THE LORD OF THE RINGS

THE CARD GAME

Learn to Play

Introduction

"You have done well to come," said Elrond. "You will hear today all that you need to understand the purpose of the Enemy. There is naught that you can do, other than to resist, with hope or without it. But you do not stand alone. You will learn that your trouble is but part of the trouble of all the western world."

—from the chapter "The Council of Elrond"
The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring

Welcome to Middle-earth, a land of Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Wizards, and Men. From the bright towns and fields of the Shire, to the wilds of Mirkwood Forest and Rhovanion, and to the powerful kingdoms of Gondor and Rohan, the various peoples of this land struggle against the foul minions and the ancient, evil threat of the Dark Lord, Sauron.

Game Overview

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is a game of heroes, perilous journeys, and adventure set in the lands described in the epic fantasy masterpiece created by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*. During this game, players assume the role of a party of heroes who are attempting to complete dangerous quests. These quests occur during a timespan of 17 years: from when Bilbo celebrated his 111th birthday (and Frodo celebrated his 33rd birthday) to days just prior to Frodo's leaving the Shire. Instead of directly retelling the classic stories that have previously been narrated, this game provides players with a variety of elements—characters, settings, enemies, events, items, artifacts, and scenarios—that allow them to embark upon new adventures and share new experiences with the beloved *The Lord of the Rings* characters and settings during this period of Middle-earth history.

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is a cooperative game in which players work together to complete a scenario. During each game, the players attempt to overcome the particular encounters, enemies, and challenges of a scenario, against which they either win or lose together. *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game* can be played solo or as a two-player game using only the contents of this core set. Up to four players can play the game cooperatively with a second copy of the core set.

The Living Card Game

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is a Living Card Game®, and the enjoyment and experience of the game can be customized and enhanced through the purchase of regularly released 60 card expansions called Adventure Packs. Each Adventure Pack provides players with new options and strategies for their decks as well as an entirely new scenario against which to play. Additionally, deluxe expansions introduce new areas of Middle-earth in which players can journey, explore, and seek new adventures.

Components

12 Hero Cards

120 Player Cards

10 Quest Cards

84 Encounter Cards

First Player Token

40 Damage Tokens

26 Progress Tokens

30 Resource Tokens

Online Rules Reference

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is supported by a living, online Rules Reference that contains a glossary of all game terms and game rules, including detailed rules clarifications and a comprehensive turn sequence chart. Due to the wealth of effects and interactions that can occur during the game, answers to questions that arise may not be addressed in this Learn To Play booklet. It is advised that players regularly consult the online Rules Reference to find answers to any rules questions they have. The online Rules Reference can be found at **fantasyflightgames.com/lotrlcg.**

2 Threat Dials

Dial Assembly

Key Concepts

This section introduces a number of foundational concepts to keep in mind while learning and playing the game.

Heroes

Heroes are the main characters that players control during the game. Heroes are represented by hero cards and players use them to attack, defend, quest, and acquire resources. Each player will begin the game with one to three hero cards faceup in his or her play area.

Player Decks

Each player has a deck that corresponds to his or her heroes. A player's deck contains allies, events, and a variety of weapons and items. During the game, a player draws cards from this deck and spends resources to play those cards, each of which can aid the heroes on their adventure.

Threat Dial

Each player has a threat dial which represents the risk his or her heroes have endured during the scenario. Game effects can cause a player's threat to increase or decrease. When this happens, the player adjusts his or her dial accordingly. The number displayed on a player's threat dial is sometimes referred to as that player's threat level.

Threat Dial

Winning the Game: Completing Quests

The quest deck tracks the player's progress towards the completion of their adventure. During the game, players place progress tokens onto quest cards in an attempt to advance to the next stage of the quest. If any number of players survive and advance through all stages of the quest, all players win the game!

Losing the Game: Player Elimination

Middle-earth is a dangerous place, and it is possible for a player to succumb to the danger and be eliminated from the game. A player is eliminated from the game if that player's threat dial reaches "50" or if all of that player's heroes are destroyed. If all players are eliminated from the game before completing the last stage of the quest, the players have lost the game.

Ready and Exhausted

Each card in play exists in one of two states: READY or EXHAUSTED. A ready card indicates that the card is available to be used. All cards enter play in their ready state. A player cannot exhaust a card that is currently exhausted and cannot use the card for any function that requires the card to exhaust until the card readies. Players ready all of their exhausted cards during the refresh phase, which is described later.

Ready   Exhausted

Creating Decks and Scenarios for the First Game

When playing *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game* for the first time, it is recommended that players use one of the core set's four starter decks and the "Passage Through Mirkwood" scenario.

To construct the decks for the first game, players gather the cards described on the next page. The lower-right corner of each card has a number that can be used to help identify the card.

For future games, players may continue to play with these starter decks, or they may customize their own decks and choose from multiple scenarios as described in the "Deckbuilding" and "Scenario" sections on pages 25–27 of this book.

Spheres of Influence

Most player cards in *Lord of the Rings: The Card Game* are from one of the four spheres of influence. A card's sphere indicates which resources a player can spend to pay for that card. Each sphere is represented by an icon that is presented on the right side of ally, attachment, and event cards and the lower-left corner of hero cards. Each sphere has a distinct identity and play style and is represented by an icon and color.

Leadership ℣**:** The sphere of leadership emphasizes a hero's charisma and influence, particularly a hero's potential to lead, inspire, and command both allies and other heroes.

Lore 📖**:** The sphere of lore emphasizes the potential of a hero's mind, particularly that hero's wisdom, experience, and specialized knowledge.

Spirit ✳**:** The sphere of spirit emphasizes the strength of a hero's will, particularly that hero's determination, resilience, courage, loyalty, and heart.

Tactics ⚔**:** The sphere of tactics emphasizes a hero's martial prowess, particularly that hero's combat effectiveness and tactical mastery.

Player Decks

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game core set contains the following four starter decks:

Leadership Deck

The Leadership deck is an all-purpose deck with tools for a wide range of situations. This deck also contains a number of cards that can be used to assist and support the other players in the game.

Heroes: Aragorn, Théodred, Glóin
Cards: All copies of cards numbered 13–27 and one copy of card 73.

Tactics Deck

The Tactics deck is all about combat, and is well-suited for both attacking and defending. The deck uses weapons and armor to bolster its heroes so they can go toe-to-toe with the enemies of Middle-earth.

Heroes: Gimli, Legolas, Thalin
Cards: All copies of cards numbered 28–42 and one copy of card 73.

Spirit Deck

The Spirit deck focuses on its characters' willpower and their ability to successfully explore locations and make progress on their quest. It is also well-suited for resisting the various threats of the encounter deck.

Heroes: Éowyn, Eleanor, Dúnhere
Cards: All copies of cards numbered 43–57 and one copy of card 73.

Lore Deck

The Lore deck is good at keeping its characters alive, and providing the player a variety of options for each situation with powerful card draw effects. This deck rewards players who anticipate threats and are prepared to meet those threats when they emerge.

Heroes: Denethor, Glorfindel, Beravor
Cards: All copies of cards numbered 58–72 and one copy of card 73.

Scenario and Encounter Deck

"Passage Through Mirkwood" is the game's introductory scenario. To set up this scenario, take the quest cards "Flies and Spiders" (119), "A Fork in the Road" (120), "A Chosen Path" (121), and the other "A Chosen Path" (122) and arrange them as a four-card deck as shown below.

Quest cards always begin with Stage "A" sides placed faceup.

Each scenario has a unique encounter deck as depicted by the set icons presented on the scenario's quest card.

Encounter Set Icons

For the "Passage Through Mirkwood" scenario, gather all encounter cards that contain the set icons listed below. This consists of cards 74–80, and 89–100.

These are the set icons for the "Passage Through Mirkwood" scenario.

Setup

To set up a game of *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game*, perform the following steps in order.

1. **Shuffle Decks:** Shuffle the encounter deck and each player deck separately. Do not shuffle the hero cards into the player decks, and do not shuffle the quest cards into the encounter deck.

2. **Place Heroes and Set Threat Levels:** Each player places their heroes in their own play area, adds together the threat cost of each of their own heroes, and sets their threat dial to that value.

Threat Cost

3. **Create Token Bank:** Place the damage, progress, and resource tokens in separate piles next to the encounter deck.

4. **Determine First Player:** Select a first player. That player takes the first player token and places it in his or her play area. If players cannot decide who should be the first player, determine a first player randomly.

5. **Draw Starting Hand:** Each player draws six cards from the top of his or her deck. If a player does not wish to keep this starting hand, that player may shuffle the six cards back into his or her deck and draw another set of six cards. A player must keep the second set of six cards as a starting hand.

6. **Place Quest Cards:** Place the quest cards for the scenario near the encounter deck. The quest cards are arranged as described in the "Scenario and Encounter Deck" section, with the stage "1A" side on top and each subsequent card beneath it increasing in sequence.

7. **Perform Scenario Setup Instructions:** Perform the "Setup" instructions presented on the stage "1A" quest card. Then, flip the card to the stage "1B" side. The game is now ready to begin.

Suggested Play Area
(One player, mid-game)

Staging Area

Quest

Active Location

Encounter Deck

Encounter Discard

Engaged Enemies

First Player Token

Token Bank

Heroes

Allies

Deck

Discard

Threat Dial

Playing the Game

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is played over a series of rounds. Each round consists of seven phases that players resolve in the following order: 1: Resource, 2: Planning, 3: Quest, 4: Travel, 5: Encounter, 6: Combat, and 7: Refresh.

After all seven phases have resolved, a new game round begins, starting with the resource phase. Rounds continue to resolve in this way until the game ends, which is described later.

Phase 1: Resource

The resource phase represents the heroes gathering supplies, finding allies, and obtaining information, which are represented in the game by resource tokens and cards. The heroes will use these resources to overcome the machinations of the Dark Lord.

To resolve the resource phase, players perform the following steps in order:

1. Gain Resources
2. Draw Cards

Each step of the resource phase is resolved by all players simultaneously. After performing the steps of the resource phase, proceed to the planning phase.

Step One: Gain Resources

For each hero a player has in play, that player takes one resource token from the supply and places it in that hero's resource pool. Each hero has a resource pool next to it that contains that hero's resource tokens. Players spend tokens from their heroes' resource pools to play cards from their hands, which is described later.

Token Bank

Step Two: Draw Cards

Each player draws one card from the top of his or her deck and adds it to his or her hand of cards. (There is no hand limit.) A player's deck consists of allies, attachments, and events that can aid the heroes during the game.

Phase 2: Planning

The planning phase represents the mustering of the heroes before the next leg of their journey—preparing them with the items and allies they need for a successful quest.

During this phase, players can play ally and attachment cards from their hands. Ally cards represent friends, followers, and companions of the heroes, and attachment cards represent weapons, armor, items, artifacts, and skills that can aid the heroes during their adventure.

A card's type is indicated at the bottom of the card.

Starting with the first player and proceeding clockwise, each player has an opportunity to play any number of ally and attachment cards from his or her hand. To play a card, a player must pay the card's cost, which is described later. Then, the card is played and placed in that player's play area. After each player has had an opportunity to play cards, proceed to the quest phase.

Paying Costs

To pay a card's cost, a player must spend a number of resources equal to that cost, which is presented in the upper-left corner of the card.

Cost

When a player spends a resource, that player takes a resource from one of their heroes' resource pools and places it in the supply. A player cannot pay for a card using a resource from any pool; he or she must take the resources from a pool that provides a **RESOURCE MATCH**. That is, the resources must be spent from heroes whose sphere of influence matches the sphere of influence of the card being played. For example, a player can only play cards that have a leadership icon by spending resources from heroes that also have a leadership icon.

A player can spend resources from multiple heroes' resource pools to pay for a single card if there is a resource match among that card and each pool from which resources are spent. If a card has a cost of "0," a player can play that card without spending any resources; however, the player must have at least one hero in play that matches that card's sphere of influence.

If players are using the starter decks, they will not have to worry about resource matching as all the cards in those decks are from a single sphere of influence.

Placing Cards

Each card type dictates how it is played.

When a player plays an ally card, place the card in that player's play area.

When a player plays an attachment card, **ATTACH** it to another card that is already in play by placing it in a position so that the in-play card slightly overlaps the attachment.

The "Steward of Gondor" card is attached to the "Aragorn" card.

Each attachment card describes the set of cards it can be attached to; most are attached to hero cards, but some can be attached to other card types.

Attach to a hero.

The "Steward of Gondor" card can only be attached to hero cards.

Paying for Cards

Sphere Icon

To Token Bank

1. Glóin has a leadership resource icon and three resource tokens in his resource pool. Éowyn and Eleanor each have a spirit resource icon and two resource tokens in their resource pools.

2. Tom wants to play Northern Tracker from his hand. Northern Tracker has a spirit sphere icon so he can pay its cost only with resources from characters that have the spirit icon.

3. Tom spends two resource tokens from Éowyn's resource pool and two resource tokens from Eleanor's resource pool, returning those tokens to the token bank. He places Northern Tracker faceup in his play area.

Phase 3: Quest

The quest phase provides the heroes with an opportunity to make progress on their journey. During this phase, the players can commit characters to advance their quest.

To resolve the quest phase, players perform the following steps in order:

1. Commit Characters
2. Staging
3. Quest Resolution

Each step is described below. After the players have performed the steps of the quest phase, proceed to the travel phase.

Step One: Commit Characters

Starting with the first player and proceeding clockwise, each player has an opportunity to commit any number of his or her characters to the current quest card. Each hero and each ally is a **CHARACTER**.

To commit a character, a player must exhaust that character. A player may commit multiple characters to the quest during this step; however, if a character is already exhausted, it cannot be committed.

Step Two: Staging

After each player has had the opportunity to commit characters to the quest, the players reveal a number of cards equal to the number of players from the encounter deck; this is called **STAGING**, and it is used to populate the play area with new locations, enemies, and objectives. This step occurs every round, even if the players did not commit any characters to the quest.

Reveal the encounter cards one at a time. If a card's text has a "When Revealed" effect, resolve that effect by following its instructions before revealing the next card.

When a "King Spider" is revealed, each player must exhaust a character.

When Revealed:

When an enemy, location, or objective card is revealed during this step, it is placed in the **STAGING AREA**, which is a play area in the center of the table, near the quest deck.

Staging Area

Quest Deck

When a treachery card is revealed, resolve the text on the card, and then place it in the encounter deck discard pile, unless the card specifically states otherwise.

If there are no cards in the encounter deck during this phase, shuffle the encounter deck discard pile to create a new encounter deck.

Step Three: Quest Resolution

During this step, the players' efforts at advancing on their quest are compared against the forces arrayed by the encounter deck to determine how much progress is made.

Each character has a willpower strength that is used to advance the quest.

Aragorn has a willpower strength of "2."

Each enemy and location has a threat strength that is used to impede a character's quest progress.

The "King Spider" and the "Great Forest Web" each have a threat strength of "2."

To resolve the quest, each character that is committed to the quest adds its willpower strength together to create a total willpower strength of all committed characters. Then, the threat strength of all enemies and locations in the staging area are added together to create a total threat strength. The players compare the total willpower strength to the total threat strength and determine the progress of their quest as follows:

- **Successful:** The total willpower is greater than the total threat.
- **Unsuccessful:** The total willpower is less than the total threat.
- **Neither:** The total willpower is equal to the total threat.

The quest resolution determines if players gain progress tokens or increase their threat. If the quest resolution is neither successful nor unsuccessful, nothing happens.

SUCCESSFUL QUEST

If the quest is successful, a number of progress tokens equal to the difference between the total willpower strength and the total threat strength are placed on the currently revealed quest card.

Each quest card has number of quest points. When the number of progress tokens on

the quest card is equal to or greater than the number of quest points, the players complete that stage of the quest, which is described later.

Progress tokens are placed on quest cards.

Sometimes there is an **ACTIVE LOCATION**, which is a location card that is placed near the revealed quest card instead of in the staging area. A location becomes active when a player travels to it, which is described later.

If there is an active location, any game effect or ability that places progress tokens on the current quest places progress on the active location instead, up to the value of the location's quest points.

If the number of progress tokens on an active location is equal to that location's quest points, that location is **EXPLORED**. Discard that location and place any additional progress tokens on the current quest card as normal.

This location is explored.

UNSUCCESSFUL QUEST

When a quest is unsuccessful, increase each player's threat dial by an amount equal to the difference between the total threat and the total willpower. If a player's threat dial reaches "50," that player is immediately eliminated from the game, which is described on page 20.

Resolving a Quest

Tom's Character **Kris's Characters**

Staging Area

Quest Deck

Encounter Deck

1. Tom exhausts Éowyn to commit her to the quest. Kris exhausts both Aragorn and the Guard of the Citadel to commit them to the quest. A Gladden Fields location card is already in the staging area.

2. The players reveal one card per player from the encounter deck, and add them to the staging area.

3. The players add the total committed ☼ and compare it to the total ♛ in the staging area. The result is 7 ☼ and 7 ♛. Tom uses Éowyn's card ability to increase the players' ☼ to eight, which allows them to place one progress token on the current quest card.

Phase 4: Travel

The travel phase represents the heroes' exploration and navigation across the lands of Middle-earth.

The staging area frequently contains one or more location cards. During this phase, the players can choose to travel to one of those locations.

To travel to a location, the players choose one location in the staging area. Place that location next to the revealed quest card, indicating that it is the active location. There can only be one active location at a time. If there is already an active location, players cannot travel to a new location.

A location card's text may have a "Travel" effect, which indicates an effect that players must resolve to travel to that location.

When players travel to a location in the staging area, that location becomes active.

Staging Area **Quest Deck** **Active Location**
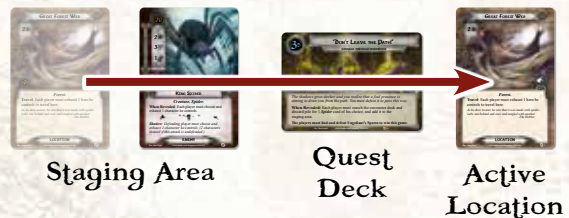
Before traveling to the "Great Forest Web," each player must exhaust a hero.

Travel:

Traveling to Locations

Location cards that are in the staging area contribute their threat strength during the quest phase, making it more difficult for players to quest successfully. Players can remove those locations from the staging area by traveling to them. The active location—as it is not in the staging area—does not contribute its threat while players are questing.

When the players have placed enough progress tokens on the active location (through questing or through card abilities), they have adequately explored it and rid it of any threats. Exploring a location in this manner discards it, and this enables the players to travel to a new active location during a later travel phase.

Phase 5: Encounter

The encounter phase represents the confrontation and pursuit of enemies. During this phase, each player has an opportunity to engage an enemy in the staging area, and then enemies potentially engage the players.

To resolve the encounter phase, players perform the following steps in order:

1. Optional Engagement
2. Engagement Checks

After all players have performed the steps of the encounter phase, they proceed to the combat phase. Each step is described in the next column.

Step One: Optional Engagement

In an order of their choice, each player has an opportunity to ENGAGE one enemy in the staging area. To engage an enemy, a player takes an enemy card from the staging area and places it in his or her play area, facing off against his or her characters.

Step Two: Engagement Checks

After each player has had an opportunity to engage an enemy, players take turns making ENGAGEMENT CHECKS. Starting with the first player and continuing clockwise, each player makes an engagement check by comparing the value of his or her threat dial to the engagement cost of each enemy in the staging area.

Engagement Cost

The enemy in the staging area that has the highest engagement cost that is equal to or lower than the value of that player's threat dial engages that player. When an enemy engages a player, its card is placed in that player's play area—this is identical to when a player engages an enemy. Note that any time an engagement occurs (either by player option, by an engagement check, or by a card ability), the end result is the same: the player is considered to have engaged the enemy and the enemy is considered to have engaged the player.

Players continue making engagement checks in clockwise order until there are either no enemies remaining in the staging area or until the enemies remaining in the staging area cannot engage any of the players.

Making Engagement Checks

Tom

Kris

Staging Area

1. The first player, Tom, makes the first engagement check. The King Spider has the highest engagement cost (20) that is equal to or lower than Tom's threat level of 24, so the King Spider engages Tom.

2. Kris makes the next engagement check. Ungoliant's Spawn has the highest engagement cost (32) that is equal to or lower than Kris's threat level of 35, so Ungoliant's Spawn engages Kris.

3. Tom makes the next engagement check. His threat level is lower than the engagement cost of the enemies remaining in the staging area, so neither of those enemies engage Tom.

4. Kris makes the next engagement check. The Forest Spider has the highest engagement cost (25) that is equal to or lower than Kris's threat level of 35, so the Forest Spider engages Kris.

5. Tom, and then Kris, each make another engagement check. The engagement cost of Hummerhorns is higher than each of their threat levels, so it remains in the staging area at this time. Since all players have made successive engagement checks without being engaged by any enemies, the "Engagement Checks" step is now complete.

Phase 6: Combat

The combat phase represents the battles and struggles between the heroes of Middle-earth and the enemies who seek to hinder or harm them during their quest. During this phase, engaged enemies potentially gain unpredictable tactics through shadow cards. Then, both enemies and players have opportunities to attack.

To resolve the combat phase, perform the following steps in order:

1. Deal Shadow Cards
2. Resolve Enemy Attacks
3. Resolve Player Attacks

Each step is described below. After performing the steps of the combat phase, proceed to the refresh phase.

Step One: Deal Shadow Cards

Deal one card from the encounter deck to each enemy that is currently engaged. These cards are called SHADOW CARDS. Place each shadow card facedown next to the enemy to which it is being dealt. Players cannot yet look at these shadow cards.

First, deal shadow cards to the enemies engaged with the first player, and then deal to enemies engaged with each other player in clockwise order. When dealing cards to enemies engaged with a player, those cards are dealt to enemies with the higher engagement cost before they are dealt to enemies with a lower engagement cost. If the encounter deck is depleted of cards, any enemies that cards were not dealt to do not receive shadow cards this round.

Shadow cards may have a "Shadow" effect presented on the faceup side of the card that players resolve during combat, which is described later.

Shadow Effect

Shadow:

If an enemy card leaves play, its shadow card is discarded. At the end of the combat phase, all shadow cards that were dealt this round are discarded.

Step Two: Resolve Enemy Attacks

After shadow cards have been dealt to each engaged enemy, resolve enemy attacks. Starting with the first player and continuing clockwise, each player performs the following steps in order for each enemy he or she is engaged with. The player performing the steps is referred to as the active player.

a. **Choose An Enemy:** The active player chooses one engaged enemy in his or her own play area that has not attacked yet this round.

b. **Declare Defender:** The active player may choose one of his or her ready characters as a defender. Exhaust that character. Alternatively, a player may declare no defenders.

c. **Resolve Shadow Effect:** The active player flips the chosen enemy's shadow card faceup and resolves any shadow effects on that card. Any non-shadow effects on the shadow card are ignored.

d. **Determine Damage:** If the defender's defense strength is equal to or greater than the chosen enemy's attack strength, the defender suffers no damage.

Attack Strength **3**

Defense Strength **1**

Attack Strength **3**

Defense Strength **2**

Otherwise, subtract the defense strength of the defender from the attack strength of the chosen enemy. The defender suffers damage equal to the difference. Damage is described in detail under "Hit Points and Damage" on page 20.

If the attack was undefended, assign the full damage from the attack, which is equal to the attacking enemy's total attack strength, to one of the heroes that the active player controls. The hero's defense strength does not reduce the damage assigned by undefended attacks.

Step Three: Resolve Player Attacks

After each enemy that is engaged with a player has performed an attack, the players have an opportunity to use their characters to attack the enemies. Starting with the first player and continuing clockwise, each player may perform the following steps in order for each enemy he or she is engaged with. The player performing the steps is referred to as the active player.

a. **Declare Target of Attack, and Declare Attackers:** The active player chooses one enemy he or she is engaged with and any number of ready characters that he or she controls to attack the chosen enemy. Multiple characters can attack the same enemy.

b. **Determine Attack Strength:** The active player adds the attack strength of each of the declared attackers to determine the combined attack strength for this attack.

c. **Determine Damage:** If the enemy's defense strength is equal to or greater than the combined attack strength of all attackers, the defender suffers no damage. Otherwise, subtract the defense strength of the enemy from the attack strength of the attackers; the enemy suffers damage equal to the difference. Damage is described under "Hit Points and Damage" on page 20.

The active player is permitted to declare one attack against each enemy that player is engaged with, and may repeat the above steps (a–c) until all of these attacks have been declared, or until that player is unable or does not wish to declare further attacks this phase.

Phase 7: Refresh

The refresh phase represents an opportunity for the heroes to rest, recuperate, and regroup. During the refresh phase, perform the following steps in order:

1. **Ready:** Ready each exhausted card in play.

2. **Increase Threat:** Each player increases their threat dial by one.

3. **Pass First Player:** The first player passes the first player token to the next player in clockwise order.

After performing the steps of the refresh phase, proceed to the next game round beginning with the resource phase. Continue to play rounds in this manner until the game reaches a conclusion.

# Defending Against Enemy Attacks

1. Kris is engaged with two enemies, the Forest Spider and Ungoliant's Spawn. At the beginning of the combat phase, one card from the encounter deck is dealt face down to each engaged enemy, as a shadow card.

2. Kris decides to resolve the attack made by Ungoliant's Spawn first. She exhausts the Silverlode Archer, declaring it as a defender against this attack.

3. To resolve the attack, Kris flips the attacker's shadow card faceup. The shadow card is the East Bight Patrol, which gives the attacking enemy +1 ⚔. Kris compares the enemy's total attack strength (6 ⚔) against the Silverlode Archer's defense (0 🛡), and places six damage tokens on the defending character. Since the Silverlode Archer only has one hit point, it is destroyed and discarded from play.

4. Kris resolves the attack made by the Forest Spider. She declares this attack "undefended."

5. To resolve the attack, Kris first flips the attacker's shadow card faceup. The shadow card is the Enchanted Stream, which has no shadow effect. The Forest Spider's attack is 2 ⚔. Since this attack was undefended, Kris must place all the damage on a single hero she controls. She places two damage tokens on Aragorn, who survives the attack with three hit points remaining.

Attacking Enemies
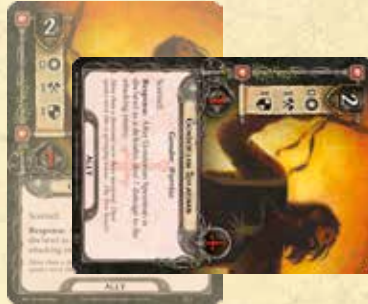
Tom is engaged with two enemies, the Dol Guldur Beastmaster and the Dol Guldur Orcs.

1. Tom declares an attack against the Dol Guldur Orcs, and exhausts Glorfindel as an attacker.

2. Tom takes Glorfindel's attack (3 ⚔) and subtracts the Dol Guldur Orcs' defense (0 🛡), and gets a result of three. Tom places three damage tokens from the token bank on the Dol Guldur Orcs. This enemy started with three hit points, so it is destroyed and discarded from play.

3. Tom declares an attack against the Dol Guldur Beastmaster and exhausts both Legolas (3 ⚔) and the Gondorian Spearman (1 ⚔) as attackers.

4. Tom takes his combined attack (4 ⚔) and subtracts the Dol Guldur Beastmaster's defense (1 🛡), and gets a result of three. Tom places three damage tokens from the token bank on the Dol Guldur Beastmaster. This enemy started with five hit points, so it survives the attack with two hit points remaining. The damage tokens stay on the enemy to indicate that it is damaged.

Concluding The Game

If at least one player completes the final quest card of a scenario, the game ends and all players win. If all players are eliminated from the game before all quest cards have been completed, the game ends and all players lose.

Quest Advancement and Winning the Game

Players complete quests by placing progress tokens on the quest card. When the revealed quest card contains a number of progress tokens equal to or greater than the number of its quest points, that quest card is completed.

When a quest card is completed, players immediately discard the card, revealing the next quest card for that scenario. Excess progress tokens placed on a quest card do not carry over to the next stage of the quest. When a new quest card is revealed, players follow the instructions presented on the stage A side of the card, and then flip the card to the stage B side. If players complete the final stage of a scenario, they win the game.

Player Elimination and Losing the Game

A player is eliminated from the game if that player's threat dial reaches "50" or if all of that player's heroes are destroyed.

When a player is eliminated from the game, that player's hand of cards as well as all player cards he or she controls are discarded. Any enemies that the eliminated player was engaged with are placed in the staging area. Enemies returned to the staging area in this manner retain their damage tokens and attachments. Players that are not eliminated continue playing, revealing one fewer encounter card during future quest phases for each player that was eliminated.

Additional Rules

This section contains additional rules that players need to know to play their first game of *Lord of the Rings: The Card Game*.

Hit Points and Damage

Characters and enemies have a number of HIT POINTS that determine the amount of damage that character or enemy can suffer.

For each damage a character or enemy suffers, one damage token is placed on that character or enemy's card. Each damage token on a card reduces that card's hit points by one. If a character or enemy's hit points are ever reduced to zero or below, that character or enemy is DESTROYED. When a player's character is destroyed, place it in that player's discard pile. When an enemy is destroyed, place it in the encounter discard pile.

Some card effects allow a character to heal. When this happens, damage tokens of the specified amount are removed from that character.

Card Abilities

The text on cards contains many types of card abilities.

Card Ability

There are five categories of card abilities found on hero and player cards: actions, responses, keywords, constant abilities, and forced effects.

Actions

An **ACTION** is an optional ability presented on cards that players can resolve during specific times of the game.

Action Ability

Action:

To resolve an action on a hero, ally, or attachment card, that card must be in play. Generally, players are allowed to resolve actions between phases and between the defined steps of each phase. Appendix I of the Rules Reference provides players with a comprehensive round sequence that indicates the specific times during which they can resolve actions.

Some action abilities are preceded by a specific game phase, such as "Quest Action" or "Combat Action." Such an ability indicates that a player can only resolve that action during the specified phase.

Responses

A **RESPONSE** is an optional ability presented on cards that can resolve immediately after a specific event has occurred during the game. For example, each time a player commits the "Aragorn" hero card to a quest, that player can resolve that card's response ability, spending one resource from that hero's resource pool to ready that card.

Response Ability

Response:

To resolve a response present on a hero, ally, or attachment card, that card must be in play.

Keywords

A keyword is a shorthand for a common game ability that appears on multiple cards. Keywords are found at the top of a card's text box. The rules for each of the keywords are as follows:

Doomed X

If an encounter card that has the "Doomed" keyword is revealed during the staging step of the quest phase or during setup, each player must increase his or her threat by the specified value.

Ranged

A character that has the "Ranged" keyword can attack enemies that are engaged with other players when it attacks.

While another player is resolving player attacks, any player can declare a character with the "Ranged" keyword that he or she controls as an attacker, but the character must exhaust and meet all other standard requirements necessary to perform the attack.

Restricted

The "Restricted" keyword appears on some attachment cards. A character can never have more than two attachments that have the "Restricted" keyword. If a character ever has three attachments that have the "Restricted" keyword, immediately discard one of the attachments.

Sentinel

A player can declare a character that has the "Sentinel" keyword as a defender against enemy attacks made against another player. The defending character must exhaust and meet all other standard requirements necessary to defend the attack.

Keyword

Sentinel.

Surge

When an encounter card that has the "Surge" keyword is revealed during the staging step of the quest phase or during setup, reveal one additional card from the encounter deck. If a card has both the "Surge" keyword and a when revealed effect, resolve the "Surge" keyword immediately after resolving the when revealed effect.

"Victory X"

For rules regarding the "Victory X" keyword, see "Victory Points" on page 29.

Forced Effects

A **FORCED** effect is a mandatory effect on cards that must resolve during specific times of the game.

Forced Effect

Forced:

Since forced effects are mandatory, it is important for players to be aware of the game occurrences that trigger any forced effects that are in play. Players must resolve a forced effect each time the triggering game occurrence specified by the effect occurs.

"When Revealed," "Shadow," and "Travel" effects, which were described earlier in this document, are versions of forced effects that are resolved during common game occurrences, such as when cards are revealed.

Constant Abilities

A constant ability is a mandatory ability that continually affects the game as long that the card bearing the constant ability remains in play. Unlike actions, responses, and forced effects, constant abilities are not presented as a bold header.

Since constant abilities are always affecting the game, it is important for players to be aware of the constant abilities in play. For example, players must remember that if the "Enchanted Stream" location card is in play, they cannot draw cards from their deck.

Traits

Traits appear in a bold, italicized typeface at the top of a card's text box. Traits have no inherent effects, but other card effects may refer to a card's traits.

Traits
Dúnedain. Noble. Ranger.

Event Cards

Event cards provide players with actions and responses that they can play directly from their hands.

To play an event card, a player spends resources equal to the card's cost from his or her resource pools. Like playing an ally or attachment card, the player must have a resource match when paying for an event card.

After playing an event card, the player resolves the action or response on the card immediately. Then, place the card in that player's discard pile.

Unique Cards

Some cards represent specific, formally named characters, locations, and items from the Middle-earth setting. Such cards are known as UNIQUE CARDS and are identified by a ◉ icon that precedes the card's title. A player cannot play a card that shares a title with a unique card that is already in play. A player can, however, play a card that shares a title with a unique card that was removed from play and is in a discard pile.

Neutral Cards

Neutral cards are cards that do not belong to any sphere of influence. *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game* core set contains one neutral card: "Gandalf." To play a neutral card, a player must spend resources equal to its cost, but a resource match is not required.

Start The First Game

This completes all the rules necessary to play a first game of *Lord of the Rings: The Card Game*. We recommend playing the first game using the scenario and decks suggested on page 6 of this book. If questions arise during the game, players can consult the online Rules Reference that includes detailed information about the game's mechanics, which can be found at **fantasyflightgames.com/lotrlcg.**

After playing the first game, read the "Advanced Rules" section to discover how to construct original decks and explore the game's other scenarios.

Advanced Rules

This section contains advanced rules that player will need to know to construct their own decks and play the game's remaining scenarios.

Objective Cards

Objective cards are a type of encounter card that is included in some scenarios. Objective cards can represent scenario-specific items, allies, or goals that heroes may need to discover and make use of during their journey.

When an objective card is revealed during the quest phase, it is placed in the staging like all other encounter cards. Each objective card describes how players can claim the card and attach it to one of their heroes.

Guarded

The "Guarded" keyword appears on some objective cards. After an objective that has the "Guarded" keyword is revealed and placed in the staging area, reveal the next card from the encounter deck and attach it to that objective. A player cannot claim an objective card if there are encounter cards attached to it.

Players resolve encounter cards that are attached to objective cards in the following way:

- **Enemy Card:** The enemy card remains attached to the objective until it is destroyed or leaves play as a result of a card effect.

- **Location:** The location remains attached to the objective until it leaves play by being explored or as a result of a card effect.

- **Treachery:** Treachery cards cannot be attached to objectives. If the revealed card that would be attached to an objective card is a treachery card, that treachery card is resolved as normal, and the objective card will not receive an attachment.

- **Objective:** Objective cards cannot be attached to other objectives. If the revealed card that would be attached to an objective card is another objective, use the next card of the encounter deck to fulfill the original keyword effect, and then resolve the guarded keyword on the second card.

Deckbuilding

Much of the depth and fun of *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game* comes when players conceive and construct original decks, using the cards of this core set and those found in Adventure Packs and Deluxe Expansions.

When constructing a deck, players must obey the following rules:

- A deck must contain a minimum of 50 cards.
- A deck cannot include more than three copies of any card that have the same title.

Within these guidelines, any combination of allies, attachments, and events can be included in a deck.

Each player begins the game with one to three hero cards. Players may confer together before playing to select the heroes they would each like to use during that game. If more than one player desires to use the same hero, they must decide among themselves before the game begins, and the other player(s) must choose different heroes.

Deckbuilding Tips and Considerations

When building a deck, it is important for a player to consider how he or she intends to pay for the cards included in the deck. It may be tempting to use the most powerful trio of heroes available, but is it worth starting the game with the high threat level those heroes would bring? Similarly, a deck full of high cost cards and effects might look powerful on paper, but the time it takes to build up the resources to play those cards could become rather problematic as the enemies mount their assault. A player should also make sure that all the cards in a deck belong to a sphere that matches at least one of the deck's heroes' resource icons so that player does not have cards he or she cannot play.

Each sphere of influence has a distinct flavor, which can be used to a player's advantage when building a deck around that sphere. For example, a deck could be built around the sphere of tactics to support its heroes with an impressive array of armor and weaponry, and then take the fight directly to the enemies that emerge from the encounter deck. As the card pool grows with Adventure Pack expansions, each of the four basic starter decks in this core set can be developed into fully playable standard decks.

It is also possible to focus on multiple spheres when building a deck. A deck built around both the sphere of spirit and around the sphere of lore could focus on self-preservation, with numerous effects that heal hit points and reduce threat. The trick to building around multiple spheres is resource management; having the correct type of resource available at the right time becomes more difficult when a deck is built around two or three different spheres.

Another useful approach when building decks is to follow the cohesion that can be discovered by building around a trait. For example, if a player wishes to run a deck built around three different spheres, it might make sense to use *Dwarf* cards from all three spheres to take advantage of *Dwarf* synergies and card interactions.

Scenario Overview

There are three unique scenarios included in this core set. Each is introduced in this section, along with a list of encounter sets for that scenario's encounter deck.

Passage Through Mirkwood

Difficulty level = 1

Mirkwood has long been a dangerous place, and recently one of King Thranduil's patrols has uncovered disconcerting signs of a gathering menace in the vicinity of Dol Guldur. A party of heroes, controlled by the players, has been assembled to carry a message through Mirkwood, down the Anduin, and eventually to Lórien, to warn Lady Galadriel of the imminent danger.

The Passage Through Mirkwood encounter deck is built with all the cards from the following encounter sets: Passage Through Mirkwood, Spiders of Mirkwood, and Dol Guldur Orcs. These sets are indicated by the following icons:

Journey Down the Anduin

Difficulty level = 4

Having survived the dangers of Mirkwood Forest, the heroes continue their journey along the banks of the Anduin river, toward Lórien, with dire news of a gathering threat in Southern Mirkwood.

The Journey Down the Anduin encounter deck is built with all the cards from the following encounter sets: Journey Down the Anduin, Sauron's Reach, Dol Guldur Orcs, and Wilderlands. These sets are indicated by the following icons:

Escape from Dol Guldur

Difficulty level = 7

While exploring in the vicinity of Dol Guldur at Lady Galadriel's request, one of the heroes' companions is captured by the Necromancer's forces, and is now awaiting interrogation in a dungeon beneath the hill. Knowing their friend's time is short, the heroes decide to attempt a desperate rescue.

The Escape from Dol Guldur encounter deck is built with all the cards from the following encounter sets: Escape from Dol Guldur, Spiders of Mirkwood, and Dol Guldur Orcs. These sets are indicated by the following icons:

Modes of Play

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is intended for both casual players and dedicated enthusiasts. To accommodate different play styles, three modes of play are available: EASY, STANDARD, and NIGHTMARE. These modes provide players with a simple way to adjust the difficulty of the game, creating the type of challenge they desire. In addition to the modes of play, players can add the basic game or expert game rules as well as scoring to any of the three game modes, allowing players to further adjust the game's difficulty.

Easy Mode

Easy mode is ideal for new players and for players who prefer the narrative and cooperative aspects of the game with less challenge. To play a scenario in easy mode, perform the following steps during setup of any scenario:

1. Add one resource to each hero's resource pool.

2. Remove any card from the encounter deck that has a gold border surrounding its encounter set icon.

Some older scenarios, including those in early printings of the core set, do not have the difficulty indicator icon presented on the relevant cards. Please visit **fantasyflightgames.com/lotrlcg** for a list of which cards should be removed for those scenarios.

Standard Mode

To play a scenario in standard mode, simply follow the normal setup instructions for that scenario.

Nightmare Mode

Players who desire a truly difficult challenge should consider using the supplemental Nightmare Decks for each scenario. More information about Nightmare Decks, which are sold separately, can be found at **www.fantasyflightgames.com**.

Scoring and Game Types

Besides the various game modes that players can use to adjust the difficulty of the game, players can also use the scoring system to measure their success as well as the basic and expert game rules to further customize the game's difficulty.

Scoring

For players who enjoy playing through the same scenario multiple times, they can use the following scoring system to measure the success of each game.

If the players win the game, they determine their score as follows:

1. **Determine Initial Score:** Add the following to determine the initial score.
   - The final threat of each player.
   - The threat cost of each destroyed hero.
   - The number of damage on each surviving hero.
2. **Add Round Penalty:** Add 10 for each completed round of the game.
3. **Subtract Victory Points:** Subtract the total number of victory points (described below) the players acquired during the scenario from the above total. This is the player's final score.

With this scoring system, a lower score is desirable. Scoring is a useful tool for evaluating the effectiveness of a deck or party over time or to compare different decks that have completed the same scenario.

Victory Points

Some enemy and location cards award players victory points when they leave play. Cards that award victory points have a "Victory X" keyword presented in the lower-right corner of the card's text box.

When a card that has the "Victory X" keyword leaves play, it should be set aside near a player's threat dial. Then, that card is used when determining the final score at the end of the game.

"Chieftain Ufthak" awards players 4 victory points if defeated.

Victory Points

Basic Game

Newer players or players who want a more basic experience can skip dealing shadow cards during the combat phase. This eliminates an element of surprise that could make the game challenging for beginners. After players are comfortable with this experience, they can begin dealing shadow cards to make combat less predictable and more exciting.

Expert Game

For an expert level challenge, players can attempt to defeat a series of scenarios, such as the three scenarios in the core set using the same combination of players, decks, and heroes. The score from each scenario can be combined together to create a single score that measures the players' success across multiple scenarios.

For an even greater challenge, it is recommended that players do not reset their threat, hit points, or player decks at the beginning of each scenario. When using the expert game rules with the scenarios from the core set, the players should start with the "Passage through Mirkwood" scenario, follow with the "Journey Down the Anduin" scenario, and finish with the "Escape from Dol Guldur" scenario.

Scenario Name

Number of Players

Player Names	Final Threat Level		Threat Cost Of Each Dead Hero		Damage Tokens on Remaining Heroes		Player Subtotal
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	

Notes

Number of Rounds: (tally)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS — THE CARD GAME

	Combined Player Subtotals
−	Victory Points Earned
+	10 Points per Round

Final Group Score

=

Scenario Name

Number of Players

Player Names	Final Threat Level		Threat Cost Of Each Dead Hero		Damage Tokens on Remaining Heroes		Player Subtotal
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	

Notes

Number of Rounds: (tally)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS — THE CARD GAME

	Combined Player Subtotals
−	Victory Points Earned
+	10 Points per Round

Final Group Score

=

Scenario Name

Number of Players

Player Names	Final Threat Level		Threat Cost Of Each Dead Hero		Damage Tokens on Remaining Heroes		Player Subtotal
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	
		+		+		=	

Notes

Number of Rounds: (tally)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS — THE CARD GAME

	Combined Player Subtotals
−	Victory Points Earned
+	10 Points per Round

Final Group Score

=

Credits

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Quick Reference

This page contains an easy-to-reference overview of the game's basic concepts and turn structure.

Round Overview

Each game round consists of the following seven phases:

1. **Resource Phase**
   a. Gain Resources
   b. Draw Card
2. **Planning Phase**
3. **Quest Phase**
   a. Commit Characters
   b. Staging
   c. Quest Resolution
4. **Travel Phase**
5. **Encounter Phase**
   a. Optional Engagement
   b. Engagement Checks
6. **Combat Phase**
   a. Deal Shadow Cards
   b. Resolve Enemy Attacks
   c. Resolve Player Attacks
7. **Refresh Phase**
   a. Ready
   b. Increase Threat
   c. Pass First Player

Keywords

The following section serves as a quick reminder of how each keyword functions. For complete rules on a keyword, see the Rules Reference.

Doomed X: If an encounter card with the "Doomed" keyword is revealed, each player must increase his or her threat by the specified value.

Guarded: After an objective with the "Guarded" keyword is revealed and placed in the staging area, reveal the next card from the encounter deck and attach it to that objective. A player cannot claim an objective if there are encounter cards attached to it.

Ranged: A character with the "Ranged" keyword can attack enemies that are engaged with other players when it attacks.

Restricted: A character can never have more than two attachments with the "Restricted" keyword.

Sentinel: A player can declare a character with the "Sentinel" keyword a defender against enemy attacks made against another player.

Surge: If an encounter card with the "Surge" keyword is revealed, reveal one additional card from the encounter deck (after resolving that card's when revealed effect, if any).

Character & Enemy Statistics

Willpower	✲
Attack Strength	⚔
Defense Strength	🛡
Threat Strength	♛

Spheres of Influence

Leadership	𐤔	𐤔
Lore	📖	📖
Spirit	✶	✶
Tactics	ⴕ	ⴕ