

DOMAINS OF VALOR

Getting Started



LEGENDS OF THALORANTH

Domains of Valor

Getting Started



This guide is a free introduction to the Domains of Valor system. It covers what domains are, why they matter, how to acquire your first one, and how the Secondary Character Roster solves one of the oldest problems in tabletop gaming. The complete system, including all domain types from entry farms to castles and fleets, the Noble Patronage framework, the Threats and Opportunities mechanics, and the full upgrade system, lives in the Domains of Valor supplement.

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Introduction to Domains

1. What Is a Domain?

When most people hear the word "domain," they picture a castle. Stone walls, a gatehouse, a lord on a throne. That picture is not wrong, it's just the end of a very long road. A domain is the inn your party buys in a river town. It's the ranch outside the walls where someone has to be home when the wolves come. It's the workshop whose reputation for quality has started to spread.

A domain is a stake in the world.

Not a passive income stream. Not a mechanical reward you collect after enough sessions. A presence, a place your party has committed real resources to, a set of relationships that exist because of that commitment, and a position in the world's social and economic landscape that the world will respond to whether you are paying attention or not.

"We didn't buy a building," the party's leader told her partners eventually. "We bought a position in the city. I'm not sure we knew what we were doing." Her partner considered this. "Does it matter? We know now."

A domain is not just a castle. It is a persistent part of the campaign world, one that the world notices, responds to, and pushes back against. Everything that follows in this guide flows from that single principle.

2. Why Use Domains?

Three reasons. Each one matters. Together they change how a campaign feels.

Give players something to build. Adventures take characters through the world. Domains make characters part of the world. When the party acquires a domain, they stop being visitors passing through and start being stakeholders with something real at risk. A threat to the party's domain lands differently than a threat to something they encountered last session, because this is something they built.

Keep the world evolving. The domain does not stop when the party is away. Factions notice. Competitors adjust. The watch sergeant who used to stop in every evening gets reassigned, and his replacement has different interests. The neighbor whose land borders the farm has been making quiet approaches to the workers. The domain that gets neglected is a domain where things have been happening without the party's involvement, and the party's return will involve discovering what that produced. Neglect creates a story. So does attention.

Tie adventures together. Every domain type comes with its own organic adventure hooks, not random events imposed from outside, but natural consequences of having a stake in a living world with competing interests. The domain does not wait for the party to go find adventure. It brings adventure to them. The inn becomes the center of a political crisis it had nothing to do with starting. The farm becomes a refugee camp when war moves through the valley.

3. Domains Across Genres

The domain framework is not locked to fantasy. The mechanics, investment, income, staff relationships, story hooks, the secondary roster, are setting-agnostic. What changes is the skin. The principle stays the same.

Fantasy. The inn, the farm, the guildhall, the castle. These are the classic entry points, and they work because fantasy worlds are built around exactly the kind of social and economic relationships that domains make tangible. The local lord's steward has inquired about catering services. The regional merchant guild needs a reliable storage partner. Fantasy domains are embedded in the texture of the world from the moment of acquisition.

Western. The ranch is not just livestock and land, it is the party's claim in a territory where claims are contested. The newspaper shapes public opinion in a town where opinion can be bought, sold, or suppressed. The mercantile controls what goods flow through the region, and who profits from that flow. Western domains carry the genre's core tension: the frontier is not empty, and what the party builds will be tested by everyone who wants what they have.

Espionage. The safehouse has a cover identity and a real identity, and both have to be maintained. The operations center is a building and also a network, handlers, contacts, cut-outs, assets in the field. Espionage domains make the secondary roster especially relevant, because the people attached to the domain are not just staff. They are operatives with their own covers, their own relationships, their own vulnerabilities.

Science Fiction. The orbital station at a trade junction. The colony on a contested moon. The trade hub where three factions meet and none of them fully trust each other. Science fiction domains operate at larger scales and longer distances, but the core dynamic is identical: the party has invested in something real, and the universe will have opinions about that.

The question to ask in any genre is not "what does this domain produce?" but "what position does this domain give the party in this world?" Answer that question, and the adventures will follow.

The Basics: How Domains Work

'If I can afford a sword without spending anything,' the young knight asked, 'why does buying a farm cost me everything?' The old steward didn't look up from his ledger. 'Because the sword is within your means. The farm changes your means. Those are different things entirely.'

Wealth Points

Domains operate within the Wealth Points system. Wealth Points, WP, are not coins in a purse. They represent economic standing: the combination of actual financial resources, social connections that provide access to goods, reputation that opens commercial doors, and the general capability a character has developed to move through Vaeloranth's economic landscape.

WP Formula: (Insight + Social) × 2

Normal purchases work like this: every item has a Purchase Point Value (PPV). If your WP is equal to or greater than that PPV, the purchase succeeds and your WP is unchanged. If your WP is less, the purchase fails and your WP drops by 1. Successful purchases do not reduce WP.

SIDEBAR: Why Domain Investment Is Different

Domain investment is the single exception to how normal purchases work. It is not a purchase in the ordinary sense. It is a conversion. When the party invests WP in a domain, those points are permanently spent, converted from liquid economic capability into fixed assets.

The WP is gone. The domain is there.

This is the mechanism that makes domains matter. You haven't bought an item. You have staked your economic standing on something that will outlive any individual session.

The Three Prerequisites

Domain acquisition is not a transaction. It is a threshold. WP is necessary but never sufficient on its own. Every domain requires three prerequisites simultaneously:

- ◆ **Sufficient Pooled WP.** The party must be able to meet the domain's purchase cost through the combination of individual contributions and Party WP. This is the mechanical floor.
- ◆ **Institutional Reputation.** Most domains require the party to have achieved at least Favorable standing with a relevant institution. A farm needs community reputation. A trade house needs Guild standing. A castle needs recognition from regional nobility. These requirements are not bureaucratic obstacles, they are the mechanism that ensures domain acquisition is integrated into the campaign's story rather than extracted from it.
- ◆ **Narrative Conditions.** Beyond WP and reputation, every acquisition requires that the specific domain be available, available land, a property for sale, a noble willing to grant a holding. These conditions emerge from play.

The 50% Rule and Pooling

No single character may contribute more than 50% of their current personal WP toward any single domain investment. This ensures domains remain collaborative enterprises rather than individual acquisitions. Each character's contribution determines their proportional ownership, which governs both income distribution and decision-making authority.

Party WP, earned collectively through completed arcs and domain income, is not subject to the 50% cap, and flows directly into any domain purchase.

Income and Upgrades

Standard domains generate monthly income at 10% of the domain's base cost. A farm purchased at 20 WP generates 2 WP monthly. Income is distributed proportionally based on each character's contribution to the total investment.

Upgrades cost 30% of the base purchase price (40% for elite holdings). Upgraded domains generate increased monthly income at 15% of total cost. Annual maintenance runs approximately 10% of original purchase cost, handled narratively through domain income.

Your First Domain

They had been talking about it for months. The farm outside Harveston. 'This is ours,' said the youngest member of the party, quietly, as if testing how the words felt. They felt heavier than expected. More real. 'We should light the hearth first,' she said. 'Before anything else.' 'Why first?' 'Because it's what makes it a home instead of a building.'

The Acquisition Process

Step One: The Conversation. Before WP changes hands, there is a conversation, a social encounter that draws on the party's skills, their reputation, their obligations, and their ability to make the case that they are the right people to take responsibility for this holding.

Step Two: The Investment. Once the social groundwork is laid, the WP is committed. The investment is immediate and permanent. There is no partial investment, no installment plan, no returning the property if circumstances change.

Step Three: Establishment. The domain exists. It has a location, a physical reality, a staff of people whose livelihoods are now connected to the party's decisions. The domain begins generating income at the start of the following month. It begins generating story immediately.

Entry-Level Domains

The following domains represent starting points, the kinds of holdings available to a party in the early stages of their career. They are modest in cost but not modest in potential. The inn that starts as a roadside waystation becomes the intelligence hub of the region. The farm that starts as a modest holding becomes a forward position when war moves through the valley.

The full domain range, from these entry holdings to Performance Venues, Academic Holdings, Trade Ships, Mansions, Monasteries, Sacred Fortresses, Castles, and Fleets, is documented in the Domains of Valor supplement.

Domain Type	Cost (WP)	Monthly Income	Upgrade Cost	Upgraded Income
Farm / Smallholding	20 WP	2 WP	6 WP	3 WP
Ranch	35 WP	3.5 WP	10.5 WP	4.5 WP
Small Inn	50 WP	5 WP	15 WP	6.5 WP
Trade Shop	80 WP	8 WP	24 WP	10.5 WP
Workshop	100 WP	10 WP	30 WP	15 WP
Performance Venue	120 WP	12 WP	36 WP	18 WP
Academic Holding	150 WP	15 WP	45 WP	22.5 WP
Trade Ship / Caravan	150 WP	15 WP	45 WP	22.5 WP

Elite holdings (Mansion, Monastery, Castle, Fleet, and Order-specific domains) are documented in the full supplement.

What Your Domain Actually Does

Two parties can own identical farms. Same location. Same facilities. Same acquisition cost. Same monthly income. What they actually own could not be more different.

Your party's Path doesn't just describe who you are as adventurers. It determines what you build, how you run it, who lives there, and what the domain actually does in the world beyond generating monthly income. Path transformation affects five elements of every domain: Operational Focus, Facility Expression, People and Connections, Income Sources, and Story Hooks.

The young knight looked at the ranch with fresh eyes after the conversation with her commander. 'It's the same building,' she said. 'It's not,' said Commandant Veyne. 'The building hasn't changed. You have. You understand now what it's for.' She looked at the training ground her people had built along the eastern fence line. The weapons cache beneath the hay barn. The three riders who weren't ranch hands, had never been ranch hands, watching the King's Way from the ridge. 'It's a forward position,' she said. 'It's always been a forward position. You just called it a ranch until you understood what that meant.'

A domain reflects its owners. Always. Completely.

The Secondary Character Roster

The Scheduling Problem

Here is a problem every table knows.

Three of your five players can make it tonight. The session is scheduled. The campaign is mid-arc. One option is to cancel. Another is to run the session anyway, with the absent players' characters steered by the GM or simply absent from the narrative with no explanation. Neither option is satisfying. The first wastes everyone's time. The second creates continuity problems and makes absent players feel like their characters are dead weight.

This isn't a rare edge case. It is the normal condition of long-running tabletop campaigns. Life interrupts. Work schedules shift. The table that plays every week without exception is the exception.

What the Roster Does

Every player creates one secondary character attached to the party's domain.

Not a simplified backup. Not a mechanical shortcut. A complete character built through the same process as a primary PC, Origins, stats, Path, skills, everything. These characters are attached to the domain's operational identity. They live there, work there, and are connected to what the domain actually does in the world.

When the main campaign cannot proceed, when players are absent, the primary characters' stories pause. The players who are present set aside their primary PCs and play their secondary characters instead. The session runs a single arc adventure using the secondary roster.

Nobody misses a session in the meaningful sense. The table runs. The stories continue.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Before the first domain session, the party answers four questions together:

1. What does this domain actually do? Not the surface answer. The real answer.
2. Who lives here beyond the hired staff? Each player names their secondary character and establishes their connection to the domain's operational purpose.
3. What does this place look like to an outsider? The surface identity matters because it is what the world sees.
4. What story does this domain generate? Based on the Path and the operational identity, what complications and opportunities will naturally arise?

A Secondary Session in Practice

Three players are present. Their primary characters are mid-journey to a city three days' ride away. Tonight's session cannot advance that arc without the missing players.

Instead, the three present players pick up their secondary characters at the domain, a retired scout, a former merchant, and a young scholar attached to the party's inn. A courier arrives at midday with news that a regular customer was found dead on the road two hours out of town, a customer who was supposed to deliver a payment that never arrived.

The secondary roster investigates. By session's end, they've uncovered a smuggling route running through the inn without the party's knowledge, made a difficult choice about who to report it to, and established a contact who will matter when the primary campaign returns.

The absent players come back next session to continue their arc, and find their domain changed in ways that will affect everything.

The best secondary arc adventures connect to the primary campaign in ways that the absent player will appreciate when they return. The secondary roster is not a consolation prize for short tables. It is a feature of how a living campaign works.

A Note on Character Death

War kills people. The party's characters are not immune to this truth. The secondary roster exists in part for this reason. When a primary character falls, the player is not without a character to play. The system is designed to absorb the cost of loss without breaking the campaign.

A Day in the Life of a Domain

The Inn on the Crossroads Road

It's a Tuesday. No adventures scheduled. The primary campaign is between arcs.

The party's inn sits at the junction of two roads outside a market town. The morning starts the way mornings start: the kitchen is lit before dawn, the cook is already arguing with the delivery boy about the quality of the eggs, and the common room needs sweeping before the early travelers come down for breakfast.

By midmorning, something is different. The city watch sergeant who stops in most days hasn't come. The regular merchant from the southern route, due yesterday, always on schedule, hasn't arrived. Two hooded travelers came in last night and took the corner table and haven't left.

By afternoon, the cook mentions to whoever is managing the floor that the merchant's usual carrier pigeon arrived this morning, which means the merchant sent it before he was due to leave, which means he sent it when he had reason to believe he might not arrive. The carrier pigeon is sitting in the loft. Nobody knows what to do with it.

By evening, the watch sergeant's replacement stops in for the first time. His questions are different. He is interested in the two hooded travelers. He is also interested in how long the party has owned the inn, where their money came from, and whether they have any connection to the merchant guild that chartered the southern trade route.

That's Tuesday.

No quest was handed to the party. No one knocked on the door with a job. The adventure arrived the way adventures arrive in a living world: because the party has a stake in it, and the world doesn't stop moving just because the characters aren't watching.

The Ranch in the Disputed Borderlands

It's late Bloomlight. The party is two weeks away.

The ranch manager, Cerys, sends a brief report with the traveling merchant who passes through every fortnight. The herd is healthy. Income is on track. There is a minor complication: a family of refugees from the border skirmishes has turned up asking to camp on the eastern pasture. Cerys let them stay. She didn't know if that was the right call.

By the time the party gets the report, there are seventeen families camped on the eastern pasture. The local lord's steward has sent a letter expressing "concern" about the party's apparent sympathy for displaced border communities. A courier from the Church of the Lady has arrived asking whether the ranch would consider housing a field healer for the summer.

Cerys's next report is shorter: "There are now twenty-three families. Three of them are not refugees. I don't know who they are. Please advise."

The party is still two weeks away. The domain is not waiting for them.

The Workshop During Festival Week

The Harvest Moon Festival in Radia draws traffic from across the kingdom. The party's workshop has been producing ceremonial pieces for the festival market for three months. The secondary character attached to the workshop, a journeyman smith who came with the property, has been managing the production schedule.

On the second day of the festival, a noble house representative arrives. Not to buy. To talk. The house needs custom military hardware. Fast. Discretely. At premium rates. The journeyman knows better than to commit to this without the party's input, but the representative is leaving tomorrow morning.

The journeyman sends a message. The party is three days' ride away. The decision will be made, one way or another, before they can respond.

That decision, and whoever makes it, is the next chapter of the workshop's story.

Quick Start Examples

The following are ready-to-use domain scenarios. Each includes a domain type, an opening situation, three immediate story hooks, and a secondary roster seed. Drop any of them into an existing campaign or use them as the foundation for a new one.

The Crossroads Inn

50 WP | Small Inn | Located at the junction of the King's Way and the Millhaven Road

Opening Situation: The previous owner, Martha Aldren, died three months ago. Her records are meticulous, and coded. The party has been running the inn on a handshake agreement with the estate while probate resolves. Last week, a courier arrived asking for Martha by name, carrying a sealed document. Martha has been dead for three months.

- ◆ The Coded Records. Martha's guest ledger contains entries in a cipher no one on staff can read. Two of the entries are dated after her death. The cipher's origins might connect to the Merchants' Guild, the crown's intelligence apparatus, or something older.
- ◆ The Nervous Regular. A merchant who has stopped at the inn every fortnight for six years is three weeks overdue. His usual table has been occupied each of those nights by a stranger who always orders the same meal the merchant ordered, always pays in the same denominations, and always leaves before dawn.
- ◆ The Competing Offer. A well-dressed representative of a regional merchant consortium has made a very reasonable offer to purchase the inn outright. The offer is too reasonable. It arrived the day after the coded letter.

Secondary Roster Seed: One secondary character per player, each with a specific reason for being attached to the inn. A cook who knew Martha and knows more than she's said. A stablehand who used to work for the regional lord and left under ambiguous circumstances. A scholar cataloguing the library of a minor noble family whose members always stay at the inn when they pass through.

The Border Ranch

35 WP | Ranch | Located on the contested edges of the Celeris Valley

Opening Situation: The previous owners abandoned the property when the border tensions escalated. The party acquired it cheaply through a land grant from the local lord, who needed someone reliable on the eastern edge of his territory. The herd came with the property. So did Cerys, the manager, who refused to leave regardless of who owned the papers.

- ◆ The Rustlers. Livestock have been disappearing from ranches across the valley. The pattern suggests organized operation rather than opportunistic theft, the same breeds, always at the dark of the moon, never leaving tracks. The local sheriff has started asking which ranches haven't been hit. The party's ranch hasn't been hit.
- ◆ The Refugee Problem. Families displaced by border skirmishes have been appearing at the ranch's eastern fence. Each one has a different story about what happened to them. Some of the stories don't match the military reports the lord's steward has been forwarding. Someone is lying. It might be the refugees. It might be the steward.
- ◆ The Bloodline. Cerys has been quietly breeding a specific bloodline of working cattle that she claims can endure conditions no other stock survives. A buyer appeared last week

offering three times market rate. Cerys refused without consulting the party. She won't say why.

Secondary Roster Seed: Characters with ties to the land. A former scout who knows every route through the border territory. A veterinarian whose skills are worth more than her pay suggests. A young heir to a neighboring family whose property was abandoned under circumstances that involved the party's lord.

The Old Forge Workshop

100 WP | Workshop | Located in Millhaven's artisan quarter

Opening Situation: Master Smith Roderick Ironwright built the forge's reputation over forty years and retired without naming a successor. The Ironworkers Guild expected to absorb the property. The party acquired it instead. The Guild has not forgotten.

- ◆ The Guild's Patience. The Ironworkers Guild has been methodically professional in their opposition, licensing delays, supply disruptions, a whisper campaign about quality standards. Nothing actionable. Nothing that stops. The party has learned that the Guild's patience is not infinite. Something is coming. They don't know what or when.
- ◆ Roderick's Journals. The master smith's technical journals are stored in the workshop. They document techniques no living smith in Millhaven can replicate. They also document, in Roderick's cramped handwriting, a series of commissions over twenty years that he believed he should not have accepted. He names the clients. Some of them are still alive.
- ◆ The Royal Contract. The crown's procurement office has issued a call for military equipment suppliers. The party's workshop qualifies, barely. Winning the contract would end the Guild's opposition permanently. Losing would confirm the Guild's whisper campaign. The representative arrives in two weeks.

Secondary Roster Seed: The forge's people. A journeyman smith who was Roderick's last apprentice and knows things he was told not to repeat. A supplier's agent who has been delivering ore to the workshop for fifteen years and whose routes and relationships extend across the mountain region. A young tradesperson who came to Millhaven specifically because of the workshop's reputation and arrived to find it in transition.

Where to Go Next

This guide has introduced the principles. The complete system lives in the Legacies of Valor supplement.

Legacies of Valor

The sourcebook that expands Domains of Valor into a unified campaign framework alongside Fields of Valor (the war system) and Items of Valor (legacy weapons). Legacies documents how domain investment compounds with battlefield honors and legacy items into a single interconnected campaign narrative. It includes the complete Secondary Roster rules, GM guidance for running domains as living campaign elements, the seasonal calendar, the Threats and Opportunities framework, and the domain-at-war chapter covering how peacetime holdings become wartime assets.

The Game Masters Guide

Chapter Seven of the Game Masters Guide covers domains from the GM's perspective, how to maintain them as living elements, how to use domain neglect as a story opportunity, how to run acquisition as story milestone rather than transaction, and how to connect domain events to the broader campaign without elaborate plotting.

A NOTE TO THE GM

Your core responsibilities with domains are four:

Keep the domain alive between sessions. Before each session, consider one question: what has happened at the domain since the party was last there? Not a full event. A development. These accumulate.

Make acquisition feel earned. Reputation should reflect actual play. The domain should arrive as a story moment, not a transaction.

Run staff as characters. Maintain brief notes on three to five key staff per domain: a defining characteristic, a key relationship, a personal investment in the operation's success, and one thing they are currently worried about that the party doesn't know.

Connect domain events to the larger campaign. The party's domains are not separate from the main story. They are part of it. When a significant campaign development occurs, ask how it affects the domain.

What you don't need: detailed accounting beyond the monthly income note, complex NPC stat blocks for domain staff, elaborate tracking systems, predetermined story paths. The mechanics handle the numbers. You handle everything that makes those numbers matter.

A domain transforms adventurers into stakeholders. Your job is to make sure that transformation means something.



*The domain doesn't wait for you to go find adventure.
It brings adventure to you.*