

Archon is a combination action/strategy game upon its release in 1983, *the game was released for the Apple II and Atari 800 computers.*

The goal of this document is to detail all the rules of the game with the goal of recreating the game using an AI coding assistant.

The game will be coded

- It should run in a browser
- Use vanilla JavaScript (ES6) + HTML5 Canvas.
- Use the Web Gamepad API for joystick input.
- No frameworks, no server, no build step.
- Everything must run in a browser via a static HTML file.

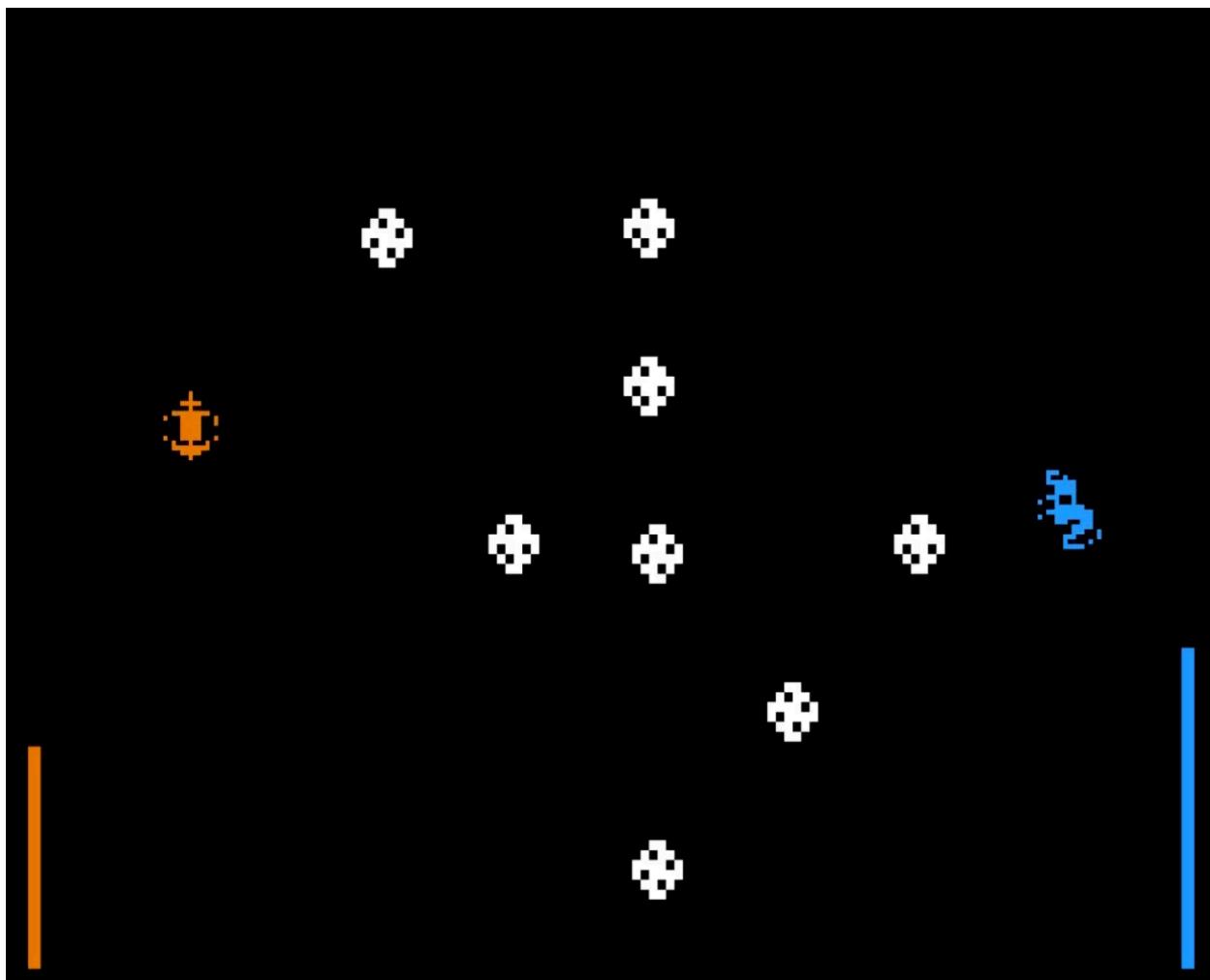
I will walk you step by step through building the game and provide image assets



Overview / Rules

Archon is a war between the Light and the Dark: two armies of creature and persons of myth and legend, called by the game “Icons”. Each side begins with a force of 18 icons, with 8 different types per side. The Light and the Dark do not share any types, yet the teams are very evenly matched.

The armies alternate turns, maneuvering for position on a chessboard-like **Strategy Screen**. On a single turn either one spell may be cast, or one icon moved. Turns may not be passed. Whenever an icon is moved to a square already occupied by an opposing piece, a battle ensues on the **Combat Screen**, where each different type of piece has its own hit points, attack damage, and so on, detailed below. The winning icon keeps the square, while the loser is eliminated from the game. It is possible for both icons to be destroyed in the battle, in which case both are eliminated.



Each side aims to occupy the five ‘Power Points’ on the board or to completely eliminate the opposition. Victory can also be achieved by casting the Imprison spell on the opponent’s last remaining icon. The game can end in stalemate as well in either of two ways: the last two icons destroy each other in battle, or there is no progress for a certain number of turns. (‘Progress’ here means battles or Spells cast, and the number of turns is at least one full cycle of color-change (12 turns per side) but depends on the number of pieces left and has been difficult to determine in some cases.) Games usually last between 50 and 100 turns per side if the players are well-matched.

Power Point Icon



Configuration Screen

Once the game loads past the Splash Screen the player is able to configure the game using these options. Text on screen

ARCHON GAME OPTIONS

POINT AT OPTION WITH HAND, PRESS BUTTON

PLAYING OPTIONS:

ONE PLAYER, COMPUTER LIGHT
ONE PLATER, COMPUTER DARK
TWO PLAYERS, TWO JOYSTICKS
TWO PLAYERS, DARK ON KEYBOARD
TWO PLAYERS, LIGHT ON KEYBOARD

SOUND CONTROL:

SOUND ON
SOUND OFF

ORDER

LIGHT FIRST

DARK FIRST

KEYBOARD:

FIRE: F

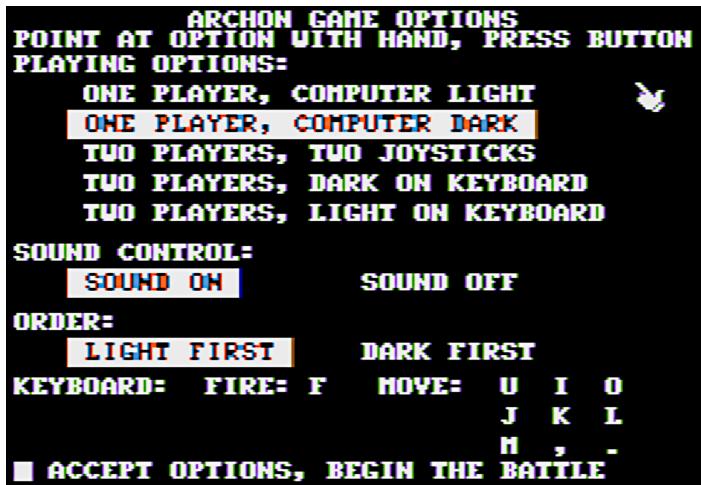
MOVE:

QWE

ASD

ZXC

ACCEPT OPTION, BEGIN THE BATTLE



NOTE: modified the keyboard commands for modern keyboard movement

Joystick

The javascript controls should make use of the standard Gamepad API and support both XBox and Playstation controllers.

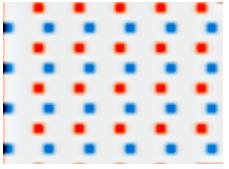
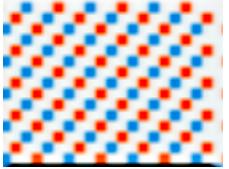


The Game Board

The strategic side of *Archon* takes place on a 9×9 grid of squares of three types: perma-light, perma-dark, and the ones that cycle through those two colors plus four more intermediate shades of gray. This is also called the Strategy Screen. The cycle repeats, progressing from lightest to darkest and back again, with one turn for each player at each color.

Colors of the Squares

Color Code	Hex Color for Web	RGB Color	Gray Scale Equivalent	Image from Apple II version
A	Pure White	(255, 255, 255)	#FFFFFF	All white

B	Very Light	(204, 204, 204)	#CCCCCC	
C	Light	(153, 153, 153)	#999999	
D	Medium	(102, 102, 102)	#666666	
E	Dark	(51, 51, 51)	#333333	
F	Pure Black	(0, 0, 0)	#000000	All Black

The six colors 'A' through 'F', with 'A' being the lightest. The color of the square affects the hit points (more about that later) of both fighting icons when a battle takes place there, with the Light Side benefiting from lighter squares and the Dark Side from darker.

When the Light Side moves first to open a game, the changing squares will begin at 'D' and proceed darker, changing after each turn of the Dark Side. When Dark moves first, the changing squares begin at 'C' and initially grow lighter. Moving first, therefore, has the disadvantage of quickly exposing your icons that begin on the changing squares.

Colors oscillate back and forth from A to F, they do not reset from F to A.

At the edges and center of the game board are the five blinking "Power Points" one on a perma-light square where the Wizard starts, one on a perma-dark that the Sorceress controls, and three on

squares that change color. Often, the entire game revolves around the battle for the three in the middle. Each of the five Power Points protects its square, as well as any icon on it, from being the target of a Spell. They also have healing properties (see the Hit Points and Damage section). Capturing all five wins the game.

Icon Selection

Dark and Light alternate turns. When it is the player's turn a orange (light) or blue (dark) box allows them to highlight a specific square. If they highlight the Sorceress icon (dark) or Wizard icon (Light) and press the button they can cast spells. When their turn starts the highlight box appears off the playing field to the left for light or dark to the right.

If they highlight any other icon and press the button they can move that character designated distance.

Strategy Screen

The Strategy Screen is the chessboard where the game starts. It is a 9x9 grid with the name "ARCHON" written across the top of the screen. The board layout is defined below as text and as an image. Use this grid naming convention to identify the squares.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	I1
2	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2	H2	I2
3	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3	G3	H3	I3
4	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4	H4	I4
5	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5	F5	G5	H5	I5
6	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6	F6	G6	H6	I6
7	A7	B7	C7	D7	E7	F7	G7	H7	I7
8	A8	B8	C8	D8	E8	F8	G8	H8	I8
9	A9	B9	C9	D9	E9	F9	G9	H9	I9

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	I1
2	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2	H2	I2
3	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3	G3	H3	I3
4	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4	H4	I4
5	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5	F5	G5	H5	I5
6	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6	F6	G6	H6	I6
7	A7	B7	C7	D7	E7	F7	G7	H7	I7
8	A8	B8	C8	D8	E8	F8	G8	H8	I8
9	A9	B9	C9	D9	E9	F9	G9	H9	I9

When the screen first loads the colors of the squares are defined as follows

The initial colors for each square are as follows when Dark is the Player



Square on Grid	Color of Square at Start of Game (Light First)	Color of Square at Start of Game (Dark First)	Does the Square Rotate Colors	Icon - Starts on this square	Is the Square a Power Point?
A1	F		No	Valyrie	No
B1	A		No	Archer	No

C1	F		No		No
D1	D		Yes		No
E1	D		Yes		Yes
F1	D		Yes		No
G1	A		No		No
H1	F		No	Manticore	No
I1	A		No	Banshee	No
A2	A		No	Golem	No
B2	F		No	Knight	No
C2	D		Yes		No
D2	A		No		No
E2	D		Yes		No

F2	D		No		No
G2	D		Yes		No
H2	A		No	Goblin	No
I2	F		No	Troll	No
A3	F		No	Unicorn	No
B3	D		Yes	Knight	No
C3	A		No		No
D3	F		No		No
E3	D		Yes		No
F3	A		No		No
G3	F		No		No
H3	D		Yes	Goblin	No
I3	A		No	Basilisk	No

A4	D		Yes	Djinn	
B4	A		No	Knight	
C4	F		No		
D4	A		No		
E4	D		Yes		
F4	F		No		
G4	A		No		
H4	F		Yes	Goblin	
I4	D		Yes	Shape Shifter	
A5	A		No	Wizard	Yes
B5	D		Yes	Knight	
C5	D		Yes		
D5	D		Yes		

E5	D		Yes		
F5	D		Yes		
G5	D		Yes		
H5	D		Yes	Goblin	
I5	F		No	Sorceress	Yes
A6	D		Yes	Phoenix	
B6	A		No	Knight	
C6	F		No		
D6	A		No		
E6	D		Yes		
F6	F		No		
G6	A		No		
H6	D		Yes	Goblin	

I6	D		Yes	Dragon	
A7	F		No	Unicorn	
B7	D		Yes	Knight	
C7	A		No		
D7	F		No		
E7	D		Yes		
F7	A		No		
G7	F		No		
H7	D		Yes	Goblin	
I7	A		No	Basilisk	
A8	A		No	Golem	
B8	F		No	Knight	
C8	D		Yes		

D8	A		No		
E8	D		Yes		
F8	F		No		
G8	D		Yes		
H8	A		No	Goblin	
I8	F		No	Troll	
A9	F		No	Valkyrie	
B9	A		No	Archer	
C9	F		No		
D9	D		Yes		
E9	D		Yes		Yes
F9	D		Yes		
G9	A		No		

H9	F		No	Manticore	
I9	A		No	Banshee	

<Define how the colors impact the strength of light and dark characters>

Splash Screen



Overall AI for the game

(For Implementation by an AI Coding Assistant)

Core AI Design Intent (Read First)

The AI in Archon is **not intelligent in the modern sense**.

It is:

- shallow
- aggressive
- heuristic-driven
- intentionally imperfect

The AI **must not**:

- perform search or look-ahead
- use minimax or tree evaluation
- learn from prior turns
- optimize long-term outcomes

The game's *systems* (alignment drift, forced combat, asymmetric units) create strategy.

The AI's job is simply to **apply pressure**.

The AI is split into **two independent systems**:

1. Strategy Screen AI (turn-based)
2. Combat Screen AI (real-time)

These systems **do not share logic** beyond basic unit stats.

Strategy Screen AI

(Turn-Based Board-Level Decisions)

Responsibility

The Strategy Screen AI decides:

- which unit to move
- where to move it
- whether to initiate combat

It evaluates **only the current turn**.

It does not plan future turns or sequences.

Inputs

- Current strategy screen board state
- All unit positions and types
- Tile alignment values (Light ↔ Neutral ↔ Dark)
- Current side to move (Light or Dark)

Output

A single action:

- { unitId, destinationX, destinationY }

Core Principle

Enumerate all legal moves for the current side, score each move using a simple heuristic, and select the highest-scoring move.

There is:

- no recursion
- no memory
- no simulation

Move Evaluation Heuristic

Each legal move is assigned a score using a weighted sum:

Pseudo Code for Score

```
score =
  captureScore
+ alignmentScore
+ positionalBias
+ unitValueBias
- combatRiskPenalty
```

Each term is computed independently and summed.

Capture Score (Primary Bias)

- Any move that initiates combat receives a **large positive bonus**.
- Capturing is strongly preferred over non-capturing moves.

This bias ensures:

- constant engagement

- short, tense games
- no passive stalling behavior

Alignment Score

- Units prefer tiles aligned with their side.
- Units are discouraged from occupying opposing-alignment tiles unless capturing.

Example logic:

```
alignmentScore = tileAlignment * sideAlignment * ALIGNMENT_WEIGHT
```

This is the **main strategic driver** of the AI.

The AI does not reason about future alignment changes; the board mechanics handle that implicitly.

Positional Bias

- Slight preference for central tiles.
- Mild penalty for edge and corner tiles.

This prevents aimless lateral movement.

Unit Value Bias

Units have fixed, static value categories:

- High-value units (e.g., Dragon, Phoenix, Wizard)
- Medium-value units
- Low-value / expendable units

High-value units:

- are biased toward safer positions
- are less likely to initiate risky combat

Low-value units:

- are more likely to trade aggressively

This is table-driven, not adaptive.

Combat Risk Penalty

- A coarse estimate of expected combat outcome.
- Based on unit matchup tables and tile alignment.
- No combat simulation is performed.

Important constraints:

- Risk is tolerated.
- Losing fights are acceptable.
- Favorable alignment reduces perceived risk.

The AI will sometimes initiate losing combats by design.

Move Selection

1. Score all legal moves.
2. Select the highest-scoring move.
3. If multiple moves tie, choose randomly among them.

Random tie-breaking is required to prevent deterministic play.

Combat Screen

The Combat Screen is a **self-contained real-time arena** that temporarily replaces the Strategy Screen whenever two opposing icons attempt to occupy the same square.

It resolves **one and only one question**:

Which icon survives and remains on the Strategy Screen square?

Nothing else carries forward except that result.

How the Icons Interact to End Up on the Combat Screen

- On the Strategy Screen, combat is triggered when:
 - a moving icon attempts to enter a square already occupied by an opposing icon
- The Strategy Screen **pauses**
- The game transitions immediately to the Combat Screen

Important constraints:

- Only **two icons** are ever present
- No third-party interference
- No environmental carryover except **tile alignment**

The Combat Screen is **not optional** and **not avoidable** once contact occurs.

Combat Screen Layout

The Combat Screen contains two categories of visual objects:

1. Icons

The two opposing creatures engaged in combat.

2. Sprites

Environmental objects (trees, rocks, structures, terrain features) that affect movement, visibility, and line-of-fire.

This section describes **sprites only**.

Icons and Sprites Present on the Combat Screen

- Sprites represent **static environmental features** tied to the alignment of the Strategy Screen square.
- Examples include:
 - trees
 - pillars
 - rocks
 - terrain blocks

Sprites are placed at fixed positions when the Combat Screen is initialized.

They **do not move** and **do not animate** during combat.

Sprite States: Solid vs. Transparent

Each sprite exists in **one of two interaction states**:

1. **Solid State**
2. **Transparent State**

These states directly affect Icon interaction.

Solid State

When a sprite is solid:

- Icons **cannot pass through it**
- Icons must move around it
- Attacks and projectiles may be blocked or partially blocked (depending on unit type)

Solid sprites function as:

- hard obstacles
- cover
- line-of-sight blockers

This creates positional advantage and encourages maneuvering.

Transparent State

When a sprite is transparent:

- Icons **can pass through** the sprite
- Movement through the sprite is **slowed**
- Icons remain partially visible while inside the sprite

Key characteristics:

- Transparency is visual and mechanical
- Sprites do not disappear; they change interaction mode
- The sprite continues to influence combat even while passable

This state represents:

- magical interference
- weakened terrain
- unstable alignment conditions

How Sprite States Change During Combat

- Sprite state is determined **at Combat Screen initialization**
- State is based on:
 - the alignment value of the Strategy Screen square
 - the current phase of alignment drift

Once combat begins:

- Sprite states **do not toggle**
- No sprite changes state dynamically during the fight

This ensures:

- deterministic arenas
- predictable terrain behavior
- skill-based positioning rather than reactive terrain changes

Effects of Sprites on Icon Movement

- Solid sprites:

- fully block movement
- force path redirection
- Transparent sprites:
 - allow movement
 - apply a movement speed penalty while inside the sprite bounds

Movement penalties are:

- continuous (applied per frame)
- multiplicative, not binary
- removed immediately upon exiting the sprite

Effects of Sprites on Combat Behavior

Sprites influence combat indirectly by:

- creating safe zones
- enabling ambush positioning
- breaking direct attack lines

However:

- sprites do **not** absorb damage
- sprites are **not destructible**
- sprites do **not** change shape or size

They exist purely as environmental modifiers.

Design Constraints (Important)

An AI coding assistant must treat sprites as:

- static
- non-animated
- deterministic
- non-destructible
- state-fixed per combat instance

Sprites are **never treated as entities**, units, or icons.

Where the Icons Are Placed to Start

- The arena is a fixed rectangular playfield
- Icons spawn on **opposite sides** of the arena:
 - one near the left edge
 - one near the right edge
- Vertical position is typically centered or slightly offset

Key points:

- Icons never overlap at spawn
- Starting distance is always sufficient to allow:
 - movement
 - at least one attack opportunity
- Starting positions do **not** vary based on unit type

The arena layout (obstacles, terrain) depends on the **alignment of the Strategy Screen square** where combat was triggered.

How Hit Points Work

- Each icon has a fixed **hit point (HP) total**
- HP represents the icon's remaining life in the Combat Screen only

Damage rules:

- Successful attacks reduce HP
- Amount of damage depends on:
 - unit attack type
 - contact or projectile hit
 - tile alignment modifier

Important constraints:

- HP does **not regenerate**
- HP is not displayed numerically
- HP is typically represented visually (bar or depletion cue)

HP persists only for the duration of the combat.

How an Icon Is Killed

An icon is killed when:

- its HP reaches zero (or below)

When this occurs:

- the icon immediately enters a **death state**
- movement and attacks stop
- a death animation or visual cue plays briefly

There is **no recovery**, **no retreat**, and **no stalemate pause** once HP is exhausted.

What Happens After an Icon Is Killed

Once one icon is killed:

1. Combat immediately ends
2. The surviving icon is declared the winner
3. The game transitions back to the Strategy Screen

On the Strategy Screen:

- The surviving icon occupies the contested square
- The losing icon is permanently removed from the game
- Tile alignment influence resumes normally

The surviving icon:

- returns at full strategic strength
- does not carry combat damage forward

Combat damage is **not persistent** across battles.

What Happens if Both Icons Eliminate Each Other

If both icons reach zero HP:

- This is treated as a **mutual destruction**

Outcome:

- **Both icons are removed**
- The contested Strategy Screen square becomes **empty**
- No unit occupies the square

This result is rare but intentional.

Design implications:

- High-risk engagements can erase both sides

- Board control can be reset by mutual loss
- The game explicitly allows “no winner” combat outcomes

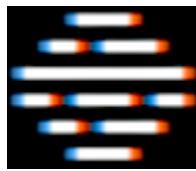
There is no tiebreaker, resurrection, or advantage awarded in the case of a tie.

Combat Screen Sprites

Bushes



Transparent Bushes



Red Energy Bolt



Blue Energy Bolt Diagonal (Serpent)



Blue Energy Bolt Horizontal (Serpent)



Basilisk Shot



Spells

The leader of each side is a mage. Mage is used to describe either the Wizard or Sorceress. Both icons have a selection of seven spells. The Wizard and Sorceress have the same list of spells and may cast each once per game. If a mage is killed in combat, his/her remaining spells are gone. No spell may target a ‘Power Point’ square or an icon standing on one. If the spell you choose has no legal targets, the game will realize it and tell you to choose another spell.

Each time a spell is cast, the mage becomes weaker. Casting spells will reduce the hit point bonus gained for the mage's home square: one HP per spell cast. Any Icon standing on the Wizard or Sorceress's home square suffers the hit point penalty, even after the mage is killed. And a mage, even after casting spells, does not suffer the penalty when away from that square.

Teleport

Moves one of your own icons to any empty square or to one occupied by an opponent's icon, which begins a battle.

Early in the game, the computer A.I. loves to use this spell to catch a Basilisk on its weak starting square with a Unicorn (or vice-versa). Same with Banshee/Valkyrie, and sometimes a Golem (or Troll) will be sent across the board to take out a Goblin (or Knight). Less often, the computer will use the same technique with its heavy-hitters. The only other use the computer has for this spell is to put something (usually a Golem/Troll) within striking distance of the other team's mage. All are worthy uses of this great spell, but a human player can be more creative.

Heal

Restores full health to one of your own injured icons.

The computer usually saves this spell for the Djinn, Phoenix, or Dragon, but the Wizard and Sorceress sometimes heal themselves late in the game as well. See the Hit Points and Damage section for more information.

Revive

Brings one of your dead icons back to life, shiny and new. The revived piece must be placed 'within the charmed square,' i.e., one of the empty squares surrounding your mage, no matter where your mage may be.

The computer will only use this spell to bring back one of its strongest two creatures, usually whichever is the first to die.

Exchange

Swaps the board locations of any two icons. Cast it on two enemies, two of your own icons, or one of each.

The best use of Exchange is probably to move one of your Basilisks, Trolls, or Golems into the fray quickly. Trapping an enemy ground mover is possible, but the time cost to set it up usually negates any benefit. This is the only spell the computer never uses.

Shift Time

Reverses the direction of the color cycle for the changing squares, but the squares will still change after every move of the player who did not move first. If the squares are 'A' or 'F' when

the spell is cast, however, they will change to the opposite color the next time they change. This is great for catching several enemy icons on the wrong color at once, but it helps if you're the second player to move so that the change is immediate after the spell; that's another advantage of not going first.

The computer prefers to use Shift Time when there's an Imprison spell in effect (see below) but will also just employ it to give itself more time to try for all the Power Points.

Summon Elemental

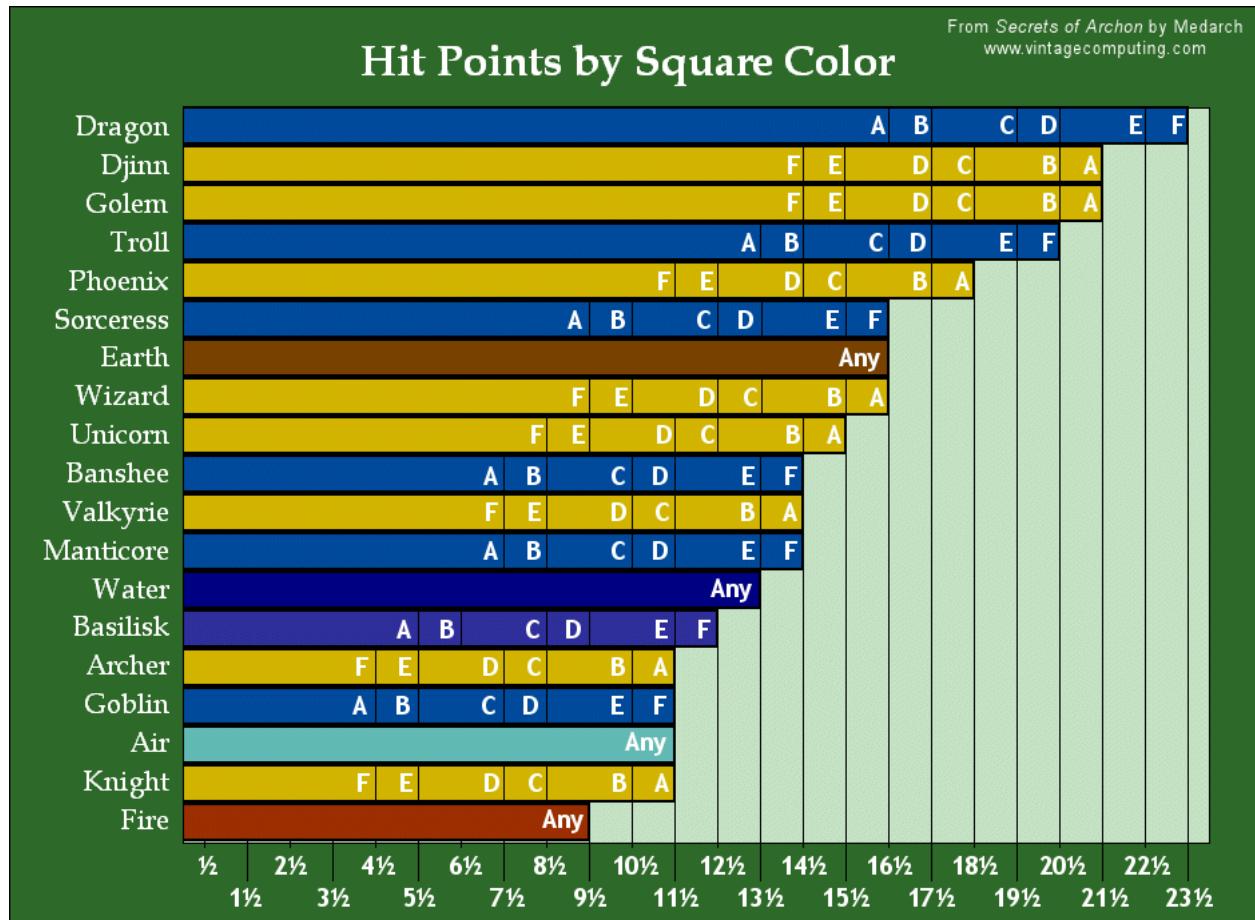
Calls forth an Earth, Water, Air, or Fire Elemental to do battle with an enemy piece. The elemental must attack immediately; it cannot be placed on an empty square and used later. You don't get to choose which Elemental appears, but the second player to cast this spell won't get the one summoned earlier by the other side.

The computer uses this spell to attack the opposing heavy-hitters caught on weak squares or when just about any enemy icon wanders suspiciously close to its mage. Moving your mage off its protective Power Point will usually trigger a Summon from the computer opponent also. Win or lose, the elemental is gone forever after its battle. The combat attributes of the elementals are given below in the Icons section.

Imprison

Freezes an enemy icon on its square until the changing squares become 'A' (for an imprisoned Light Side icon) or 'F' (for Dark). Imprisoned Icons may not move on the game board or cast spells, but can still move and defend themselves in battle if attacked.

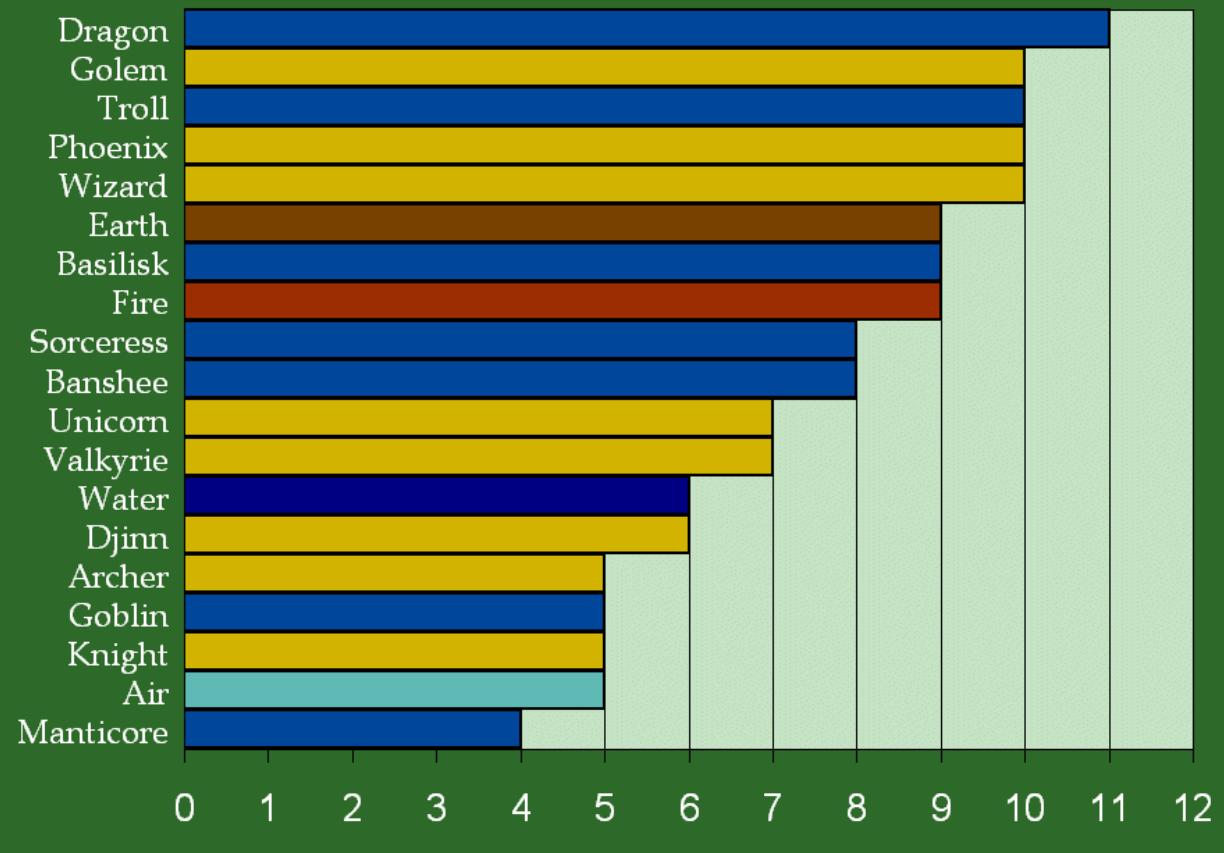
This spell can only be cast when the color cycle is 'C' or 'D' and heading toward its favored color. It also loves to extend (or reduce) a prison sentence with the Shift Time spell, but it's smart to save Imprison for the endgame, when you can freeze your opponent's last piece and win immediately.



Hit Points and Damage

Archon displays Icon's health (what I call hit points) in vertical bars at the sides of the combat screen. No numeric values are given in the game or the manual, but experimentation reveals that both hit points and damage quantize nicely into fairly big units. The catch is that hit points are offset by one-half unit from damage, such that damage is always delivered in integral amounts, but hit points are always something-and-a-half. Sure, we could get rid of the halves by doubling all values, but I prefer working with the smaller figures. (Now, it is very likely that in *Archon*'s program, hit points are actually integers, 0.5 lower than the values I give and that Icon must be reduced to below 0 to be killed. But since the zero-hit-point level is drawn as some positive amount on the screen, I'm going to call that one half.)

Damage Per Attack



Several factors determine the hit points an Icon will have in battle: the Icon's base HP, any injuries it may have sustained, the bonus for square color, and, if on the mage's home square, a penalty (counting against the square color bonus) of 1 HP per spell the mage has cast.

The HP bonus for square color (from 'A' to 'F') is as follows for Light Side icons: 7, 6, 4, 3, 1, and 0. It's the opposite for the Dark Side, which gets 7 additional hit points for 'F,' 6 for 'E,' etc. For an icon to sustain an injury that persists after the battle, it must take damage in excess of its bonus for square color. For example, if a Dragon attacks a Knight (both uninjured) on 'E,' the Dragon will have 22.5 HP after its bonus of 6, and the Knight will have 5.5 after its bonus of 1. Let's say the Knight manages to get in 2 hits before dying. That's a total of 10 damage minus the square bonus of 6 equals 4 points of injury done to the Dragon, a reduction that will show up in its next fight unless it's healed.



Light HP: +7 +6 +4 +3 +1 +0

Dark HP: +0 +1 +3 +4 +6 +7

Icons can be healed in two ways. First is the Heal spell, which heals all damage to that one icon immediately. The other way is via a Power Point. At the end of any of your turns, any of your icons on a Power Point regain 1 HP if they're not already healthy.

Icons: Statistics and Information

Below is a list of all the Icons in the game, including a description and information about each.

Pawns: the Knight and the Goblin



These foot soldiers are the game's weakest and most numerous characters. Lacking a ranged attack, they must dodge bullets while trying to get close enough to do some damage. Although arrayed in the front of their armies, the Knights and Goblins really do their best work later in the game, after the opponent's pieces have been injured from other battles. If they can absorb one attack, they have a good chance of delivering a hit or two themselves, hopefully to polish off a weakened opponent.

The Knight and Goblin are identical in all ways except the shapes of their bodies and weapons—differences small enough to defy analysis.

Knight

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 4.5
Max HP: 11.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 5
Shot Speed: N/A
Attack Rate: Ultra Fast (3/2 atks/sec)
Sword Width, Horizontal Attacks: 2
Sword Width, Vertical Attacks: 4

Goblin

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 4.5
Max HP: 11.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 5
Shot Speed: N/A
Attack Rate: Ultra Fast (3/2 atks/sec)
Club Width, H: 2, V: 4

Walk Cycle

The walk cycle image for all Icons is setup as: 4 columns wide with the walk and attack cycle and then the 8 directions. Each cell in 64x64 which will be drawn to look like a 16x16 character from the original game.

Columns: 0 1 2 3

idle/w0 walk1 walk2 attack

Row 0: N

Row 1: NE

Row 2: E

Row 3: SE

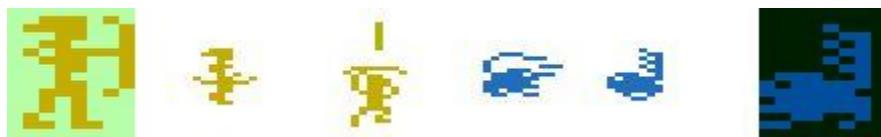
Row 4: S

Row 5: SW

Row 6: W

Row 7: NW

Scouts: the Archer and the Manticore



These guys flank the Pawns and usually vie early in the game for the nearest Power Points. As the game's lowliest shooters, they are often outgunned but can still be effective if played skillfully.

The Archer is basically a Knight who shoots with a bow. He can hold his own on favorable squares ('A' and 'B'); however, the Archer is quite vulnerable on the medium squares ('C' and 'D'), where one shot from a Basilisk, Troll, or Dragon will take him out, as will two bashes from a Goblin's club.

The Dark Side's Manticore owns the weakest attack in the game, but he makes up for it with a decent hit point total and his widely-spaced tail spikes, which are hard to dodge at close range. He will have trouble against the Wizard or Unicorn and should avoid Knights on squares 'A' , 'B' , or 'C' , where he'll need 3 hits to kill them. The Manticore is excellent for trying to pull off an upset against a Djinn or Golem; those matchups can be very entertaining.

Archer

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 4.5
Max HP: 11.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 5
Shot Speed: Medium (70%)
Attack Rate: Medium (3/4 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 1, V: 2

Manticore

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 7.5
Max HP: 14.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 4
Shot Speed: Slow (50%)
Attack Rate: Medium (3/4 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 5, V: 10

Fliers: the Valkyrie and the Banshee



The Fliers begin the game in the four corners of the game board, whence they have no trouble escaping as they soar over other pieces and enjoy the benefits of diagonal movement. Although the Valkyrie and Banshee are very different, they're both great for attacking weaker opponents caught on a bad square, especially when it's bothersome to disturb your carefully-deployed and less flexible ground forces.

The Valkyrie improves on the Archer, having moderate hit point and damage levels. Her weakness is that her spears are both slow and narrow, so the Valkyrie must get in close for a successful attack (preferably on the diagonal). No other slow-shooter in the game has projectiles merely one pixel wide. The Valkyrie is excellent on medium squares, except against the Dragon on 'D' , where one blast of fire will roast her.

It's always fun and challenging to use the Banshee because of its unique attack form: a scream-cloud that quickly drains the life of an opponent caught within its radius. Life is drained 1 HP at a time, for a total of 8 if the cloud hits for the full duration. The Banshee can move while screaming, which is a mixed blessing"it's impossible to escape from the scream, but the Banshee is left extremely vulnerable after (and during) the attack. In light of this, the Banshee is best used for polishing off badly injured opponents, and in this task it has no equal, but it's helpless against a foe with a tall health bar. Perhaps more than any other Icon, the Banshee needs to stick to its favorable squares.

Valkyrie

Move: Fly 3
Base HP: 7.5
Max HP: 14.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 7
Shot Speed: Slow (50%)
Attack Rate: Medium (3/4 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 1, V: 4

Banshee

Move: Fly 3
Base HP: 7.5
Max HP: 14.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 1-8
Attack Rate: Slow (3/5 atks/sec)
Scream Cloud Size: 64x32

Brutes: the Golem and the Troll



The Brutes are strong, tough, and conspicuously slow. In fact, besides the Earth Elemental, there are no other Icons that walk around at less than normal speed. Even though the speed reduction is only one-quarter, the resulting disadvantage in combat is big, and the Golem and Troll have trouble evading close-range fighters like Knights and Goblins. But with their impressive firepower and health, as well as the biggest bullets in the game, they always have a chance of upsetting more powerful foes.

Golems have 1 more hit point than Trolls, but otherwise they're equivalent in ability. That extra HP does come in handy for the Golem sometimes—for example, in a head-to-head matchup on 'E,' where the Troll should be favored, both need only 2 hits for victory.

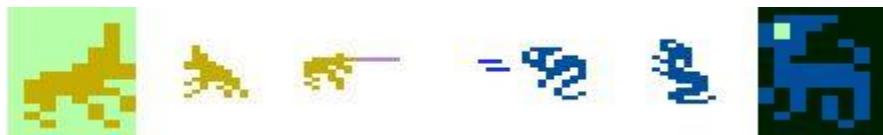
Golem

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 14.5
Max HP: 21.5
Speed: Slow (75%)
Attack Power: 10
Shot Speed: Slow (50%)
Attack Rate: Slow (3/5 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 8, V: 12

Troll

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 13.5
Max HP: 20.5
Speed: Slow (75%)
Attack Power: 10
Shot Speed: Slow (50%)
Attack Rate: Slow (3/5 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 8, V: 12

Assassins: the Unicorn and the Basilisk



These two quick and deadly Icons are more than a step up from the others we've looked at so far. What makes them so dangerous is not only how fast they can shoot (the best shot speed in the game), but also how often they can shoot. At 1 per second, the Unicorn and Basilisk can attack more frequently than anything but the short-ranged Knight or Goblin. Since the Assassins begin on wrong-color squares and are so important to their respective sides, an early Teleport attack involving these icons is always a wise decision.

The Unicorn is the real workhorse of the Light Side; its unique movement range of Ground 4 makes it the most annoying enemy of Dark as it gallops around blockades and picks off anything left too long on a color-changing square. It's also excellent against the Dragon on middle-color squares and is Light's best hope against the Sorceress on her home turf, where the Unicorn can absorb a hit and still fight on! and may only need 2 hits for the kill if the Sorceress has already cast three spells. In this case, the Unicorn's supremely fast laser beams actually make it favored, which is one of Light's most important advantages. The Unicorn does well on 'D' but should beware of darker squares, where it can be taken out by 1 shot from a Dragon, Troll, or Basilisk (on 'F').

Taking into account damage, attack rate, shot speed, and projectile width, the Basilisk is unquestionably the most potent attacker in *Archon*. Long-range foes have trouble dodging the Basilisk's super-fast petrifying gaze, and its 10-pixel-wide vertical shots make it nearly invincible against anything that likes to get in close for an attack. The Basilisk often wins games for the Dark Side, either by dethroning the Wizard or by destroying half a dozen Light pieces in a row. Its one glaring weakness is hit points, so the Basilisk must be careful, especially avoiding Unicorns on lighter squares if possible.

Unicorn

Move: Ground 4
Base HP: 8.5
Max HP: 15.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 7
Shot Speed: Very Fast (100%)
Attack Rate: Very Fast (1 atk/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 1, V: 2

Basilisk

Move: Ground 3
Base HP: 5.5
Max HP: 12.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 9
Shot Speed: Very Fast (100%)
Attack Rate: Very Fast (1 atk/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 3, V: 10

Hunters: the Phoenix and the Shapeshifter



These fliers are the most mobile icons in the game. Their movement range of 5 is huge on the 9×9 board, and nothing is ever safe from their attack. The Phoenix and Shapeshifter are also *Archon*'s most unusual icons, having peculiar strengths and weaknesses.

The Phoenix has a short-range attack similar to the Banshee's, but it defends the Phoenix even as it harms enemies. While its flame is on, the Phoenix is impervious to attack—but immobile. This is a terrible weakness, since it can almost always be hit just as the flame expires, making this bird worthless against players who know what to do. (This flaw was corrected in *Archon II*'s Firebird, who can cut short its flame attack.) Icons with slower attack rates have more trouble taking advantage of this trick, so the best job for the Phoenix is to slay Dark's 2-seconds-per-shot Dragon. A computer opponent will not use the trick at all, so in that case the Phoenix can have great success against Goblins, Banshees, and Trolls as well. A Phoenix-Shapeshifter battle is often a long, boring affair (each flame protecting against the other) in which the one with the most hit points coming in almost always wins. This is never good for the Phoenix, though, who is sure to suffer severe injury if victorious.

The Shapeshifter may be the Dark Side's greatest advantage. As its name suggests, it takes on the form and abilities of its opponent in combat. The opponent's base HP are also used, but the Shapeshifter of course gets the Dark Side's HP bonuses for square color. This means that on 'E' and especially 'F', it will have a big advantage. Unless you're confident, though, you shouldn't start attacking early in the game on squares 'C' and 'D' because the Shapeshifter is evenly matched against just about any opponent before they've sustained injuries. The Shapeshifter's best feature is that, unlike any other piece, it never suffers permanent damage—it's always completely healed after every battle. Plus, the computer A.I. has a bad bug where it attacks the Shapeshifter, even on dark squares, as if it did not heal after being damaged! The Shapeshifter's hit points work a little differently against Elementals, when it gets a base HP of 9.5—not all that much—plus the usual color-bonus, regardless of which Elemental it faces. This is the ~Shifter's biggest weakness, as it's an even fight with a Fire or Earth Elemental, even on the darkest of squares—something a smart Light Side player will use to his advantage.

Phoenix

Move: Fly 5
Base HP: 11.5
Max HP: 18.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 2-10
Shot Speed: N/A
Attack Rate: Slow (3/5 atks/sec)
Flame Cloud Max. Size: 64×32

Shapeshifter

Move: Fly 5

Champions: the Djinn and the Dragon

As the game's best two fighters, these characters are the most important to their respective sides other than the Mages. Should the Djinn or Dragon go down in combat, they're the ones you want to bring back with your Revive spell. Both can fly with a range of 4, so they can always keep an eye on multiple Power Points at once. In fact, from the center square, they can reach any other spot on the game board.

The Djinn has as many hit points as a Golem but significantly less attack power, delivering a relatively low 6 damage per shot. His shots are large and swift, though, giving Goblins and Banshees little chance for survival and Trolls not much more. He should avoid the Dragon and Basilisks on medium-color squares, but, if healthy, the Djinn is the only Light Side icon to have an advantage in shots-to-kill over the Shapeshifter on 'C.' The Djinn is fairly vulnerable to Elementals, especially Fire, on the three darker square colors, so he needs to be moved to safety as early as possible. When Light needs to take out the Sorceress on her home square to win the game, the Djinn is an excellent choice for the attack.

The Dragon is the strongest and most intimidating Icon in the game. No opponent, on any color square, can withstand two blasts of his fire, and many are roasted with just one. The Dragon's health bar, too, towers over all others with an incredible maximum of 23.5 hit points; some foes will need five hits to bring him down. He pays for these gaudy numbers, however, with a miserable attack rate of one shot every two seconds, the worst in the game. Consequently, the Dragon can really struggle against the Phoenix and against the swift-shooting Unicorn on medium squares. In most cases, though, the Dragon will have the upper hand, notably against any Elemental, no matter what color square. Light should save his Elemental attack for the Shapeshifter instead. Dark should make sure to Heal the Dragon if his health gets low.

Djinn

Move: Fly 4
Base HP: 14.5
Max HP: 21.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 6
Shot Speed: Medium Fast (80%)
Attack Rate: Med. Slow (2/3 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 5-7, V: 8

Dragon

Move: Fly 4
Base HP: 16.5
Max HP: 23.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 11
Shot Speed: Medium (70%)
Attack Rate: Very Slow (1/2 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 4, V: 6

Mages: the Wizard and the Sorceress

As the leaders of their teams, each Mage starts on a Power Point and usually spends most of the game defending it. Although weaker than the very best fighters in combat, they are strong enough to be favored in any fight on their home squares, as long as they haven't cast too many spells; the HP bonus for their home squares goes down by 1 for each spell cast. Later in the game, the Mages may venture away from their Power Point and into the battlefield, where they're both superb combatants on middle-color squares. A battle between the two of them, which is rare, would be even chances on any square but 'A.'

If you're playing the Light Side, your favorite piece will be the Wizard. He's an awesome, intimidating fighter who shoots fireballs that are large, powerful, and swift. Dark shouldn't bother attacking him with anything less than its best icons. The Wizard is very rarely the underdog; if he does need to go wandering away from his home square, he should avoid the Dragon on 'D,' Basilisk on 'E,' and Shapeshifter or Troll on 'F.'

Dark's spellcaster is the Sorceress, whose lightning bolts are faster than her rival's fireballs, but are smaller and less powerful. She's not quite as good as the Wizard in combat, but is still more than a match for any Light piece on a medium square. Dark players may enjoy using the Sorceress as an attacker and handing off Power Point guard duty to a Dragon or Troll.

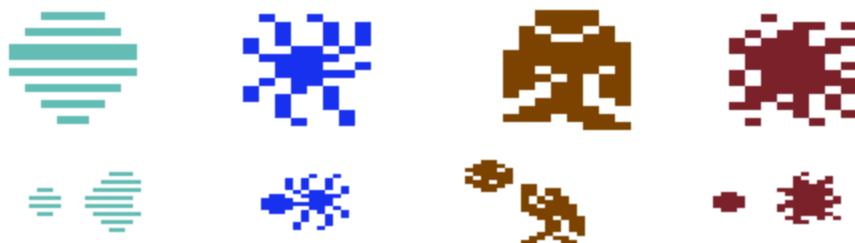
Wizard

Move: Teleport 3
Base HP: 9.5
Max HP: 16.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 10
Shot Speed: Medium Fast (80%)
Attack Rate: Medium (3/4 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 6, V: 8-12

Sorceress

Move: Teleport 3
Base HP: 9.5
Max HP: 16.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 8
Shot Speed: Fast (90%)
Attack Rate: Medium (3/4 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 2, V: 4

Elementals: Air, Water, Earth, and Fire



The four Elementals do not fight exclusively for either side, they just fight when called upon by the spell Summon Elemental. They disappear after their one battle. Generally, they're mediocre warriors, each worth about a Valkyrie except Fire, which is a little better. Unfortunately, the spellcaster has no control over which Elemental shows up. Elementals do not receive an HP bonus for square color, so they have the same number on any square, and it's a fairly good amount.

Overall, the weakest of the bunch is probably the Air Elemental, whose projectiles look like the Djinn's but are a bit slower and weaker. It is similar to the Archer, but better due to its larger bullets and unique attack rate of 6 shots every 7 seconds. The Air Elemental is also the only icon with physical gaps in its body, allowing the horizontal attacks of some icons (Djinn, Unicorn, Valkyrie, Archer, Shapeshifter, Basilisk, and Manticore) to pass right through, if it's lucky. It's probably best used against a Unicorn or Shapeshifter.

Marginally better than Air is the Water Elemental. It has more HP and does more damage than Air, but cannot shoot as often. Practical results with Water will be similar to Air, but Water can take out a Basilisk on 'A' with one shot and will have at least an even fight against a Shapeshifter on any square.

The Earth Elemental is a poor man's Troll, having the same lumbering pace but fewer HP and dealing not quite as much damage. At 9 per shot, though, Earth still packs a punch. You might use it to take out some weaker foes with 1 shot, and it probably is the best Elemental against the Dragon.

Fire is, without a doubt, the best Elemental the spell can buy. Similar to a Basilisk, Fire can do damage in a hurry, mimicking the Basilisk's attack power and attack rate. Its bullets aren't quite as fast, but they're still swift enough to get the job done. Fire is great against just about anybody, but especially against a Djinn, Unicorn, or Basilisk. It has very few hit points, though, and can be taken out by 1 shot of a Dragon, Golem, or Troll.

Air

HP: 11.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 5
Shot Speed: Medium (70%)
Shot Rate: Medium Fast (6/7 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 5-7, V: 8

Water

HP: 13.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 6
Shot Speed: Slow (50%)
Attack Rate: Slow (3/5 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 3-6, V: 4-10

Earth

HP: 16.5
Speed: Slow (75%)
Attack Power: 9
Shot Speed: Slow (50%)
Shot Rate: Slow (3/5 atks/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 8, V: 12

Fire

HP: 9.5
Speed: Normal
Attack Power: 9
Shot Speed: Medium Fast (80%)
Attack Rate: Very Fast (1 atk/sec)
Projectile Width, H: 3-6, V: 4-10

Development Notes

"T" Key toggles between turns to allow Testing

Orange Color is

R 255

G 180

B 70

Columns: 0 1 2 3
idle/w0 walk1 walk2 attack

Row 0: N

Row 1: NE

Row 2: E

Row 3: SE

Row 4: S

Row 5: SW

Row 6: W

Row 7: NW