# Secret Histories rulebook

In Secret Histories game players attempt to fulfill their desire to gain immortality and ascend to become one of the Long. There are many paths to shedding or transforming one’s physical form but ultimately the Hours that dwell in Mansus will only allow one player to bask in the illumination of The Glory.

Player will spend their turns trying to obtain and upgrade *Lore*, *Influence* and *Ingredient* cards. While they are seeking immortality, wordily affairs still impact them and they must earn a living or face starvation.They will also have to avoid or mitigate effects of *Ill Effects* and Seasonal cards. Growing more powerful and resilient through *Ability* and *Skill* cards is inevitable part of the progression*.* And there is never enough time to do all that needs to be done.

Players indirectly compete for the attention of the Hours. Therefore, they must keep the obtained occult knowledge close to their chest and carefully choose the right moment to dedicate themselves to a path to ascension.

Once a player progresses through their chosen ascension path, only the final ritual is separating them from their victory. That, or another disciple performing the ritual themselves.

## Game components

679 cards, 60 time tokens, 24 player-colored tokens, 50 money tokens and 1 first player token.

## Board setup

* Create a face down deck somewhere near the center of the play area for the *Season* cards, except for the **Season of Chill** and shuffle it. Place the **Season of Chill** below the deck, face up. Reveal to the top card of the deck and keep it face up on top of the deck.
* Place **Time Passes** card next to the **Season of Chill** card.
* Place **Temptation: Power**, **Temptation: Sensation** and **Temptation: Enlightenment** above the season deck.
* Create a sorted face down pile for all of the *Dedication* and *Ascension* cards.
* Create a sorted pile from all of the *Ill Effect* cards and relevant cards: **An Affliction**, **Dread**, **Contentment** and **Bleak Thoughts**.
* Create piles for following *Influence* cards **Glimmering** + **Fervor**, **Vitality** + **Fortitude** and **Wisdom** + **Erudition**.
* Create a pile for *reputation* cards: **Mystique** and **Notoriety**.
* Create piles for the following *Ingredient* cards: **Health**, **Reason**, **Passion**.
* Create a sorted pile for following cards: **Robust Strength**, **Unyielding Training**, **Unyielding Strength**.
* Create a sorted pile for following cards: **Vivid Imagination**, **Envisage the concept**, **Fevered Imagination, Creative Mastery**.
* Create a sorted pile for following cards: **Scholarship, Cerebral problem, Sage Scholarship**.
* Create a face down deck for the *Patron* cards, except for **Sulochana Amavasya** and shuffle the deck. Place **Sulochana Amavasya** at the bottom of this deck so that she is always drawn last**.**
* Create a sorted pile for all of the *Lore* cards.
* Create a pile with the *Masterpiece* cards together with **Wildering Mirror**.
* Create a face down deck for *Morland's Shop* cards and shuffle it.
* Create a sorted pile with all of the *Spintria* cards.
* Create a face down deck for *Oriflamme's Auction House* cards, except for the cards with *Ingredient* aspect, and shuffle it. Cut the deck and shuffle the withheld ingredients cards to the bottom half of the deck. Place the whole deck somewhere to the side, it will become active once *Morland's Shop* is empty*.*
* Create a deck from *Commission* cards, except for *Substantial Commissions* cards, and shuffle it. Cut the deck and shuffle the substantial commissions into the bottom half of the deck.
* Create a face down pile with all of the *Cult* cards.
* Create a face down *Hours* deck and shuffle it. Hours will be used often for other card effects so they should be easy to reach for at least one player.
* Create a sorted pile for **Way: The White Door**, **Stag riddle** and **Way: The Stag Door** cards.
* Create a sorted pile for **Glover&Glover** and **Senior at Glover&Glover** cards.
* Create a face down deck for the *Robbery* cardsand shuffle it.
* Create a face down pile with all of the remaining influences.
* Whichever player read a book most recently gets the first player token

## Player setup

* Take 10 funds
* Take 1 **Reason**, **Passion** and **Health** card
* Take 1 **Unskilled Labor, Robust Training, Creativity, Find an inspiration, Elementary Insight**, **Intellectual Problem, Difficulty at Work** and **Your “Mr Alden”** card
* Take 1 **White riddle** and **Way: The Wood** card
* Draw 3 cards from *Morland's Shop* deck. You can mulligan once all of these 3 cards; draw 3 new ones.
* Take 1 action tracker and 1 study guide helper cards

## Playing the game

### Goal

Ascension to immortality requires an occult ritual using cards with the following *Aspects*:

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| **Lore** | **Influence** | **Ingredient** |
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You can use only one and only one *Lore* card for the ritual, up to two *Ingredient* cards and up to two *Influence* cards. Lore card represents occult incantations you will be reading. Up to two ingredients will be strategically placed around the ritual room. During the ritual, your mind can channel up to two influences.

There are three paths available to ascension: *Power*, *Sensation* and *Enlightenment*. Multiple players can compete for the same path but there is limited number of resources for each path. Once a player dedicates themselves to a path, it cannot be changed.

Cards have one or more associated *Principle,* usually together with a strength as a numeric value:

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| **Heart** | **Grail** | **Moth** | **Lantern** | **Forge** | **Edge** | **Winter** | **Knock** |
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Note that only *Lore* cards come with all of the above principles. *Ingredients* cards and *Influence* cards are limited to the *Lantern,* Grail or *Forge.*

*Enlightenment* path seeks sufficiently strong *Lantern* lore, influences and ingredients to gain ultimate knowledge and immortality.

*Sensation* path seeks sufficiently strong Grail lore, influences and ingredients to discover new pleasures and evolve your body to achieve immortality

Power path seeks sufficiently strong *Forge* lore, influences and ingredients to gain true power and immortality.

Player progress through the chosen path’s *Temptation*, *Dedication* and finally *Ascension* cards. Once a player has an *Ascension* card and performs the prescribed action on it, they instantly win the game.

### Rounds

The game is played in rounds which continue until one of the players perform ascension ritual.

#### Beginning of round

At the beginning of the round the following events happen:

* New *Patron* is draw from the patrons’ deck. Then from the commissions deck, cards are drawn until a *Commission* with a *Principle* that the patron gives is found. The commission is placed under the patron face up. The other drawn commissions, that did not match the principle, are placed in a dedicated commission discard pile. If commission deck is empty, commission discard pile is shuffled and it creates a new commission deck. **Sulochana Amavasya** does not give any commissions and stays on the board for the rest of the game. If the patrons’ deck is empty, nothing happens.
* New *Cult* is revealed. If there are no more cults to reveal, skip this step.
* Each player can spend 1 fund, once, to draw a card from the *Morland's Shop* deck. Player with first player token starts, continuing clockwise. This does not count as an action. Once the last card is bought this way from the *Morland's Shop* deck, this event becomes inactive. Retrieve the *Oriflamme's Auction House* deck and place in the same place. It will become active next round so skip the following event.
* Assuming *Oriflamme's Auction House* deck is active, reveal a card from it. A public auction for this card is now open. Players can either place increasing bids or pass. Once they pass, they can no longer bid. The bids or passes start from the player with the first player token. The opening bid must be at least 1 fund. The last player to stay in the auction obtains the card. If all players passed immediately, discard the card.

During each round, players take turns in the clockwise order starting from the player with the first player token**. Each player will take 3 turns**. If a player does not want to take an action, they can forfeit their turn and the following player takes their turn. During their turn, a player can perform exactly one action. There are 4 types of actions:

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| **Dream** | **Study** | **Work** | **Talk** |
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The action type is displayed next to a verb in the card description and also in the top right corner of the card. Each action in a round must be of a unique type. For example, player can spend their turn playing a *Dream* action, *Work* action and *Talk* action. They could not perform *Study* action because they are out of turns. They also could not perform two *Talk* actions in the same round.

There is also an option of **double-action round** where player can perform two actions of the same type at the cost of their third action. For example, after player studies a book, for their second action they can declare double study round and they can perform another *Study* action as their final action of the round.

#### End of round

At the end of the round following actions take place:

* The effect of the current *Season* card is evaluated. Place it in the dedicated season discard pile. Then the face up card on the season deck is placed below the deck and it will be the next round’s seasonal effect. Finally, reveal the next season card from the deck and put it face up on top of the deck. This card will be the future round seasonal effect. If the season deck is empty, shuffle season discard pile and it becomes the new season deck.
* The effect of **Time Passes** card is evaluated
* Players remove one *Time* token from each of their temporary card. If it was the last Time token on the card, it is discarded. If the discarded card says that it *decays* to another card, player must obtain that card and load it up with time tokens indicated by *Temporary* aspect.
* All tapped cards are un-tapped
* First player token passes clockwise to the next player

At any point during their turn, players can **sell cards with *Auction* aspect** to gain the amount of funds specified on the right of the aspect. This does not count as an action.

## Aspects

Cards usually have aspects that signify how are they are used.

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| **Auction** |  | These cards can be sold to *Oriflamme's Auction House.* Sometimes for a hefty profit. Placed them at the bottom of the *Oriflamme's Auction House* deck. |
| **Book** |  | Books are valuable commodities that can be studied to obtain occult Lore. |
| **Cult** |  | Cults are secret societies offering services to players for funds. If you are sufficiently knowledgeable their service might be free. |
| **Ill Effect** |  | The card will spell trouble down the line when the matching Season comes. Try to get rid of it. |
| **Influence** |  | One of the necessary components for performing game ending ritual. The strength and *Principle* matters. All *Influences* are temporary in nature. |
| **Ingredient** |  | One of the necessary components for performing game ending ritual. The strength and *Principle* matters. |
| **Lore** |  | One of the necessary components for performing game ending ritual. The strength and *Principle* matters. |
| **Patron** |  | *Patrons* are helpful individuals who usually offer commissions for studying occult lore for various rewards. |
| **Pigment** |  | Special type of *Ingredient* that can be used to create a masterpiece with sufficient Imagination skill. |
| **Season** |  | *Season* cards are result of natural passage of time. They usually spell misfortune. If they have strength 1, they come and go with each round. |
| **Temporary** |  | The card starts with a certain amount of Time tokens and loses one at the end of each round. When all Time tokens are gone, the card decays to another card or nothingness. |
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## Decks

Some cards are organized to specific decks. The decks are usually face down and cards are drawn from them through various actions.

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| **Robbery** |  | Robbery deck cards are obtained from certain *Cults* actions. |
| **Bookstore** |  | This card is from *Morland's Shop* deck. Player can pay 1 fund to obtain one such card each round before the Morland’s shop runs out of stock. |
| **Auction House** |  | This card is from *Oriflamme's Auction House* deck. The auction house deck becomes active once *Morland's Shop* deck is exhausted. These cards are auctioned among players. |
| **Commission** |  | Commissions are given by Patrons and can be worked on to provide ingredient rewards. |
| **Hours** |  | Other cards use *Hours* deck for randomness. |

## Clarifications

Whenever a player obtains a card with *Temporary* aspect, they place it face up in their board area and immediately load it up with Time tokens equal to number specified to the right of the aspect. The card will lose one time token at the end of the current round and every round after that. Temporary cards are always visible to all players.

If a player cannot perform the first step of a card effect, they move to the “if you cannot” effect. For example, when evaluating **Time passes** card, player must pay 1 funds. If they don’t have any funds, they must perform the next effect.

Tapped cards are exhausted and cannot be used this round for other actions. For example, **Reason** used for **Glover&Glover** cannot then be used to dream up a **Wisdom**. Note that tapped cards still count as “the card” for the sake of negative effects or discard effects. For example, you can convert tapped **Health** to **An Affliction** due to **Season of Sickness**.

If player does not meet all conditions of the first effect of an action card, they cannot perform the action. For example, player that does not have appropriate 2+ *Lore*, cannot work on a commission. In the same vein, if they don’t have untapped **Reason,** they cannot work on a commission either.

If a card says you must reveal or show another card, the revealed card is clearly shown to every player and returned to hand. These cards follow all other relevant rules.

Cards with *draw from Hours deck* usually use “exclusive” rule, noted by vertical bars (|) in their effect. This means you need to match principles between the drawn Hour card and the triggering card left to right. If any principle is matching, you must stop immediately and obtain the card next to the matching principle. Sometimes these cards have a final card without any principle before it which means you get that card if none of the previous principles matched.

Painting *Skill* cards use sequential rewards system, noted by 1), 2), 3), 4) and -> symbols. Every time player uses the *Skill* card, they gain the next reward in sequence starting from 1). Once they gain the last reward, the next action will give them 1) reward. The rewards are tied to the specific card and each player. You can use time tracking tokens to mark the last reward.

Decks, whose cards are moved to dedicated discard pile, are always refreshed from the discard pile at the moment a card needs to be drawn from the deck but there is none. *Hours* deck is one such deck.

## Tips and Tricks

* Use the action tracker card and player-colored tokens to help you tracking actions which you have taken during the round
* Before the first game make sure everyone is familiar with how ascension work. Unless you prefer a lot of mystery, the group should go through all *Temptation*, *Dedication* and *Ascension* cards carefully.
* Each path to ascension has strengths and weakness. *Forge* provides a balanced path to ascension. It has a slight advantage with *Ingredients* acquisition and more powerful Bronze Spintria. Its progression also has the least amount of *Ill Effects*. *Lantern* knowledge is bountiful. Two principles subvert to Lantern and there is high amount of books in *Morland's Shop* and *Oriflamme's Auction House*. But it suffers the most from *Ill Effects* and does not get any *Influences* from jobs. Grail is unique in having a lower threshold for ascension. It should also have the easiest time obtaining *Influences*.
* Choosing a path to ascension requires careful consideration and working without perfect information. However, here are some tips for what to choose. If you can snatch a powerful *Ingredient* from Oriflamme's Auction House, you should seriously consider the related path. Getting a pigment *Ingredient* and having time to master Painting skill guarantees powerful *Ingredient*. On the other hand, choosing a path without having matching lore of strength 2 or 4 is not recommended. Strength skills naturally produce bountiful of Grail *Influences*. Likewise, painting skills are good source of *Influences* for Forge. Finally, Lantern-curious occultists should look out for **Cracked Mirror** in *Morland's Shop.*
* When to dedicate yourself to a path is a pivotal moment. Do it too early, before having enough book options, and you might struggle improving your *Lores* to game ending strength. Do it too late and you might get locked out of victory due to the timing of **Season of Ambition**. Consider dedicating yourself very soon after the first player also dedicates themselves; or when **the Season of Ambitions** comes and you have enough *Ingredients* to jump straight to Ascension.
* *Influences* gained dreaming are short-lived. Obtaining the needed *Influence* for the ascension, and more importantly keeping it, can cost a lot of actions. Therefore, *Influences* should be the last piece of the puzzle you pursue.