

CARDS OF WAR!



Intro

War is upon us! The kingdoms are divided and the land is in turmoil. Bring stability to the people by defeating the opposition to rule supremely over all. To do this, you must recruit forces from the four royal houses; the quick Diamonds, brutal Clubs, vigilant Hearts and cunning Spades. Cards of War is a game of luck as well as strategy. Each turn a random member of the four houses is drawn from the shared deck and chooses to fight by your side. Who will come to your aid? Will you be victorious?

The Deck and Barrows:

Cards of War uses a standard deck of 52 playing cards. Inclusion of the two joker's (red and black) is optional. All players draw cards from the same deck. When a card is defeated or removed from play it is placed face up, on a pile referred to as the "barrows". This discard pile may be placed anywhere that can be reached by all players.

The Cards:

The cards, (*sometimes referred to as a unit*) are deployed into battle by each player and represent the player's army. In most circumstances, units become exhausted as they rush into battle. An exhausted unit should be tilted slightly by the player on the field to represent this mechanic. An exhausted unit may do nothing for a single turn after being deployed to the battlefield.

The Battlefield:

The battlefield consists of two zones for each player. These are referred to as the Front and Rear ranks.

The **Front** ranks is where soldiers (cards 2-10) are deployed. Each player may only deploy three units to the front ranks per turn. If the number of units exceeds this limit, the owner must choose which units to remove from play. *NOTE: Two cards of the same suit may be combined and considered a single "unit". This means it is possible to have a maximum of 6 soldiers deployed to the front ranks. More details on this ability in the section below, titled "Blood Bond".*

The King, Queen, Jack, Ace and Joker units enter the battlefield through the **Rear** ranks to support the army. Some units residing in the rear ranks may be directly targeted and will remain in the rear ranks until they are defeated or removed from play. Only 3 units may occupy the rear ranks at any time.

Attacking and Defending:

Most cards have an attack and defense value. These stats are separated by a slash in these instructions. The **attack value** determines how much damage a card does when attacking or defending itself from another card or unit. The **defense value** indicates how much damage a card can receive before it is defeated in combat. For example, the 5 of Hearts card has +5/+5, or an attack value of 5 and a defense value of 5. Conversely a King (+0/+13) has only a defense value of 13.

Player's may only declare units in the rear ranks or an opposing player as a **target** for an attack. Each target can only be attacked by a single unit. When an attack is resolved, all damage is dealt simultaneously to all affected units. If a unit is not defeated (taking damage equal to its defense value) it survives the encounter and remains on the battlefield. All damage directly dealt to a player as the target is resolved at the end of the turn. Damage may be blocked or prevented by soldier units in the front ranks or special abilities of some units from the rear ranks.

Player Health and Win Conditions:

Each player starts with 40 life points. A player's health is depleted whenever a unit successfully deals damage to that player. If a player's health points are reduced to 0 then they lose the match.

Alternate Victory: If the entire deck of cards has been depleted and two or more players have remaining life points, then the match enters a sudden death scenario. Each player is allowed one more turn, starting with the player who drew that last card. At the conclusion of the final turn, the player with the lowest life points loses the match.

Starting the Game:

1. Shuffle the deck and place it within reach of all players.
2. Roll a die (or flip a coin) to see who gains first advantage. The player who wins advantage, chooses to either start first or defer.
3. Starting with the first player, everyone pulls 1 card at a time from the deck, until each player has 5 cards.
4. Begin with the first player's turn. No additional cards are drawn from the deck at the start of the first this turn.

Player Turn Phases:

1. **UNTAP** all exhausted units by straightening them on the battlefield.
2. **DRAW** a single card from the deck
3. **DEPLOY**, your cards to the appropriate ranks
4. **COMBAT**
 - a. Declare attackers and targets
 - b. Opponent declares any defenders, or play any card that can act instantly
 - c. Apply special abilities
 - d. Damage is calculated
 - e. End Combat
5. **RESOLVE** remaining spells or effects
6. **CLEANUP** your hand by discarding down to 5 cards

House Traits:

Each house (card suite) consists of a King, Queen, Jack, Assassin (Ace) and 9 soldiers varying in skill from 2-10. Though some members of each house may turn the tides of battle through the use of magic or leadership, the soldier units may employ a unique trained skill or trait that can significantly impact the outcome of each battle.

Diamonds: The Diamonds are renowned for their decisive leadership and speed. Soldiers of the Diamonds house have been trained to anticipate their opponent's moves. Only when attacking, Diamond soldiers may parry and strike their opponent, thus dealing damage without receiving any in return.

Clubs: The Clubs are naturally gifted with overwhelming presence and strength. Soldiers of the Clubs house may ferociously route a defeated opponent, allowing the remaining damage to be redirected. *Only when attacking, all additional damage dealt by a soldier of the Clubs house can be redirected to an opposing player or targetable unit.*

Hearts: The Hearts have naturally superb awareness and endurance. Each member of the Hearts house has trained extensively to remain vigilant and ready for combat. *Hearts soldiers are not exhausted after attacking another unit or player. They may remain available as a blocker with full defense and attack values.*

Spades: The Spades are well known for their evasive battle techniques and trickery. All Spades house soldiers are trained to attack with misdirecting strikes, allowing them to often defeat multiple opponents. *Only when attacking, if a Spades soldier defeats an enemy combatant or unit, they may surprise one other targetable opponent with an additional attack.*

Blood Bond - On the owner's turn, two cards of the same house may work together and be treated as a single combined unit on the battlefield. Blood Bonded units may also be separated by the owner or an opposing ability.

Blood Bonded cards are placed in a stack formation. One card must be designated as the unit leader and placed on top of the others. All damage to this unit is applied from the top down, beginning with the unit leader. It is possible for only the unit leader to be defeated, leaving the remaining card still on the battlefield.

A newly bonded unit remains ready for battle if both cards were already in play and not exhausted. If a card is bonded with an exhausted or newly deployed unit, then the bonded unit will also be exhausted for the remainder of that turn.

The Cards:

2-10 : All cards from 2 through 10 represent their military might of their house. Each unit has a varied level of skill. For example the 2 card may represent a simple infantry soldier with the attributes of +2/+2, and the 10 card may represent a mighty knight with the attributes of +10/+10.

Jacks: The Jack card represents a sudden and tragic decision made by the young noble of each house. All actions taken by the Jacks are played instantly. They can be played at any time, and on any player's turn. Jack cards are removed from play at the end of the turn.

- **The Jack of Diamonds** throws themselves heedlessly into the enemy's ranks choosing to take one enemy with them. This sacrifice causes a great distraction and instantly interrupts the opposing player's turn. *The last card deployed by the opponent is sent to the barrows, and their turn is immediately ended.*
- **The Jack of Clubs** rallies the troops and makes a final ferocious charge. This unexpected move rattles the opposing forces causing someone to flee in fear. *Randomly remove a single card from the opposing player's hand and place it in the barrows.*
- **The Jack of Hearts** selflessly dives into the fray to shield their allies, absorbing all damage from the enemy. *Negate all damage that would be dealt to all allies this turn.*
- **The Jack of Spades** uses a dying breath to reveal a shocking secret to a single opposing unit. This knowledge persuades the unit to switch their allegiance. *The player immediately gains control of any unit in play and places the affected card(s) into their hand.*

Queens: The Queen card represents a single significant action that can only be taken on the player's turn. The Queen is able to supply significant aid to the player's army without entering the battlefield directly. Queen cards are removed from play at the end of the turn.

- **The Queen of Diamonds** concentrates all energy into casting a spell, slowing the flow of time for their army. *The player may choose to immediately take one additional turn.*
- **The Queen of Clubs** uses significant political influence to eliminate threats to their army. *The player may choose to have any two units (currently in play) immediately removed from the game.*

- The Queen of Hearts summons ethereal forces to complete a resurrection spell, thus compelling any fallen card to rise from the dead and join their forces. *The player takes a card of choice from the barrows and places it into their hand.*
- The Queen of Spades sends a spy into the enemy's camp in an attempt to discover the opponent's next move or persuade any potential allies. *The player may look at the top four cards of the deck, keep one and place the remaining three back on top in any order.*

Kings: The King card provides a prolonged influence on the battlefield, providing an advantage to the player's army. When the King (+0/+13) is in play they provide support to allies from the rear ranks. Once the king enters the battlefield they cannot be recalled and must remain until defeated in battle. A player may only have one King in play at a time.

- The King of Diamonds has access to an ancient magical device allowing them to teleport units directly into battle. *Each allied soldier is quickly deployed for combat and is no longer exhausted when entering the battlefield.*
- The King of Clubs is a proud warrior with unmatched skill in battle. They may step out in front of their army to challenge any opposing soldier unit in combat. This challenge may not be ignored. *The King may deal 13 points of damage to any opposing soldier unit on the battlefield. The king receives all damage that would normally be dealt by the challenged unit as well.*
- The King of Hearts may cast a spell shield on an ally, absorbing all damage that would be dealt. *Absorb 13 points of damage that would be dealt to any allied soldier unit(s) or player. If more than 13 points of damage is absorbed, the spell backfires and the king is destroyed.*
- The King of Spades creates a clever distraction to draw the attention of their enemies away from all allies. While in play, *the King of Spades is the only unit that can be directly targeted by opponents. All allied soldier units are unnoticed and cannot be blocked while attacking.*

Ace : Each house retains the skills of a professional assassin (+1/+0), represented by the four Ace cards. All units damaged by the assassin are poisoned and removed from play at the end of that turn along with the Ace card. The assassin's blade cannot poison a player.

- The Ace of Diamonds uses their lightning reflexes to quickly strike an opponent without warning. *The Ace may take immediate action, striking instantly on any player's turn.*
- The Ace of Clubs is a bold killer who saunters up to their target, often to be mistaken as an ally. Their surprise attack often allows multiple enemies to be eliminated. *The owner of the assassin's target must remove a random card in their hand from play.*
- The Ace of Hearts is resilient and very difficult to kill. *Once the Ace has damaged a target they may return to the owner's Rear Ranks (if there is room) to remain as a 1/0 guard unit that may only defend. Any unit blocked by this guard is poisoned by the assassin's blade and will die at the end of that turn.*
- The Ace of Spades is stealthy and may sneak up on multiple opponents without notice. *If the Ace's target is a soldier, the assassin may additionally attack a second adjacent soldier unit.*

Jokers: The Joker cards represent rare and powerful entities in the land. Once discovered, they are then compelled to aid the player's army.

- The Black Joker is a mythical creature known as the Doppelganger. When the Doppelganger is summoned to the battlefield, it may imitate the form of any other card of the player's choice. While this creature remains in play, it gains all abilities and stats of the chosen card, and is deployed to the appropriate rank for the card it is imitating.
- The Red Joker is a powerful sorcerer (+0/+14) who reluctantly agrees to support the player's army. When entering the battlefield, the sorcerer immediately casts a powerful enchantment that causes amnesia for all opposing soldier units. This effect prevents all opposing soldiers from utilizing their house traits and separates all enemy Blood Bonded unit.

Summary

House Traits:

Diamonds → strike without receiving damage
Clubs → deal additional damage to other opposing unit or player
Hearts → remain available to block after attacking
Spades → strike a second time after defeating a unit
Blood Bond → cards of the same suite combine to form a single unit

The Cards:

2-10 → Soldiers (power/defense = card number)

Jack ♦ → interrupt opponent's turn

Jack ♣ → force player to discard a random card

Jack ♥ → absorb all damage to allies

Jack ♠ → gain control of target card

Queen ♦ → take additional turn

Queen ♣ → remove any two units from play

Queen ♥ → resurrect target card

Queen ♠ → look at top 4 cards, keep 1, put 3 back

King ♦ → deployed allies may attack immediately

King ♣ → deals 13 points of damage to enemy soldier units

King ♥ → absorb 13 points of damage that would be dealt to allied soldier unit

King ♠ → stealthed army, cannot be blocked or attacked

Ace ♦ → may attack instantly on any player's turn

Ace ♣ → target's unit destroyed and opposing player discards a card

Ace ♥ → may return to rear ranks as a 1/0 guard with a poison blade

Ace ♠ → attack an additional adjacent unit if the target is a soldier

Joker (**black**) → transform into card of player's choice

Joker (**red**) → all opposing allies lose house traits

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(2017)