

The Newcomer's Guide to

THE WITCHER® WILD HUNT



Second Edition
by Kerry Parsons



Includes the Beginner's
Guide to



Welcome! This guide is intended for newcomers to the Witcher series who wish to dive right into the Witcher 3: Wild Hunt. It does not contain any spoilers and covers only what newcomers should know at the very start of the game...

Important History

☰ The Conjunction of the Spheres



This cataclysmic event of the past is, in brief, an alignment of planets resulting in an inter-dimensional rift. This rift allowed beings from one dimension to pass through to another. Imagine ships passing on a stormy sea, being forced together for a brief, chaotic moment, and the crew of one ship jumps across to the other. This is how monsters, humans, and the magical force of Chaos all arrived on the Continent some 1,500 years ago.

☰ Witchers

After the Conjunction of the Spheres placed monsters in the path of man, early sorcerers decided to create mutated warrior monks with the sole aim of tracking and killing these beasts. Abandoned orphans were subjected to a brutal process of mutation known as the Trial of Grasses, the survivors of which were trained to become superior swordsmen and expert trackers. The Witchers of today are remnants of a number of disbanded Witcher "schools", and are now generally despised as drifters and cat-eyed freaks, scraping out a living as bounty hunters in an unfriendly world besieged by...



The Nilfgaardian Threat



The game takes place against the backdrop of war. Most of the non-human races, such as the elves and the dwarves, have now been persecuted into obscurity and human kingdoms now wage war upon one another instead. Mankind is currently being divided by the third Nilfgaardian conquest of the Northern Realms. Armies of the Empire of Nilfgaard are once again pursuing an expansionist agenda and spreading north. They have been most notably opposed by the kingdoms of Temeria, Kaedwen, Aedirn, and Redania. Only the Redanians have yet to fall, but their defeat is almost certain. The current frontline is the river Pontar in northern Temeria.

Familiar Characters

Geralt of Rivia

Also known as the White Wolf, Geralt is the orphaned son of a sorceress, a rare oddity considering sorceresses are said to be infertile. He is easily identified by his white hair, a side effect of his own particularly brutal ordeal during the Trial of Grasses as a child. Geralt's life has been marked by destiny, manifested in many chance encounters that have dragged this Witcher into larger-than-life events. His fate is bound to that of the sorceress Yennefer, thanks to his last ditch attempt at saving her life, described in the short story, *The Last Wish*. Geralt is also the adoptive father of Ciri, whom he has raised, trained, and cared for as though she were his own daughter. Despite his rough exterior and hard demeanor, this antihero is a big softy with a huge heart.



Ciri



Also called the Lion Cub of Cintra, Cirilla is Geralt's adopted daughter. She was claimed before birth by the Witcher after he invoked the Law of Surprise, a ritual whereby an unborn child is sometimes claimed by a Witcher as a reward for services rendered. Geralt never truly intended on taking her away from her parents, but destiny saw to it that little Ciri ended up in his care anyway, after her parents left her with her grandmother, Queen Calanthe of Cintra, who was subsequently killed by Nilfgaardian soldiers. Ciri, due to her lineage, is the rightful heir to the thrones of both Cintra and Nilfgaard, among various other royal entitlements. The young princess, however, displayed no interest in these titles. Having been raised by Witchers and educated by the sorceress Yennefer, Ciri wished only to become a Witcher and set out on her own path. Unfortunately for her, she also carries the blood of Lara Dorren, an elven sorceress and distant relative. This "Elder Blood" is Ciri's defining characteristic and what makes her arguably the most important character of all, around whose life all others revolve.

Excerpt from the book, *Sword of Destiny*:

"You've finally found me! Oh, Geralt! Just like they said! Now we'll be together, right?
I'm your destiny? Say it! I'm your destiny?"
"You're something more, Ciri. Something more."



Yennefer

Ciri's adoptive mother and Geralt's long time lover, Yennefer of Vengerberg is a powerful and ambitious sorceress. She has been instrumental in helping Ciri control and channel the immense power of the child's Elder Blood. Her fate is bound to that of Geralt due to an event known as the Last Wish. This magical bond formed the basis of their love for one another, but it could be argued that destiny brought them together regardless of the magical component. They share a tempestuous relationship, however, and lead very separate lives. Known for her raven hair, violet eyes, and scent of lilac and gooseberries, Yennefer has aligned herself with...



Emperor Emhyr var Emreis

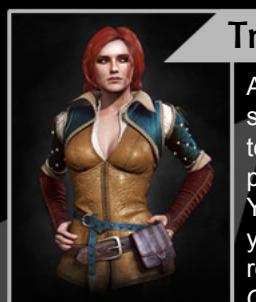


The Emperor of Nilfgaard, with the epithet "The White Flame Dancing Upon the Graves of His Foes", is Ciri's real father. After Geralt freed him of a curse, he promised his child to the Witcher's care in compliance with the Law of Surprise, payment a Witcher may demand in lieu of coin. Geralt never truly cared to uphold this debt and did not intend to take Ciri away from her parents, but destiny saw to it that she ended up in his care anyway. The Emperor now resents the Witcher and barely tolerates his presence. Emhyr does not have a good relationship with his daughter either, especially since he is responsible for sacking Cintra and killing her grandmother, Queen Calanthe. He is also believed to have orchestrated the death of Ciri's mother, though he claims her death came about by accident.



Others

You will meet a great many characters in the game, but only those above should really be known at the start of your adventure. Other notable recurring characters are:



Triss Merigold

A relatively young sorceress and "big sister" to Ciri, Triss has been a part of both Geralt and Yen's lives for many years. She has also been romantically involved with Geralt in the past.



Dandelion

Geralt's best friend. A famous bard and womanizer, Dandelion also narrates much of the Witcher's story during the game, albeit from a much later point in his life.



Vesemir

This Master Witcher is both a father figure in Geralt's life, and the oldest Witcher remaining upon the Continent. He was responsible for Geralt's training at the School of the Wolf.



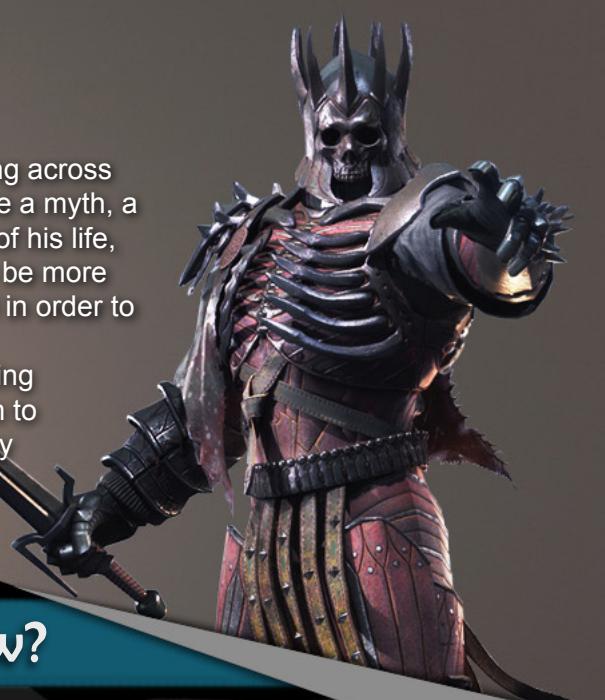
Zoltan

A Dwarven warrior and loyal friend at Geralt's side during many a past adventure. Zoltan is a lover of beer and Gwent, and is never found wanting in support of his friends.

The Wild Hunt

Said to be a battalion of spectral horsemen riding across the sky at night, the Wild Hunt was thought to be a myth, a folk legend. Haunting Geralt's dreams for most of his life, this nightmarish army not only revealed itself to be more than a myth, but also hell-bent on capturing Ciri in order to acquire the power of her Elder Blood.

Geralt and Yennefer spent many years concealing Ciri from the Wild Hunt, until they both fell victim to a violent uprising. They were ultimately saved by Ciri but, in a twist of fate, they both later ended up as captives of the Wild Hunt. It was around this time that Ciri then disappeared. Until now.



So What's Happening Now?

The game opens with Yennefer navigating a battlefield as she makes haste to an unknown location. Ciri, who has been missing for years, has now suddenly reappeared in this world at war. Yennefer has felt her presence and the emperor has given the raven haired sorceress carte blanche to locate the long lost princess. Knowing that Geralt is the best tracker alive, Yennefer has written to him and asked that he meet her in the village of Willoughby. Upon arriving in Willoughby, however, Geralt and Vesemir discovered that the village had been burned to the ground and that Yennefer had fled. The two witches are now tracking her down...

A City and a Gaggle of Sorceresses



Free City of Novigrad



Novigrad as a location does not need a description here, since you'll discover it on your own in the game. This paragraph serves only to clear up any confusion as to whom the city belongs...

Novigrad is a free city-state not unlike the Vatican City in Rome, administered by a religious group known as the Church of the Eternal Fire. It falls within the borders of Redania, but does not fall under the rule of the Redanian King. As the largest city on the Continent, Novigrad is also home to the largest fleet of ships in the world, making it a significant prize for any kingdom able to capture the port. The city's politics are also said to be heavily influenced by an underworld of four rival gangs.

III The Lodge of Sorceresses



Often referred to in the game, "The Lodge" is a secret league of extraordinary sorceresses founded by a particularly powerful sorceress named Phillipa Eilhart. The aim of this sect was for the members to align themselves with powerful rulers, as advisors to emperors, kings and queens, in order that they might vicariously influence the politics of the Continent for the sake of keeping magic relevant.

The Lodge was disbanded some time ago, after certain rulers had begun to feel that these sorceresses had gained too much power of influence, resulting in *all* sorceresses then being forced to flee for their lives. Yennefer is excepted from this general persecution due to her close ties with Emperor Emhyr var Emreis, Ciri's real father and ruler of Nilfgaard.

The Books and Previous Games

You do not need to read the books or play the previous games in order to enjoy the Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, but it is highly recommended that you do so if you wish to gain the most rewarding experience. The Witcher 3 is full of lore and little surprises that make a lot more sense if you're familiar with their significance. It'll also make the more difficult in-game decisions a little easier when you know the background to certain characters etc.

Some people may find the first game a little dated nowadays, in which case it is recommended that you watch an online summary of the story.



Playing Like a Witcher

III Difficulty Level

Many people recommend you play the game on either the "Blood and Broken Bones" or "Death March" level, due to a difficulty falloff once you get your character up to about level 10. You can, however, change the game's difficulty **at any time** during your adventure by accessing OPTIONS/GAMEPLAY from the pause menu. You should note that you are also able to turn on "Enemy Upscaling" in the gameplay menu, allowing enemies to present a greater challenge.

III Witcher Contracts



Witchers make a living by tracking and killing monsters, lifting curses, and solving mysteries. In the Witcher 3 you will have the opportunity to take part in such contracts, and they are all worth your time. Side-quests in this game are often of greater value in terms of storytelling and gameplay than the entire campaigns of many other AAA titles. They usually relate to the main story, and there are thankfully no uninteresting "fetch-quests" to be found.

You can find and activate contracts by viewing notice boards scattered throughout the map. You may also discover new quests, contracts, and treasure hunts by interacting with the people you encounter during your travels.

Potions, Blade Oils, and Bombs

In the Alchemy menu you will be able to brew special potions to enhance Geralt's abilities, blade oils to coat his swords with toxins, as well as grenade-style bombs. You can create and/or upgrade your alchemy items as soon as you have collected the required ingredients. Note that you will only have to create **each item once**. Once created, your alchemy items will be replenished whenever you meditate, so long as you have some form of alcohol in your inventory.



Witcher Signs



Witchers are trained to make use of basic magic, called Witcher Signs, that will allow you to gain an edge in combat, smash through barriers, or even influence the will of people and monsters. Each sign is affected by *Sign Intensity*, which amplifies a sign's power and can be upgraded by various means.

Mutagens and Ability Points

Since being mutated during the Trial of Grasses, Witchers are able to make use of mutagens to enhance their abilities. In the Character menu you are able to upgrade and assign special abilities by spending earned ability points. You will gain these ability points by leveling up your character and drawing from places of power.

You are then able to assign mutagens to further enhance your selected abilities and, in the Blood and Wine expansion, you will also gain the use of *super* mutagens and abilities.

Research and Witcher Senses

Make regular use of the Bestiary to learn the particular weaknesses of monsters. Knowing which blade oils to apply, which signs to cast, and which potions to imbibe can make all the difference in a fight. You may also make use of Geralt's *Witcher Senses*, which will allow you to spot monster tracks, hear monsters before they are able to surprise you, and even spot hidden loot.



Silver and Steel

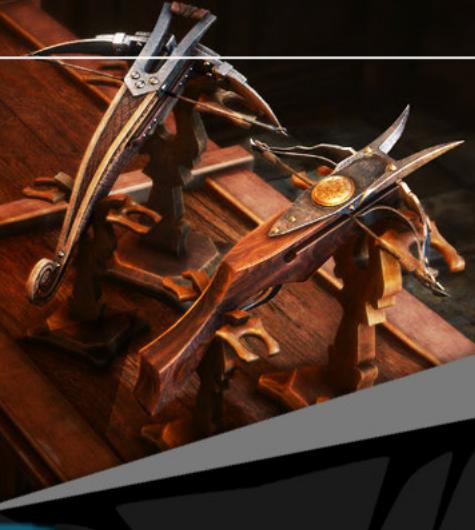
You'll notice that Geralt carries two swords, one made of silver and the other made of steel. Silver is a monster's kryptonite, therefore the silver sword is for fighting monsters and magical beings, while the steel sword is for fighting humans, non-humans (elves and dwarves), as well as wild animals like wolves and bears. According to Geralt, however, "both are for monsters".

Gear Maintenance and Crafting

Your swords and armor will degrade with use. Have them repaired by armorers and blacksmiths, who can also craft any items for which you have acquired the relevant diagrams and crafting materials. You can view which items you are able to have crafted by opening your Crafting menu, but Geralt cannot craft them himself. He can, however, repair his own gear so long as you've collected repair kits, which can be crafted, purchased, or found in-game.

III Crossbows

Equip and fire your crossbow at flying enemies to bring them down within range of your sword strikes. You may also use your crossbow **underwater**, to kill submerged monsters. Make use of **quick-firing** with a simple tap of the Fire button, rather than aiming manually. This will allow Geralt to auto-aim and fire at the enemy far more effectively and rapidly than any manual attempts. This is especially useful when you need to prevent a monster from sinking your boat while you're miles away from the shore!



Gwent and Other Challenges



Arguably one of the best "minigames" ever created, **Gwent** is an experience not to be missed. Take the time to learn how to play this addictive and rewarding card game and you'll be hooked! Also, taking part in Gwent tournaments can lead to a lot more than just a game of cards (wink wink). There is a complete reference for beginner's to the game of Gwent appended to this guide. See page 9 and beyond...

The Witcher 3 also offers other in-game challenges in the form of fist fighting tournaments and horse races. It can be worth your time to partake in these challenges, as they offer valuable rewards and may also lead to some incredible moments that might surprise you!

Additional Details

III Swordplay on Horseback

While riding your horse you may encounter enemies in your path. When this happens you do not need to dismount in order to defend yourself. Simply hold down the Sword Attack button when you're close to the enemy in order to **slow time**, allowing you to strike with precision from horseback.

Your horse's fear level must be mitigated during these encounters in order to prevent her from throwing you off. You can achieve this by casting the **Axii** sign to calm your horse, or equip her with various blinders.

III Points of Interest

While exploring the gameworld you'll discover many dangerous POI's, such as monster nests, person(s) in distress, guarded treasures, and abandoned sites. Tackling these dangers will yield loot, crafting/alchemy ingredients, as well as earning you experience points. Not all POI's are dangerous, however, since there are hidden treasures and places of power that will not necessarily result in combat, but you should always be prepared to fight. Also, once you have destroyed a **monster nest** by blowing it up, you will then be able to *loot* it in addition to the corpses you created in order to gain access to the nest!



Character Movement

Geralt's character animation is very realistic, and some people might find this restrictive for their style of play. You are able to change his movement mode from "Standard" to "Alternative", under the OPTIONS/GAMEPLAY settings from the pause menu. Doing so will make your character more responsive, especially in close quarters.



Character Customization

You cannot customize the physical appearance of your character beyond his hairstyle and beard, and for good reason. Geralt of Rivia is a well-established character in the lore of the Witcher universe, with a set look predefined by the books, comics, and previous games.

You may visit a barber to give Geralt a new hairstyle or change the style of his facial hair. Altering the style of his beard will cause it to stop growing, but simply having him clean shaven or selecting the "*full beard, trimmed short*" option will allow his facial hair to grow again.



You're Not the Chosen One

Where most RPG's place you in the role of the metaphorical *Chosen One*, the lucky center of the universe, you will find that your time in this game will be spent as an ancillary character to someone else's story.

Geralt's decisions in the game certainly do make a difference *if* he chooses to make them, but be aware that many events will take place (for better or worse) without any input from the Witcher, should he opt to ignore them. World events in-game are far bigger than Geralt's exploits and he often has little bearing on their outcome. Witchers are barely liked by anyone and are treated as outcasts and freaks, so don't expect your character to be welcomed as the latest saviour of the world!

Expansions and Free DLC



When to Install/Play the Expansion Packs



The two expansion packs, *Hearts of Stone*, and *Blood and Wine*, are both separate stories that run independently of the main campaign. You should install the packs as soon as possible, due to the expansions adding new merchants, Gwent cards, monsters, and mutagens to the existing game. You will then be able to benefit from these additions before you actually begin the expansion campaigns, which are best experienced *after* the main story has reached its conclusion.

You may also begin these new stories just as soon as you have met the level requirements, if you wish to do so.



16 Free DLC

There are 16 separate DLC options for the Witcher 3 that are available free of charge. They variously add new missions, new gear, a new game mode, and alternate looks for the game's characters etc. All are well worth downloading.

The Beginner's Guide to the game of



Opponent
Skellige

9

10

Geralt
Monsters



This guide is intended for newcomers to the wonderful game of Gwent, an addictive and challenging component to the already stellar *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. If you seek a basic tutorial to get you started, then you've come to the right place!

Let's begin with an important rule when starting out:

To learn how to play Gwent, simply start playing Gwent!

The game is simple enough for newcomers to grasp quite easily. This guide will only be of use to those who prefer an informed approach when starting out, but it is not entirely necessary...

The first half of this guide provides an overview of the various factions and unit cards of Gwent. You do not need to memorize all the details, since they will soon become self-evident.

Part 1: The Basics

Objective

The objective of Gwent is simple: Win 2 out of 3 rounds of a card battle, in which you pitch your deck against that of an opponent. The player whose deployed cards collectively total the highest score at the end of a round wins, and each round is over when both players have chosen to pass their turns or depleted their deck. At the end of each round, all cards on the board are relegated to a Discard pile where they remain until the battle ends (unless they're recalled by a special ability)

Rules

- Each battle begins with a virtual coin toss to decide which player gets to go first.
- You will then be dealt with just 10 random cards from your chosen deck. These are the only cards you will be issued with for the entire battle, but you may use these cards to muster further units from your deck by activating the special abilities of unit and hero cards.
- Before the battle begins, you will have the opportunity to swap out a maximum of 2 of your dealt cards in order to have them exchanged for (random) replacements.
- Both players now take alternate turns deploying cards to the battlefield, until such time as the round is over. The deployed cards are then cleared to their respective Discard piles (also called the "graveyards") and the winner plays the first turn in the next round.

Part 2: Building Your Decks

Factions

There are a total of **four** Gwent factions in the main game, plus an additional fifth faction is available within the *Blood and Wine* expansion, each with a unique bonus/perk:



Monsters

Faction Perk:

Retains a random unit card on the board after each round



Nilfgaardian Empire

Faction Perk:

Wins any round that ends in a draw



Northern Realms

Faction Perk:

Grants an extra card after winning the round



Scoia'tael

Faction Perk:

Decides which player goes first at the start of the battle



Skellige

EXCLUSIVE TO PACK
BLOOD AND WINE

Faction Perk:

Two random cards return from the discard pile in the third round

At the start of the game you will be restricted to the **Northern Realms** faction until such time as you collect enough cards to form alternate decks.

Each faction also favors a particular combat style that will become evident as you play against various opponents.

More on that later...

Leader Cards

The leader of each faction provides unique *Leader Abilities* that you are able to select for your deck. Active abilities are played once per battle, such as the ability to clear any weather cards from the board, while passive abilities, such as one leader cancelling out the effects of another, will remain in effect for the duration of the battle. Each leader is represented by multiple variants of his or her character that you are able to unlock and exploit...



Leader Ability

Double the strength of all your Close Combat units (unless a Commander's Horn is also present on that row)

You are able to acquire new leader cards in just the same manner as all of the available Gwent cards: By winning games of Gwent and buying new cards from innkeepers and merchants.

Hero Cards



Hero Cards are powerful units that are not affected by any adverse effects applied to the board but, on the other hand, they cannot be recalled by Medic cards or claimed by Decoys. Therefore they may be played only once per battle. Hero Cards are **immune** to all effects, negative and positive, as well as any special abilities that might be offered by unit cards. Heroes are typically strong, ranging from scores of 7 to 15 points each or, in the case of a spy variant whose points are assigned to your opponent, a score of just 0.

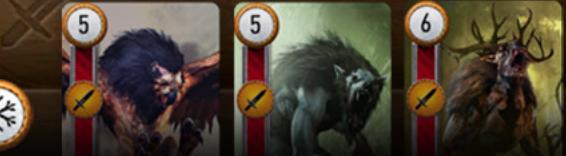
These cards are both rare and relatively expensive.

Unit Cards



Close Combat

Weakness: *Biting Frost*



The Close Combat Units form the frontline of your forces. They will always be placed along the row closest to your opponent's cards. These units are most notably favored by the MONSTERS faction, which utilizes a combat style of mustering a great many units to the fore in order to outnumber and swarm their opponents. Close Combat units are weakened by *Biting Frost* (see Weather Cards).



Ranged Units

Weakness: *Impenetrable Fog*



The Ranged Units form the median line of your forces. They will always be placed along the center row of your side of the board. These units are most notably favored by the SCOIA'TAEL faction, which often utilizes agility cards (see description below) while also mustering additional units to the battlefield. Ranged units are weakened by *Impenetrable Fog*.



Siege Units

Weakness: *Torrential Rain*



The Siege Units bring up the rear of your forces and are placed along the very bottom row of your side of the board. They are most notably favored by the NORTHERN REALMS faction, which also allows similar units to reinforce and multiply the strength of one another. Siege Units are weakened by *Torrential Rain*.

Note: While certain factions favor particular units and combat styles, such tactics are not necessarily exclusive to any particular faction. The Nilfgaardian faction, for example, effectively employs units across all disciplines.

Agile Units

Most often seen among the Scoia'tael faction, Agile cards may be placed upon either the Close Combat or the Ranged row (See the Special Abilities section, up next...)

Special Abilities of Unit Cards

Aside from standard cards, individual units might also present a special ability when deployed to the board. These special abilities are automatically activated when the respective cards are played, and should be taken into account when planning your moves.

Special Ability



MEDIC

Choose 1 card from the discard pile and play it

MORALE BOOST

Adds +1 to all units in the row (excludes self)

SPY

Place on your enemy's board & draw 2 new cards

TIGHT BOND

Adds its base power to every card of the same name in the row (incl. self if others are present)



MUSTER

Draws all cards with the same name from the deck



COMMANDER'S HORN

Doubles the strength of all units in that row



AGILE

Can be placed in either the Close Combat or Ranged row



SCORCH

Destroys the enemy's strongest units on a certain row, if total strength of the row is 10 or more

Note: The Scorch unit ability is easily confused with the Scorch Special Card, but each follows slightly different rules...

Weather Cards

Weather cards are used to reduce non-hero unit cards to a score of 1 point each across an entire row.

Warning: Affects both your opponent's cards as well as your own!



Biting Frost
Affects only
Close Combat
units



**Impenetrable
Fog**
Affects only
Ranged
units



Torrential Rain
Affects only
Siege
units



Clear Weather
Clears **ALL**
weather effects
from the board

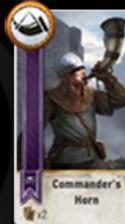
Special Cards

These cards are not to be confused with the special abilities of *unit* cards. You can play special cards to any row in order to gain an edge, but remember that *Hero* cards will not be affected.



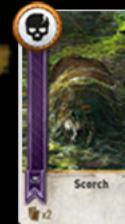
Decoy

Swap with a card
on the battlefield to
return the selected
card to your lineup.



Commander's Horn

Doubles the strength
of all units in a row.
Limited to 1 per row.



Scorch

Destroys all cards on
the board that share
the highest score.
Can affect *both* sides!

Additional Cards (DLC)

Certain cards are only made available via the game's two expansion packs. These cards, once acquired, are playable across all regions. You'll only find opponents using the Skellige deck in Toussaint, however.

Bovine Defense Force

EXPANSION PACK
HEARTS OF STONE

The Cow unit is a neutral card that takes advantage of the rare **Summon Avenger** ability. When played, this card will summon the **Bovine Defense Force** unit at the end of the round. The Cow card is found in a location unlocked by the Hearts of Stone DLC.



The Skellige Faction

EXPANSION PACK
BLOOD AND WINE

This powerful faction makes use of a number of units and special cards that are unique to the Skellige deck:

Unique Unit Abilities:



MARDROEME

Triggers transformation of
Berserker cards in the row



BERSERKER

Transforms into a bear if
Mardroeme is activated



SUMMON AVENGER

Summons a powerful replacement
unit when removed from the board
(Also available with the neutral
Bovine Defense Force unit)



Unique Special Cards



Mardroeme

Same effect as the Mardroeme
unit ability, but in the form of a
special card. Transforms all
Berserker cards of the same
row into bears.



Skellige Storm

This weather card reduces the
strength of both Ranged *and*
Siege units, down to a value
of 1 across both rows.



Skellige Combat Style

Musters additional units, takes advantage of Tight Bond, and incorporates unique abilities.
Advise building a medium sized deck made up of only ability-appropriate units.

Building Your Decks

Collect cards throughout the gameworld by purchasing them from innkeepers and various merchants, as well as by winning games against NPC opponents. You can access your Gwent decks from the pause menu in-game. Here you are able to view your card collection, assign your leader card(s), and build the decks for each separate faction. You will need to update your decks constantly during the game, as you acquire new cards. You will also have the chance to update your decks at the start of every battle.



A screenshot of the Gwent Deck builder interface. At the top, it says "Current Faction: Northern Realms". Below that are sections for "Collected Cards", "Leader Card" (showing "Felina, Lord Commander of the North"), and "Playable Deck". The "Collected Cards" section shows cards like Decoy, Commander's Horn, Search, Biting Frost, Impenetrable Fog, and Torrential Rain. The "Leader Card" section shows Felina with stats: Total cards in deck 26, Number of Unit Cards 22, Special Cards 4/10, Total Unit Card Strength 150, Hero Cards 9. The "Playable Deck" section shows a subset of these cards: Decoy, Commander's Horn, Search, Biting Frost, Geralt of Rivia, and Cirilla Fiona Elen Riannon. A "Unit Card Counter" box highlights the number 22. Other UI elements include "Cards in Deck ALL CARDS", "Change leaders", "Add a card", and "Zoom".

It is up to you to manage your factions and assign any cards you collect to your playable decks. In order to play a faction in battle, you will need to build a deck comprised of a minimum of **22** units. Some cards that stack do not count towards this number, however. Simply keep an eye on the displayed unit card counter when assigning cards to your deck, because a deck of 22 or more cards *in total* may not necessarily amount to the required minimum of **22 unit cards**.

Combat Style Matters

You will need to think about each faction's combat style when building your decks. Since only 10 cards will be selected from your deck at random before every battle, the total number of cards your warriors are drawn from must be taken into account. If you have a large deck made up of both weaker and stronger cards, for example, your odds of drawing strong cards is lower than if you had a tighter deck made up of only strong cards. But if you're playing with a faction that musters additional cards from your deck during battle, then you'll want your deck to be made up of as many available units as possible.



MONSTERS

Musters additional units during battle. Advise a large deck comprised of units with Muster ability.



NILFGAARDIAN EMPIRE

Utilizes strong units across all rows, as well as Spy cards. A small but strong deck is advised.



NORTHERN REALMS

Relyes on Tight Bond ability as well as stronger units and Spy cards. Advise a small, strong deck.

SCOIA'TAEL

Musters additional units and also utilizes Agile ability. Advise a large, ability-appropriate deck.

Part 3: Playing Gwent

The Battlefield

An overview of the board:



Example Round

In the following example Geralt is playing the NORTHERN REALMS faction, while his opponent has chosen to play MONSTERS. The opponent has won the first round and therefore plays first in this, the second round. The MONSTERS faction perk has retained a random card on the board from the first round. Let's see how the second round plays out:

1

Opponent's faction perk ensures that a random card remains on the board...



The battle continues on the following page...

2

Opponent opens the round by playing a card with Muster ability. Additional units swarm the board.



3

Geralt counters with a unit card's Scorch ability. Opponent's top scoring card is destroyed.



4

Opponent is ahead on points and passes. Geralt plays the Decoy card to retrieve the Scorch unit.



5

Geralt replays his Scorch unit and destroys the bulk of the opponent's remaining forces.



6

Geralt wins, having played just three moves and with only two cards deployed to the board.



Think Strategically

Gwent incorporates elements of strategy that you should think about when deploying cards to the battlefield. Foresight when deciding the order in which to play your cards can make all the difference, and it is entirely possible to defeat a much stronger opponent by simply thinking ahead. There are many such strategies you will discover on your own, but here are just a few simple examples:

- **Forfeiting the First Round (or Not)**

It always makes sense to move into the next round with more cards in hand than your opponent, therefore forfeiting the first round is a valid (optional) strategy. This will only be viable, however, so long as you first make your opponent spend a card or two more than you have done. One way to do this is to keep a Medic card in reserve (if you have one) and play a strong unit card to the board. This will force your opponent to play one or two cards in order to gain the upper hand. Once they have done so, forfeit the first round and then, at the start of the second, play the Medic card to reclaim your strong unit from the Discard pile. **HOWEVER...** it sometimes makes sense to attempt a win on the first round IF you can do so without losing too many cards, because this will allow you to go all out on the second round in order to avoid playing a third. This makes sense against the Skellige deck, which always revives two dead cards from the discard pile in the third round.



Medical Emergency

If you have both a Medic unit and a Decoy card, you can effectively revive 2 cards from your discard pile over three moves, plus incorporate the points of your Medic card itself: Play a Medic to revive a “dead” card, then reclaim your Medic with the Decoy, then play the Medic again to recover another “dead” card. You may also use a Medic to revive another Medic, then use that second Medic to revive yet another card from the discard pile, all in one turn!



Grabbing Spies

You don't need to have been dealt any Spy cards to your hand in order to acquire Spies during a battle. If your opponent plays a Spy card against you, it is placed on your side of the board. Simply grab it with a Decoy card or, if you don't have a Decoy to hand, use a Medic card to revive the Spy from your discard pile in the next round, and then play it back against your opponent!



Watch the Weather

A well-played Weather card can really ruin your day, so keep an eye on which row your opponent is building his units on. If, for example, your opponent is playing a lot of Close Combat cards, they are far less likely to play a Weather card on that row and negatively affect their own troops (although it has been known to happen), so there's a good chance that playing your own Close Combat units will not result in them being hit with bad weather. Also, do not play your weather cards too soon. If you see your enemy building up units on the Ranged Combat row, for instance, and you happen to have an Impenetrable Fog card, don't play it until the end of the round, by which time your opponent should have played any Clear Weather cards or abilities they might possess. And if you intend to clear any weather effects yourself, obviously do so before you play your own Weather cards against the enemy.



Hold Fire!

If you're dealt a Scorch special card to your hand, don't play it too early. Since it destroys the strongest cards of equal strength on both sides of the board, play your weaker units first and wait until your enemy plays their most powerful non-hero cards before using the Scorch ability. Your opponent might lay down a level 8 siege unit with the Tight Bond ability, for example. So wait to see if they intend on deploying a second identical unit to take advantage of the Tight Bond, and only then hit them with your Scorch!



Other

Difficulty Level

You will very quickly become unbeatable once you're familiar with the cards and strategies of Gwent, so raising the difficulty level will likely be necessary in order to keep the game challenging. You can alter the difficulty level from the pause menu: OPTIONS/ GAMEPLAY/ Gwent Difficulty

Alternate Look DLC

There is a free DLC called “Ballad Heroes” available, which will allow you to alter the appearance of some of your Gwent cards.