KotC Card Building Guide

1st Edition

This guide teaches how to design cards for Keeper of the Cards.

When designing a card, you have a great deal of free reign with regard to what that card does. However, resource cost (the number indicated on top of the green circle on the bottom) is strictly defined based on what statistics you assign to your card. As such, your job is to make cards that play well, but are not prohibitively expensive to use.

There are two types of cards: creatures, and spells. Creatures have an offensive power ("offense"), a defensive power ("defense"), and any number of abilities. Offense and defense must be no lower than 0 and no higher than 99. Spells have only a single ability (which may itself be referred to as a "spell").

Constructing Abilities

Abilities are composed of as many as four components:

1. One activation condition (optional)

2. One activation cost (optional)

3. One target selection (optional)

4. One or more effects (required)

These components must be listed on the card in that order. You must choose components from the lists on the following pages only. Within these restrictions, you may design any ability you wish.

Many components have variables, indicated as "[x]", "[y]", or "[z]", in them. You are to choose a number for each of these components, replace "[x]", "[y]", or "[z]" with the chosen number, and replace any "x", "y", and "z" in the component's cost with the same respective numbers. Variable amounts must be positive, non-zero integers. You should also change any plurals referring to a variable to singular if you choose the number "1" for that variable.

If you choose to not give any abilities to a creature, use the text, "This card has no abilities."

Resource Cost

Resource costs are determined mathematically by considering the powers and abilities of the card. Each effect and target selection has a designated cost, and each activation condition and activation cost has a designated relief, listed on the following pages in parentheses after the respective card text.

Effect cost formulas may have the special variable "t" in them. In this case, replace the variable "t" with the calculated cost of the target selection. For example, if your target selection cost is 4 and an effect cost is listed as "3t", the that becomes 3*4, i.e. 12.

To determine the resource cost of a creature, add together the creature's offense, defense divided by 5, and ability cost, then round up to the next integer if it isn't one already. If less than 1, set to 1.

To determine the resource cost of a spell, take the spell's ability cost and round up to the next integer. If less than 1, set to 1.

To determine the total relief of an ability, add the activation cost relief, if any, and the activation condition relief, if any. If greater than 20, set to 20. (The maximum value of 20 is in place to prevent one-turn kill abilities from being viable.)

To determine an ability cost for either a creature or a spell, subtract the total relief from the sum total of all effect costs. If less than 1, set to 1.

Or, to put it in mathematical terms (using Python programming syntax):

- total_relief = min(20, condition_relief + cost_relief)
- ability_cost = max(1, sum(effect_costs) - total_relief)
- creature_cost = max(1, math.ceil(offense + (defense / 5) + sum(ability_costs)))
- spell_cost = max(1, math.ceil(ability_cost))

Creating the Card

Once you have decided the parameters of your card and calculated the resource cost, edit "card.xcf" in the GIMP (or another supporting image editor), and edit the text fields appropriately. Make sure the "Creature Template" layer is visible while the "Spell Template" layer is invisible if designing a creature, or vice-versa if designing a spell. If designing a spell, also make sure to remove the offense and defense numbers from the bottom-left and bottom-right of the card, respectively.

You can paste an image to represent your card into the "Image" layer.

You may modify the look of the card as long as the layout remains the same and all important text (i.e. the ability text, offense, defense, and resource cost) is clearly legible. You may also resize any text if necessary to fit it on the card.

The standard size for cards is 2.5 inches wide and 3.5 inches tall (or 66mm x 91mm). This does not have to be exact as long as sleeves are used that are the same size and opaque when viewed from the back.

Activation Conditions

Activation conditions indicate special conditions under which the spell or ability is to be activated. If a spell or ability has an activation condition, it may only be activated under that condition. Otherwise, it may only be activated during your own action phase. Only one activation condition can be used per ability.

1. "Activate in response to an opponent's summon." (0)

2. "Activate in response to an opponent's attack." (0)

3. "Activate in response to an opponent's card effect." (0)

4. "Activate when this in-play card is destroyed." (2)

5. "Activate when this card as a resource is destroyed." (2)

6. "Activate when this card in your hand is destroyed." (2)

7. "Activate when this card in your deck is destroyed." (2)

8. "Activate when another of your cards in play is destroyed." (1)

9. "Activate when a card in your hand is destroyed." (1)

10. "Activate when a card in your deck is destroyed." (1)

11. "Activate when you take damage." (1)

Activation Costs

Activation costs serve to reduce the resource cost of an ability by "paying" in other ways. Only one activation cost can be used per ability.

1. "Remove [x] counters from this card." (2x)

2. "Pay [x] hitpoints." (x)

3. "Exhaust [x] of your unexhausted cards in play." (2x)

4. "Exhaust [x] of your unexhausted cards in play chosen by an opponent of your choice." (4x)

5. "Sacrifice [x] cards on the top of your deck." (2x)

6. "Sacrifice [x] random cards in your hand." (3x)

7. "Sacrifice [x] cards in play." (4x)

8. "Sacrifice [x] cards in play chosen by an opponent of your choice." (6x)

Target Selections

Target selections are necessary for some effects to work. They serve to designate what cards an effect is used on. Only one target selection can be used per ability.

1. "Target this card." (1/2)

2. "Target up to [x] cards in play." (x)

3. "Target up to [x] cards in play with at least [y] counters." (x/(y+1))

4. "Target up to [x] resources." (x)

5. "Target up to [x] exhausted cards in play." (x/2)

6. "Target up to [x] cards in play selected by an opponent of your choice." (x/2)

7. "Target up to [x] cards in the current chain." (x/2)

8. "Target up to [x] cards in your hand." (x)

9. "Target up to [x] cards in one player's hand randomly." (x)

10. "Target up to [x] cards on the top of one player's deck." (x)

11. "Target up to [x] cards in your graveyard." (x)

12. "Target up to [x] cards in one player's graveyard randomly." (x)

Effects

Effects are the main component of abilities, and at least one is required for any given ability.

1. "Place [x] counters on each target." (2xt)

2. "Remove up to [x] counters from each target." (xt)

3. "Place [x] offense counters on each target. You can remove an offense counter from a card at any time to increase its offense by 1." (4xt)

4. "Place [x] defense counters on each target. You can remove a defense counter from a card at any time to increase its defense by 5." (4xt)

5. "Place [x] weakness counters on each target. You can remove a weakness counter from a card at any time to decrease its offense by 1." (4xt)

6. "Place [x] damage counters on each target. You can remove a damage counter from a card at any time to roll a six-sided die and inflict damage to it equal to the result." (4xt)

7. "See all targets." (2t)

8. "Exhaust all targets." (2t)

9. "Send all targets to the resource zone of their owners (exhausted)." (3t)

10. "Destroy all targets." (8t)

11. "Increase targets' offense by a total of [x]." (x+t)

12. "Increase targets' defense by a total of [x]." (x/5+t)

13. "Decrease targets' offense by a total of [x]." (x+t)

14. "Inflict a total of [x] damage to targets." (x/4+t)

15. "Reveal all targets, then summon or cast any number of targets that are not in play (paying the usual costs)." (3t)

16. "Switch control of each target in-play creature to a different player of your choice until the end of this turn." (4t)

17. "Place all targets on top of owner's deck in any order." (3t)

18. "Draw [x] cards." (4x)

19. "Increase your hitpoints by [x]." (2x)

20. "Inflict [x] damage to any one player." (x/2)

21. "Negate attack of all targets." (5t)

22. "Negate activated effect of all targets." (5t)