UniVersus

How to Play Guide

Table of Contents

Win Conditions

UniVersus is a fighting card game where you play as one of your favorite characters from anime, fighting games, or manga.

A match in **UniVersus** is best 2 out of 3 games. Each player has a character card and a deck of at least 60 cards. Decks contain attacks that players will use to reduce their rival's health to 0! Also, if a player ever runs out of cards in their deck and has no cards left after cycling they instantly lose the game!

Finally, some cards may provide special win conditions, allowing players to win in a unique way.

**For the full game rules, scan or click the code below:**

Game Zones

Each player has their own play area in the game, consisting of multiple game zones.

The diagram on this page explains each of the game zones.

1. **Character Card** is where you will place your character card.

2. **The Health Tracker** along the top is for tracking your health. Place a token on the number equal to your character's starting health.

3. **Card Deck** is where you keep your game deck.

4. **Card Pool** is where you play cards during your turn.

5. **Discard Pile** is where you place cards that are no longer in play.

6. **The Stage** is where you keep played cards that remain in play.

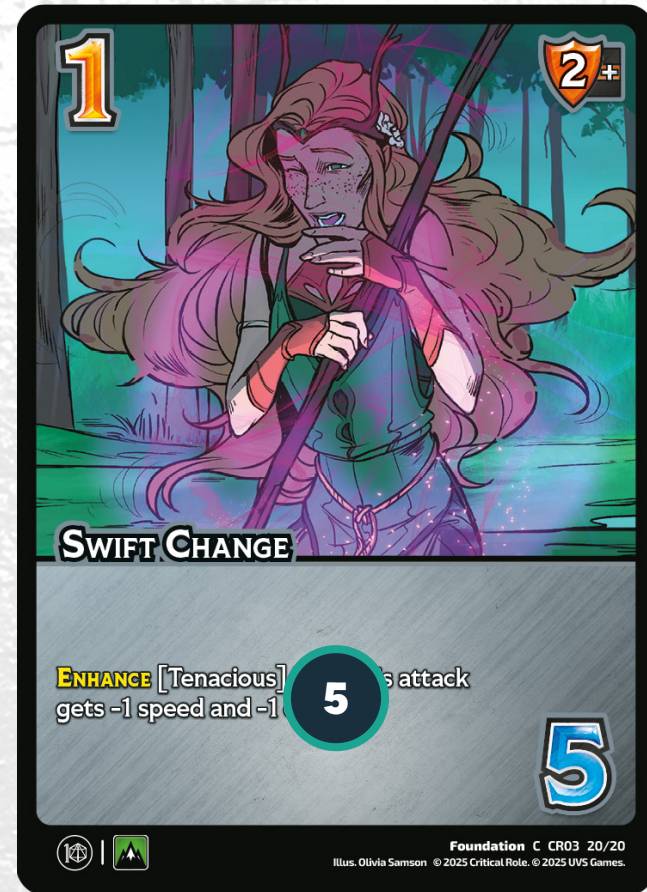7. **Momentum** is a resource pool where attacks go at the end of the turn when they have dealt damage.

*There is no specific zone location for cards that are removed from the game, but these cards should be kept in a faceup pile, outside of the play area. This is your Removed From Game zone.
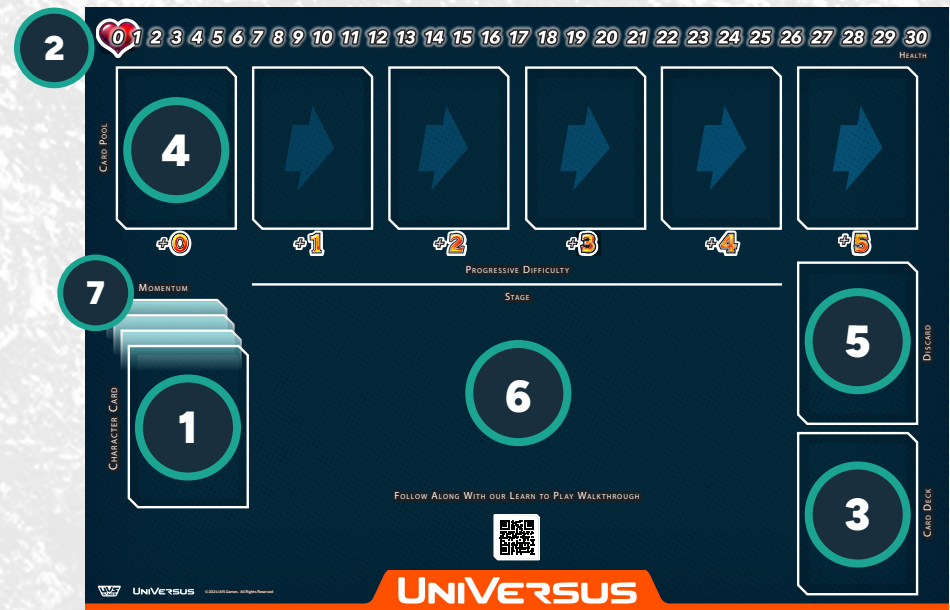
Card Types – Overview

In UniVersus there are a variety of cards to use to gain the upper hand on your rival. Here are a few things that each card has in common.

1. **Difficulty:** This is how difficult the card is to play.

2. **Card Name:** The title of the card

3. **Block:** This is the value of the block. Blocks prevent your rival's attack from dealing damage. More on blocks later!

4. **Card Type:** This icon identifies the card's type. In this case Swift Change is identified as a foundation.

5. **Text Box:** This is where any keywords or special abilities on a card will be located.

6. **Symbols:** Symbols are used for deckbuilding and identifying the front faces of cards. For more information, check out our website at www.uvsgames.com.

7. **Check:** This is the value of the card when making a check to play another card.

SWIFT CHANGE

ENHANCE [Tenacious] ... s attack gets -1 speed and -1 ...

Foundation C CR03 20/20
Illus. Olivia Samson © 2025 Critical Role. © 2025 UVS Games.

Characters

Your **Character card** is who you are playing as in UniVersus, and a key component of your deck's strategy.

1. **Starting Hand Size:** The number in the card icon is your starting hand size. This is the number of cards you begin the game with and will draw back up to during the Draw Step on each of your turns.

2. **Maximum Health:** The number in the heart icon is your **character's** maximum health. This is how much health you begin the game with. You can never have more health than this number. If your health falls to zero, then you lose the game!

3. **Symbols: Character cards** have multiple symbols that tell you what cards can be included in your deck. This allows for a variety of ways to play the same character! For more information on deckbuilding please visit our website at www.uvsgames.com.

Attacks & Foundations

Attacks are your primary source of dealing damage to your rival. **Attacks** are one-time use and can be blocked by the defending player. Here are the primary characteristics of **attacks**!

1. **Zone & Speed:** The color of the arrow will be **Red**, **Orange**, or **Yellow** to indicate the zone (direction) of your **attack**. The number in this icon is the speed of the **attack**. These characteristics will help determine how hard it is to block the **attack** (see Block Step on page 16.)

   HIGH   MID   LOW

2. **Damage:** The number in this icon is the base damage this **attack** will deal if unblocked.

3. **Keywords:** These are terms like Punch, Fury, or Throw! Some keywords are traits, which are only referenced by other cards. Other keywords will be highlighted with a color such as **EX: 3**. This means the keyword is shorthand for an ability.

You can easily recognize **foundation** cards by the grey text box. **Foundations** are your main resource in UniVersus, allowing you to help check higher-Difficulty cards, defend against faster and harder attacks, or use their unique abilities to give yourself an edge while attacking or defending.

Most **foundations** do not have an effect until they enter the your Stage. However, on following turns, they provide a player access to more abilities or the chance to play more cards than they otherwise would be able to.

The abilities on your foundations **cannot be used until they leave your card pool and enter your stage**.

GREAT-AXE CHOP
EX: 3 • FURY • WEAPON

(EX: 3—ENHANCE Spend 1 or more momentum: This attack gets +3 speed for each momentum spent to pay the cost of this ability.)

Attack C CR03 4/20
Illus. Olivia Samson © 2025 Critical Role. © 2025 UVS Games.

COMBAT EVALUATION

ENHANCE, Flip: Ready 1 foundation that has not been readied this Combat Phase.

Foundation C CR03 12/20
Illus. CoupleOfKooks © 2025 Critical Role. © 2025 UVS Games.

Actions, Assets & Backups

Though your deck will mostly be made of attacks and foundations there are a few more card types that are less common!

Actions are special events or abilities that can seriously impact the game! Abilities on these cards are played from your hand; you can play them any time that a similar ability can be played.

Example: Enhance abilities on an **action** card can only be played during the Enhance Step. Response abilities can only be played after its trigger is met.

Actions stay in your card pool after they are played or are discarded if the check to play them fails.

Assets can be tools, allies, or even special locations used to help get a leg up in battle! **Assets** are similar to foundations, but you cannot commit them in order to pass checks. Because of this, they tend to have strong abilities!

Backups are comrades that live in your stage like mini character cards with helpful abilities to aid you in combat. However, just like your character, your rival can select them as attack targets to take them out.

1. **Backups have their own unique statistic: Stamina!**
   Stamina is to a backup as health is to a character. Once a backup loses all of its stamina,it is destroyed and placed in the discard pile.

Like other card types, **backups** have abilities you can use once it is in your stage; but, like Assets, you cannot commit **backups** to increase your check to play a card.

Setup

To start, you and your rival will place your **characters** and decks in the appropriate game zones.

1. Randomly determine who will go first.

2. Both players draw up to their hand size 🂠.

3. Both players may mulligan once.

To mulligan, follow the rules below:

- *The first player puts their entire hand on the bottom of their deck and draws a new hand. He first player may mulligan up to two times.*

- *The second player may select any number of cards in their hand to put on the bottom of the deck before drawing back to their printed hand size. They can only do this once.*

- *Players who have chosen to mulligan shuffle their deck afterwards.*

4. Begin the first player's turn.

Draw up to hand size
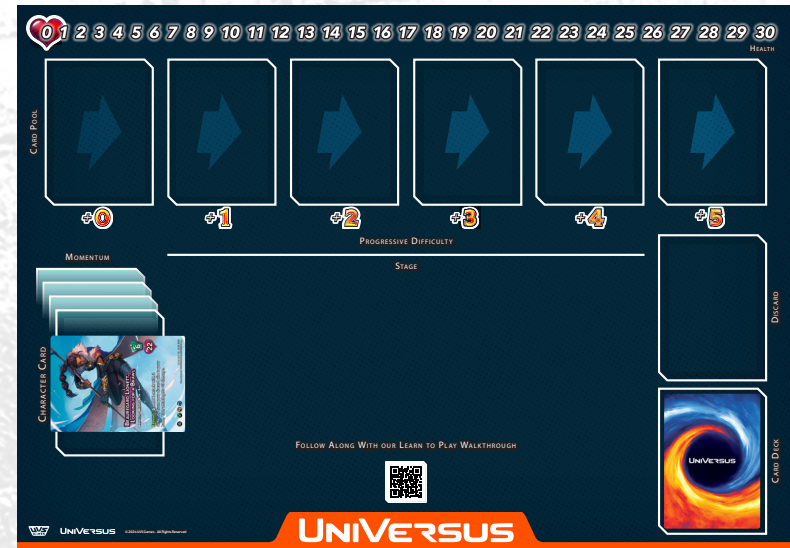
First Player's Setup

Second Player's Setup

Turn Sequence – Start Phase

Your turn is divided into **three Phases:** The **Start Phase**, the **Combat Phase**, and the **End Phase**, in that order.

The Start Phase is the first part of a turn, and comes before the Combat Phase.

The first player starts with their character **Committed** (turned sideways) and **SKIPS** the Start Phase on their first turn.

This phase contains 3 Steps: The Ready Step, the Review Step, and the Draw Step, in that order.

1. **Ready Step:** During this step you ready all the cards in your stage. When a card is **Ready**, it is turned upright. A card must be **Ready** in your stage in order to use its abilities. The player going second will start with their character **Ready**. When a card is committed, that card can no longer us its abilities.

2. **Review Step:** During this step you may discard up to 1 card before completing the Draw Step. This is called reviewing.

3. **Draw Step:** During this step you draw up to your character's Hand Size. **On their first turn only,** the second player may draw 1 additional card during the Draw Step. This means the second player will draw above their printed hand size.

Second Player Setup

The second player reviews cards in their hand and draws up to on their first turn.

Combat Phase

The Combat Phase is the main phase of the game. During your Combat Phase, you may do any of the following things any number of times:

- Play an Attack, Foundation, Asset, Backup. **If you fail** to play one of these card types during your turn, **immediately move to the End Phase.**

- Play Form abilities on cards in your stage, or on Action cards in your hand. **If you fail** to play a Form ability on an Action card during your turn, **immediately move to the End Phase.**

At any point (except during an Attack Sequence), you may pass and end your Combat Phase.

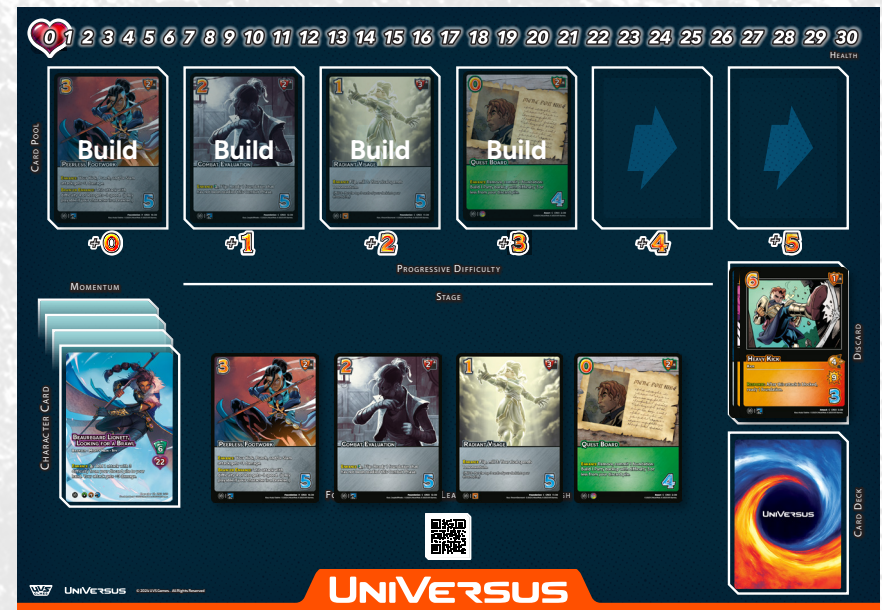**First Player Turn One – Combat Phase**

End Phase

In this phase, **the card pools** are cleared to end the turn.

To clear your card pool, move cards from your card pool to other zones using the following rules:

• The player whose turn it is, clears their card pool first.

• Clear your Card Pool going **from right to left.**

• Add any **Foundations**, **Assets**, or **Backups** played during your turn to your Stage. This is called **Building**. You may also build any attack cards with the shift ability that you played during your turn.

• You may **add** any of your **Attacks that dealt damage** to your Momentum (see pg. 20), otherwise, place them in the Discard Pile.

• All other cards are added to your **Discard Pile.**

• Then your rival will place all cards in their card pool in the discard pile from right to left.

After your End Phase, your rival's turn begins.

First Player Turn One – End Phase

Playing Cards – Making Checks

Let's learn how to play your first card!

1. **To play a card**, add it to the left most empty spot in your **card pool**.

2. **Look at the orange difficulty value** of the card added to your card pool and make a check.

3. **To make a check**, discard the top card of your deck and look at the blue check value in the bottom right of the discarded card. **If the check value is greater than or equal to your card's difficulty value, you've successfully played your card!**

In this example, the **total difficulty** to play the foundation, *Science Bros* is **3**.
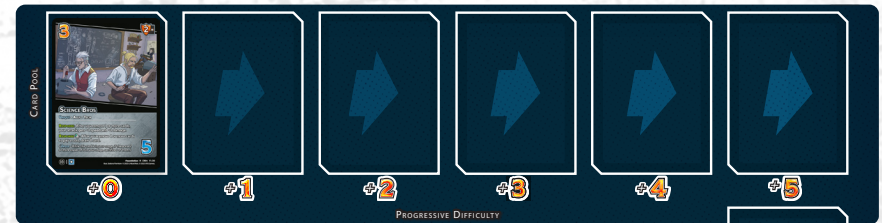
+ 3 (Printed Difficulty)
= 3 (Total Difficulty)

Now you need to **check a 3** or greater.

You can play as many cards as you want during a turn as long as you can pass the Check. Each new card played will increase the total difficulty by +1. This is called **Progressive Difficulty**, please see the following page for an example on how to successfully play multiple cards!

Important
The card pool always fills from left to right, and new cards will always be placed to the right of all other cards in the card pool.

Playing Multiple Cards

In order to play multipe cards you need to determine the **Total Difficulty**. To do so, count the number of cards previously played in your card pool and add that number to the printed difficulty of the card you are attempting to play.

Let's look at an example! You're trying to play the Asset, *The List*, as your fourth card this turn. The printed difficulty of *The List* is 1 and the Progressive Difficulty is 3. This means the **Total Difficulty to play The List is 4**!

1 (Printed Difficulty) + 3 (Progressive Difficulty) = 4 (Total Difficulty)

Now let's make a check! Oh no! You have checked the attack, *Golem Beating*, with a **Check value of 3**.

To pass the check, you can commit any number of ready foundations (you can also commit your Character card). **Each card committed this way will add +1 to your check**.

To show that a card has been committed 🔄, turn it 90 degrees clockwise. Cards that are committed remain committed until yout next Start Phase—Ready Step.

So, if you checked a 3 and need a 4, you can commit 1 card to add +1 to your check, totaling 4 and passing the check.

If you fail to play a card, discard the card and begin your End Phase.

Important
Only cards in your stage can be ready or committed, and you cannot commit a card that has already been committed. When trying to play a card, you must either commit just enough cards to pass the check, or no cards.
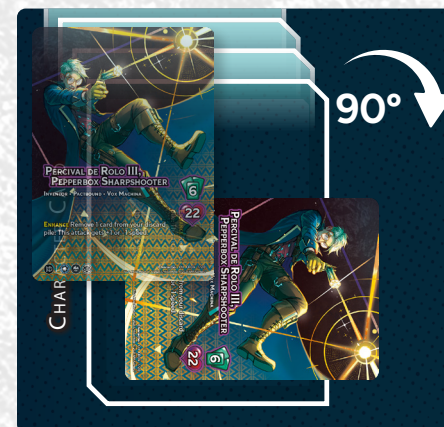
Attack Sequence

When you play an attack during your combat phase, you enter the **Attack Sequence**, which consists of three steps. The **Enhance Step,** the **Block Step,** and the **Damage Step**.

Once an Attack Card is successfully played, you will enter the Enhance Step.

Enhance Step

The start of the **Enhance Step** is the time to play an exciting new kind of ability called Blitz (see pg. 19). Once the attacking player has used their Blitz abilities, both players take turns playing Enhance abilities.

The attacking player first decides to either play an **Enhance** ability or pass. Afterwards, the defending player chooses to play an **Enhance** ability or pass.

This will continue back and forth **until both players pass consecutively**.

Blitzes and Enhances are further explained on page 19.

Once the Enhance Step ends, **the Block Step** begins!

Block Step

Now the **Block Step** begins, where you can try to Block an Attack and try to reduce the damage you will take.

Blocks have three possible zones, just like attacks (**High**, **Mid** and **Low**).

• **High** and **Mid** zones are adjacent.
• **Low** and **Mid** zones are adjacent.
• **Mid** zone is adjacent to both **High** and **Low** zones.
• **High** and **Low** zones are **NOT** adjacent zones.

In order to block an attack, the block zone must match or be adjacent to the attack's zone.

You may only try to block once per attack and you are not required to block even if you have a card with a matching block zone in hand.

Successful blocks stay in your card pool until the **End Phase**, while a failed block is added to your Discard Pile.

High Attacks can be blocked by **High Blocks** or **Mid Blocks**

Mid Attacks can be blocked by any block zone

Low Attacks can be blocked by **Low Blocks** or **Mid Blocks**

Block Step

First, you'll need to determine the **total block difficulty**:

To determine the total block difficulty, add your rival's speed, plus your block modifier, plus your progressive difficulty. Finally, make a check against that total difficulty.

If you successfully pass this check, you will reduce the amount of damage you take depending on the zone of the attack and the zone of your block.

Damage Step

When you block an attack, if your block zone completely matches the zone of the attack, you will take no damage.

If you choose not to block, or fail to block an attack, you will lose health equal to the total damage of the attack.

If you block an attack with an adjacent block zone, you will take half damage, rounded up.

Attacking Player

Blocking Player

| Rival's Attack Speed | | Your Block Modifier | | Progressive Difficulty | Total Block Difficulty |

Block Step

Example

Staff Crack is a 3 Speed, **High Zone** attack with 3 Damage. Let's check our hand to see if we can block!

Staff Crack is a **High Attack**. It can only be blocked by **High Blocks** and **Mid Blocks**.

We have the following cards in hand: *Collecting Components*, *Alchemical Satchel Toss*, & *Merciless Lead*.

The only two cards we can block with are *Collecting Components* and *Merciless Lead*. **Let's attempt a full block with *Merciless Lead*!**.

Start by adding *Merciless Lead* to the left most empty slot in your card pool.

Then, determine the **total block difficulty**.

3	**+**	**2**	**+**	**0**	**=**	**5**
Rival's Attack Speed		Your Block Modifier		Progressive Difficulty		Total Block Difficulty

Then make a Check against the difficulty. We checked *Found Family*, which has a check of 6.

Since the Check was equal to the difficulty, the block was successful!

Attacking Player

Blocking Player

Cards in Hand

Abilities – Blitzes & Enhances

Now that you have learned how to attack and block, let's go over abilities that can help you attack and defend. Know that Abilities are separated into two parts: the cost and the effect.

1. **Cost: Everything before the colon** is the cost that you must pay to play the ability. If there is nothing before the colon then there is no cost to play the ability.

2. **Effect: Once the cost has been paid**, the effect will occur in the order it is written on the card.

Blitz abilities can be played only at the start of the Enhance Step. The attacking player can play all of the **Blitz** abilities on their attack in an order of their choosing.

Blitz abilities are optional, you don't need to use them if you don't want to.

Enhance
The Enhance step continues, with you and your rival taking turns playing **Enhance** abilities. An enhance ability is playable if it's on a ready card in the stage, an action card in the hand, or on the current attack.

Some abilities are restricted to specific characters, as noted on the card. For example, *Peerless Footwork* has an **Enhance** that can only be played if your character has the keyword *Brawler*.

Each **Enhance** ability can only be used during an Attack Sequence, and only once per attack.

Important
Abilities on committed cards cannot be played unless the ability states "Playable while committed". These cards are labeled **Tenacious**.

Responses & Momentum

Responses are abilities that can only be played when a specific condition is met.

Some (but not all) **Responses** will have costs just like **Enhances**.

Let's look at an example!

- The **Response** on *Martial Prowess* can only be played after you take damage during the combat phase.

Momentum

Momentum is an extra resource used to pay the cost of certain abilities. These effects are powerful enough to swing many games in your favor.

Some card abilities will allow you to gain momentum, but **the main way to gain momentum is by dealing damage with your attacks.**

During the End Phase of each turn, each player may add any of their attacks that dealt damage to their momentum.

Here are two examples of common abilities that utilize your momentum!

- (**EX: 3—Enhance** Spend 1 or more momentum: This attack gets +3 speed for each momentum used to pay the cost of this ability.)

- (**Powerful: 3—Enhance** Spend 1 or more momentum: This attack gets +3 damage for each momentum spent to pay the cost of this ability.)

Deck Building

So you've played a bunch of games with these starter decks and now you're ready to build your own unique deck. Here's some important information to help you do so.

Your deck must consist of 1 starting character and a minimum of 60 other cards. The suggested ratio is 30% attacks to 70% non-attacks. You may include up to 4 copies of any card in your deck.

Resource Symbols

There are 12 Symbols in Universus. These symbols are used for deckbuilding. Each card has at least one resource symbol printed on it. Different symbols specialize in different aspects of gameplay. A list of the 12 symbols and their names is featured here.

When building a deck, choose 1 of your character's resource symbols to be your deck's primary symbol. Every card in your deck must have the deck's primary symbol.
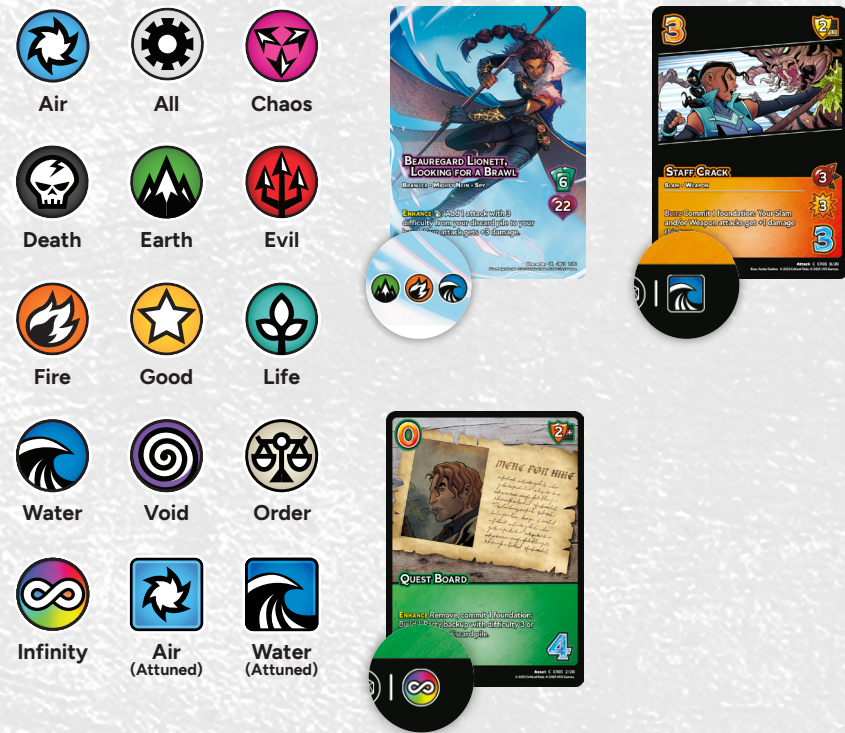
Attuned Symbols

Some cards have resource symbols with a square icon, rather than a circular symbol icon. This indicates that that symbol is attuned. A card with an attuned symbol on it can be played in a deck whose starting character has the corresponding resource symbol regardless of the deck's primary symbol.

The character does not need to have an attuned symbol on their card, just the base symbol. For example, *Beauregard Lionett* has the 🌊 symbol. So even if her deck's primary symbol is 🔥, she can play an attuned 🌊 card such as *Staff Crack*.

Infinity Symbol

Cards with the infinity symbol have no particular resource symbols—such cards can be played in any deck.

Chosen Character + **30% Attacks** + **70% Other Cards**

Air	All	Chaos
Death	Earth	Evil
Fire	Good	Life
Water	Void	Order
Infinity	Air (Attuned)	Water (Attuned)

FAQs

There are only 6 spaces on the playmat. Does this mean I can only play 6 cards per turn?

The playmat provided is only for learning purposes. You may play as many cards per turn as you are able to pass checks for.

Is there a maximum hand size?

No, there is no maximum hand size. However, if you have more cards in your hand than your starting hand size, you will not draw any cards during the Start Phase.

If I flip a card, do I need to commit it?

No. If you need to flip a card, flip it in the same state of ready or committed it is in.

How many times can I play an enhance ability?

Each enhance ability on a card may be used once per Enhance Step, provided you can pay the cost of the ability. For example, if you need to commit a card to pay for an enhance, you cannot commit a card that is already committed.

Can I block with cards in my stage?

No. Blocks may only be played from your hand. Though you may block as many attacks in a turn as you are able to.

Both *Makeshift Maneuver* and *Learned Technique* say "next attack gets…" and modify the values of the next attack. Will this carry over to the next turn?

No. Unless otherwise stated, all card effects end during the End Phase of each player's turn.

Cards may be played as forms or they may have form abilities. What does form mean?

A form is an action (not an Action card) taken during the Combat Phase that furthers the game state and occurs outside of the Attack Sequence.

If my attack has a blitz ability, do I have to use it?

No, You may choose to pass on a blitz ability if you find it beneficial to do so.

Are there abilities other than Enhance and Response abilities?

Yes. There are other types of abilities such as Form abilities and Continuous (not played) abilities. Form abilities are played during the Combat Phase, at the same time a player could normally play a card from their hand.

Continuous abilities do not need to be played and their effects are always active, provided the condition is met. The conditions for these effects are included in the game text on the card.

What happens if my deck runs out of cards?

If your deck runs out of cards, shuffle your discard pile to create a new deck, and then remove the top 10 cards of your new deck from the game. If you ever run out of cards after this process, you've exhausted yourself and lost the game!

Where can I find a full list of the Keywords in the game?

The keywords are listed in the Rules Reference on the card game webpage. You can scan the QR code on the back of this booklet, or visit www.uvsgames.com

DON'T FORGET THE GOLDEN RULE!
If a card tells you to do something that contradicts the rules, follow the instructions on the card.

For full game rules scan or click the code below!

Quick Reference

Start of Game

Both players shuffle their decks, then place their characters and decks in the appropriate play zone.

- Randomly determine who will go first.
- The first player commits their character.
- Both players draw up to their hand size.
- Both players may mulligan (pg. 9).
- Begin the first player's turn (the first player skips their first Start Phase).

Turn Sequence

Start Phase (pg. 10)

- Ready Step (ready all cards in your Stage).
- Review Step (you may discard 1 card).
- Draw Step (draw back up to your hand size).

Combat Phase (pg. 11)

- Play cards into your card pool, one at a time.
- Any foundations played during your turn will build during the End Phase.
- If you play an attack, go to the Attack Sequence.
- After an Attack Sequence ends, you may continue to play cards.
- You may choose to end your Combat Phase at any time outside of an Attack Sequence.
- If you fail an attempt to play a card during your Combat Phase, immediately move to the End Phase (this does not apply if you fail to play an Enhance or Response ability on an Action card).
- You MUST try to play at least 1 card during your Combat Phase.

End Phase (pg.12)

- Starting with the right-most card in your card pool, move cards from your card pool to the appropriate zone.
- Foundation cards build into your stage.
- Any attack that dealt damage may either be placed face down in your momentum, or go to your discard pile.
- Any attack that did not deal damage goes to your discard pile.
- After the active player clears their card pool, all cards in the defending player's card pool go to their discard pile.

After the End Phase, the defending player becomes the active player.

Playing Cards (pg.13-14)

Determine the Difficulty of the Check to play the chosen card.

- Add the number of cards already in the card pool to the printed difficulty of the card.

Make the Check to play the card.

- Place the chosen card into the card pool, then discard the top card of your deck.
- If the Check value of the discarded card is greater than or equal to the Difficulty of the check, the card is successfully played.
- If the Check value of the discarded card is less than the Difficulty of the check, you may commit foundations in your Stage to add +1 to the check for each foundation committed (you may also commit your character to add +1 to the check).
- If you cannot commit enough foundations, or choose not to commit any to pass the check, the check fails and the card you tried to play is placed in the discard pile.

Attack Sequence (pg. 15)

After an attack is played into the card pool, begin the Enhance Step.

Enhance Step (pg.15)

- Starting with the attacking player, players take turns using Enhance abilities on cards in their Stage.
- The attacking player may also use Enhance abilities on the current attack, but not on any previous attacks in the card pool.
- A player may choose not to play an Enhance ability any time they have the opportunity to play one.
- Once both players consecutively choose not to play an Enhance ability (or have no more abilities to play), move to the Block Step.

Block Step (pg. 16)

- The defending player chooses if they will try to block with a card in their hand.
- The defending player places the block in their card pool, determines the block difficulty (pg 19-20), and makes a check to play the block.
- After the block is determined, move to the Damage Step.

Damage step (pg. 17)

- If the attack was not blocked, it deals full damage.
- If the attack was completely blocked, it deals no damage.
- If the attack was partially blocked, it deals half damage, rounded up.

Attack Resolution

- After the Damage Step, the Attack Sequence ends and play returns to the attacking player's Combat Phase.