

How to Speedrun Hades - Basic Guide

2022 Edition

Hi! This is a basic guide to speedrunning Hades. It'll cover everything you need to know to get started and to play through a single run, as well as some of the things you can do to optimise your time. There's a lot to learn about speedrunning this game, so it won't be exhaustive, but there'll be links to more advanced guides, so it should be a good jumping-off point for any beginner.

This guide will assume you've cleared a few full runs, can comfortably kill Hades on 0 heat, and have some basic game knowledge. You should also have most of the mirror upgrades, keepsakes, and weapon aspects unlocked and maxed out. If you don't, and you're on PC, speedrun.com has a maxed-out save ([here](#), download 'Max Save With No Run History') as well as a guide to installing it ([here](#)).

Getting Started

The Leaderboard Categories and IGT vs. RTA

The category this guide will focus on is **Any Heat**, where your goal is to escape once, using any mirror options, heat settings, or aspect, as fast as possible.

By default, Any Heat is timed using the in-game timer (IGT) which you can turn on in the game's settings, but the leaderboard also tracks real-time (RTA). IGT pauses during the pause screen, in-game menus, and in certain rooms (which we'll talk about later), while RTA does not stop at any point during the run. Multi-run categories such as OwO (One Weapon Only), 3 Weapons, and All Weapons only track RTA. IGT and RTA each have their own optimizations, but otherwise, their gameplay is very similar.

If you want to submit to the leaderboards, you'll need to record your full run, and you'll want to check the category rules on the game's speedrun.com page [here](#).

Setup

Now, let's get started.

First of all, we'll be looking at the mirror. Most of these options are always the same for speed, so here's a good starting setup:

- **Fiery Presence**
- **Chthonic Vitality**
- **Death Defiance**
- **Greater Reflex**
- **Boiling Blood**
- **Infernal Soul**
- **Deep Pockets**

- **Thick Skin**
- **Family Favorites**
- **Dark Foresight**
- **God's Pride**
- **Fated Persuasion**

You can change from Infernal to Stygian Soul if you prefer, and you'll want to change from Thick Skin to High Confidence once you're comfortable.

Certain options will also change based on build, which will be noted later. You can experiment with other options once you're more experienced, but this should be good for now.

Second, we'll be looking at the Pact of Punishment.

- **Extreme Measures 2** makes the Lernie fight faster by more tightly grouping the heads.
- **Forced Overtime** makes enemies spawn in faster.
- **Tight Deadline** removes the survival rooms in Tartarus. Turn it on if you're playing for RTA, but leave it off if you're playing IGT.

Finally, we'll always be using Meg's summon, as it offers the best balance between power and speed. We'll cover how to use it in a later section.

Builds

Boons

Before we look at builds, it's worth understanding the concept of a 'god pool'. Initially, you'll be offered gods at random out of the main 8. Every time you pick one up, it's added to an invisible 'pool' of gods, until your pool consists of 4. Then you'll stop seeing new gods, and will only be offered those in your pool. When you're offered gods as room rewards, consider which ones contribute to the build you're shooting for, and whether you have room for them in your pool.

The only gods that are offered regardless of this pool system are Chaos and Hermes. Which bonuses you want from Chaos (if any) will depend on your build, but let's cover Hermes now.

You'll normally get 2 boons from Hermes in each run. His boons have a huge impact on every build, and there are several specific boons you'll want from him.

Greatest Reflex is a good option for weapons that mainly use dash-strikes. It's great for mobility, and can be a huge damage increase, especially at higher rarities.

Rush Delivery gives a huge damage bonus if you combine it with **Hyper Sprint**, so you can always take Hyper Sprint as your first Hermes and keep an eye out for Rush Delivery.

Quick Reload dislodges your cast from enemies faster, so it's great for any build where a cast that can lodge is your primary source of damage.

Now, let's talk about builds.

What build is best will depend on what aspect you're playing. This guide will list the aspect and build that runners normally use for each weapon, but if you're not a fan of any of these, don't worry- every aspect has been played to some extent, and you can use whatever you like. There's less information out there for the slower aspects, so you'll have to ask around more for help playing them, but you'll always get the best results playing something you enjoy.

Sword

The fastest aspect of the sword is **Nemesis**. Your central combo will be to open with your special, dash-strike until your buff runs out, and repeat. It can be hard to get used to, so practice on Skelly, and make sure to watch runs on the leaderboard for an idea of what it should look like.

The most consistent build is Splash Nem. You'll start with Poseidon's keepsake for Tidal Dash, then look for Artemis or Aphrodite's attack, Hunter's Mark, and dash-strike bonuses from Chaos.

Another option is the crit build, where you'll start with Artemis' attack instead and go for Aphrodite's special and the Heart Rend duo boon. Hunter's Mark, Chaos bonuses, and the Zeus/Aphrodite duo Smoldering Air are extremely useful on this build as well.

Finally, there's Merciful End. You'll start with Ares' keepsake and take his attack at rare or better rarity. Then, look for Athena's special, the Merciful End duo boon, and her dash. Impending Doom is very important to look for, as it can more than double doom's damage. ME is inconsistent and can thus be difficult to get faster times with, but the fact it doesn't rely on a weapon's base damage means it can be used on a lot of different aspects.

All of these builds benefit massively from the Double Edge hammer, so look out for it. Avoid Flurry Slash, Cursed Slash, World Splitter, and Dash Nova.

Other Aspects:

Zag Sword - Merciful End

Poseidon - Lightning Phalanx

Arthur - No popular builds

Spear

The fastest aspect of the spear is **Achilles**. You'll want to quickly double-tap your special between dash-strikes to keep your buff up. You'll mainly be using the buffed attack, but your buffed cast can deal great damage even if you don't have a cast boon, so be sure to take advantage of it. You can also use charged specials for mobility.

You'll start with Poseidon's keepsake and take Tidal Dash, then take Artemis or Zeus for their attack, whichever appears first. If you got Zeus, you'll want to aim for Static Discharge, Zeus' aid, and the legendary boon Splitting Bolt. If you got Artemis, you'll want to aim for Ares' cast and the duo boon Hunting Blades.

The Flurry Jab hammer is essential to both builds.

There's a lot to dig into about this aspect, so be sure to check out world-record holder 185's excellent written guide ([here](#)).

Mirror:

Infernal Soul recommended

Other Aspects:

Zag Spear - Same as Achilles

Hades - Merciful End

Guan Yu - Merciful End, start with Athena

Shield

The fastest aspect of the shield is **Beowulf**. You'll be using your dash-strike to kill smaller enemies, and your empowered bull rush for the bigger ones. Remember that you can start charging it by holding attack after a dash-strike, and that you can load your casts while charging. You'll also want to remap your cast to a shoulder button so you can use it quicker.

A few different casts can work, but usually you'll start with Poseidon's keepsake and take Flood Flare, making sure to get plenty of poms and ideally cast bonuses from Chaos or wells. Then, look for Artemis' attack (or her special) for the Mirage Shot duo boon. Mirage Shot normally adds a second projectile to your cast with lower base damage, but the game has a bug that causes the second projectile to deal full damage on Beowulf. In part because of this, Beowulf is one of the most popular aspects for top times.

The Charged Shot hammer is by far the best choice.

For more information on how the aspect is played, be sure to read the Beowulf guide by PaperTronics ([here](#)).

Mirror:

Infernal Soul required

High Confidence and God's Legacy recommended

Other Aspects:

Zag Shield - Crit Build

Zeus - Merciful End

Chaos - No popular builds

Bow

The most popular aspect of the bow is **Hera**. You'll want to use low-charged shots to get your casts out as quickly as possible. Load enough casts to burst enemies down in one go, then pick them up and repeat. Again, remember you can load casts while charging a shot, and you'll probably want to remap your cast button.

You'll start with Aphrodite's keepsake and take Crush Shot, with as many poms and Chaos buffs as possible. Then, shoot for Artemis' attack and Poseidon's special for Mirage Shot, as well as Snow Burst and Ravenous Will from Demeter.

Triple Shot and Flurry Shot are both great hammers, depending on your preference.

For more detail on how to build and play the aspect, there's a great guide by Scuffed ([here](#)).

Rama has also seen some use lately, including an impressive unmodded WR by ocaml. It's a lot more advanced, so we won't be covering its usage here, but it has a lot of potential.

Mirror:

Infernal Soul required

Other Aspects:

Zag Bow - Crit Build with Passion Dash and Triple or Twin Shot

Chiron - Tidal Dash > Poseidon Special > Zeus Cast/Aid into Sea Storm

Rama - Zeus Special > Hunter Dash > %-based Attack Boon/Shackle

Fists

The fastest aspect of the fists is **Demeter**, which uses the same Merciful End build as Nemesis. When you don't have the build yet, your main combo will be dash-strike into dash-upper, with the addition of your cast or another dash-strike for bigger enemies. Once you have the duo and Athena's dash, switch to just holding down your attack and dashing back and forth to apply doom as much as possible. It's an easy weapon to play, and a good choice for beginners.

Breaching Cross is the best hammer, though it's not essential. Explosive Upper is also great, but you should avoid Heavy Knuckle and Rush Kick.

Other Aspects:

Zag Fists - Merciful End

Talos - Merciful End

Gilgamesh - Merciful End, Ruthless Reflex on mirror

Rail

Eris is one of the best aspects overall, and a great choice to start out on. You'll use your special while reloading, dash-strike repeatedly on enemies at close range, then stand in each special as it lands to get your damage buff.

Start with Zeus' keepsake and take his attack, then look for Static Discharge from Zeus as a primary damage source, Tidal Dash from Poseidon, and any damage-boosting special- preferably Artemis or Aphrodite.

Rocket Bomb is the best hammer, but isn't required.

Cluster Bomb is also a good option. Its damage penalty doesn't apply when you also have Rocket Bomb, resulting in the extremely powerful Clockets combo.

For much more info on the aspect, be sure to read Lili's Eris guide ([here](#)).

Hestia has also seen a surge in usage recently, but it's another more advanced aspect that we won't be covering in detail.

Other Aspects:

Zag Rail - either same as Eris, or Crit Build with Spread Fire

Hestia - Tidal Dash > %-based Attack Boon/Shackle

Lucifer - same as Eris, preferred hammer Triple Bomb

And that's it for the builds! If you're not sure how to get any of the boons we covered, be sure to check the in-game codex.

Improving Your Time

If you want, you can do a run right now with whatever build you've chosen and see what results you get. But aside from having a good build, there are some other things you'll need to keep in mind to start going faster.

Free Rooms

Each biome in the game has a fixed number of chambers, followed by the endshop and boss. Tartarus is 12 chambers (1-12), Asphodel is 6 (17-22), Elysium is 8 (27-34), and Styx is variable depending on the sack's placement. Therefore, since all chambers occupy one 'space', you want to try and take the rooms you're offered that'll be fastest. Fast (or 'free') rooms to prioritise are:

- Midshop
- Midboss
- Chaos gates
- Story rooms (Sisyphus, Eurydice, and Patroclus), which pause IGT

Most of these can only show up once per biome. The main exception is midboss, which can be offered twice in Elysium or three times anywhere else, and are therefore a lower priority than other free rooms.

In Styx, you'll always want to take the miniboss doors first. The sack can show up as soon as the second tunnel (approx. 54% odds) but if you're unlucky it can show up as late as the fifth.

There are also free rooms out of your control that can appear randomly in any normal combat room, namely:

- Survival room (pauses IGT, appears a maximum of once in Tartarus)
- Fountains (appear a maximum of once per biome)
- Thanatos (pauses IGT and appears a maximum of once per run)

Aside from free rooms, you should also prioritise 'elite' rooms, marked with skulls. These only spawn armoured enemies, which spawn in smaller numbers; They'll therefore be quicker on average. Trials also spawn armoured enemies, but in higher numbers than usual, so they're slower than other rooms and should be avoided.

Build Optimisation

Especially in the back half of the game (Elysium onwards), your build having strong damage becomes extremely important. Using good boons goes a long way, but it also helps to understand what scaling options will help your boons go further in the lategame.

The primary sources of scaling that builds tend to use are poms, well items, Chaos, Hermes, and any tier-2 boons unlocked by your cores. How much a build gains from each of these varies, but generally speaking:

- Crit builds rely on Chaos and Hermes
- Cast builds rely on poms, Chaos, and well items
- Merciful End relies on the tier-2 Ares boon Impending Doom, poms, and Hermes
- Zeus builds like Eris and Achilles rely on his tier-2 boon Static Discharge, his legendary Splitting Bolt, poms, and Hermes

Exactly how you should be using each of these will be explained in each weapon's individual guide.

You'll also usually have room in your pool for one or two extra gods that aren't a primary part of your build. The most important thing here is just to avoid taking anything that'll interfere with your build. Examples of stuff to avoid include:

- Filling slots you need, like taking Thunder Dash when you're building towards Merciful End
- Opening duos you don't want, like by taking Heartbreak Flourish on Beowulf, which'll lower your chances of getting Mirage Shot
- Opening tier-2s other than those you need, such as taking a call when you still need boons from Hermes
- Taking a lot of boons that are pommable when you need the poms for something else

There's a reference list of unpommable boons in the Discord (linked in Learning More), and if you want to check a boon's prerequisites you can just look at the codex.

Room Clear

Clearing rooms efficiently is one of the main things you'll be working on as you head for more optimised times. It's a complex topic, so this will only be a very basic explanation.

Non-miniboss rooms will start with some enemies already spawned in. Once you kill every enemy in the first wave, you'll want to move to a corner, ideally near the exit or entrance of the room. Enemies will usually only spawn on-screen, so this will limit the space in which they spawn, making them more grouped-together and quicker to kill. There's a useful guide by BIGP ([here](#)) that shows good routes for each room.

There are up to three waves in a room. Once you've cleared them all, it's usually worth checking any Wells of Charon you see. They can give useful items including Lights of Ixion, which will force a Chaos gate to appear in the next room.

If you're playing for in-game time, you can then pause while you decide which door to take. Doing this in every room will save a lot of time.

Miniboss rooms work differently, and are much simpler. You'll always want to start by using your summon. There's a great guide by SatanIsAChillGuy ([here](#)) with setups for the miniboss rooms that'll consistently hit every enemy, as well as a newer setup for the 4 witches miniboss ([here](#)). Once you use your Meg, just focus down the miniboss as quickly as you can, and you're done.

Finally, there's bosses. Using a speed build will probably make these easier than you expect, so once you're comfortable, you'll want to start playing very aggressively to save time. Keep your damage up and don't be too scared to tank hits- health is a resource, so use it, *especially* in the Hades fight.

Modded

If you've taken a glance at the leaderboards, you might've noticed the subcategories named 'Modded' and 'Unmodded'. Modded refers to a speedrunning modpack made by the leaderboard staff, which makes various changes related to quality-of-life as well as lessening the impact of RNG. These include:

- Your first god always offering you all 4 core boons
- Letting you decide what your first hammer will be
- Showing fountains on doors
- Removing the Barge of Death, Asterius, and Tiny Vermin minibosses
- Forcing the satyr sack in Styx to always appear in the second tunnel
- A QuickReset button

None of these changes affect the skill involved in the runs. They only make them less likely to be killed off by luck factors outside the player's control, and make grinding less irritating. Most speedrunners currently play modded. If you're on PC it's worth considering, but whether you want the vanilla experience or one more optimised for running is up to you.

Learning More

As stated earlier, this guide is just a starting point. There's huge amounts of information out there about speedrunning this game, and we're still figuring out new things all the time.

If you want to learn more, I really recommend joining the Hades speedrunning [Discord](#). There, you can see which of the many great players in the community are streaming at the moment. You can also post recordings of your own play for advice, which is a great way to improve.

The Hades speedrunning community is the most helpful and supportive place I've ever been on the internet, and there's always someone to answer your questions or help you out. I'll be hoping to see you around there soon, but until then, good luck.

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