

RIFT COMMANDERS

RULEBOOK & REFERENCE



2 players • ages 12+ • about 30 minutes

RULES OF PLAY

Two documents. This booklet teaches you how to play: it only contains the general rules. During a game, for a question about a card or a keyword, open the Reference: keywords and cards are listed from A to Z, with every clarification.

INTRODUCTION

Rift Commanders is a deckbuilding game for 2 players, ages 12 and up, with games lasting about 30 minutes. Each player is a commander leading a faction. Over the course of the game, they buy creatures, spells and traps from a shared recruitment zone.

Goal: reduce your opponent's health to 0. Each commander starts with 40 health. The first commander at 0 loses the game.

Four factions clash:

Faction	Commander	Play style
Brutal Death (Black)	Hosuld, Wraith of Dread	Poison, sacrifices, discard
Sacred Sentinels (White)	Loth, Supreme Inquisitor	Healing, defense, Cure
Servi Scientia (Blue)	Dr. Zetètikós	Exile, Rift, card search
Heart of the Abyss (Red)	Narr'manox, the Mad Lord	Massive Wound, Rush

Your starting faction is not a prison. Allegiance lets you recruit from the other factions, and the best cards often require two allegiances or more.

COMPONENTS

Item	Quantity	Use
Lost Soul	20	5 per starter deck
Essence Collector	4	1 per starter deck
Volatile Essence	8	2 per starter deck
Starter creatures	8	2 per faction: Plaguebearer (Black), Blessed Guardian (White), Disruption Drone (Blue), Biting Skull (Red)
Recruitment cards	80	20 per faction: 10 creatures, 8 spells, 2 traps
Rites	4	One per faction; only one per player during the game
Counters	per player	Health, allegiance in each faction, poison

The box contains the 4 starter decks, one per faction, so that everyone can play the faction of their choice. A duel uses 2 of them. Unused starter cards stay in the box for the whole game. Use tokens to track your soul essence during the turn.

Exile pile: a shared face-up pile where every exiled card goes. Keep room for it next to the recruitment zone.

SETUP

1. **Pick a commander.** Each player picks a different faction.
2. **Build your starter deck (10 cards):** 5 Lost Souls, 1 Essence Collector, 2 Volatile Essences and the 2 starter creatures of your faction. All starter decks are identical except for these 2 creatures. Shuffle it face down: this is your deck.
3. **Set your counters:** 40 health, 1 allegiance in your faction, 0 in the other three, 0 poison.
4. **Prepare the recruitment zone:** shuffle the 80 recruitment cards, place them face down (the recruit deck) and reveal 8 of them face up in the middle of the table.
5. **Place the 4 Rites** face up next to the recruitment zone.
6. **Pick the first player** at random or, for a rematch, the loser of the previous game.
7. **Draw:** 3 cards for the first player, 5 for the second. There is no mulligan. The first player refills their hand to 5 cards at the end of their first turn, as usual. The second player also gains 2 extra soul essence at the start of their first strategy phase; it is lost at the end of the turn like any other essence.

ANATOMY OF A CARD

Location	Information
Blue circle, top left	Soul cost: the price to buy the card from the recruitment zone
Faction icons under the name	Required allegiance: one icon = 1 allegiance point needed in that faction
Icon left of the name	Type: claw = Creature, spiral = Spell, wolf = Trap. Soul cards (Lost Soul, Essence Collector, Volatile Essence) are a separate type
Icon right of the name	The card's faction, the same as the frame color
Text box	The effects, read from top to bottom

Reading the text box:

- : what follows is an activated ability. You use it by exhausting the creature. Every following line, conditional lines included, is part of the same activation, up to a Demise line. Only exception:  Guard, which is used during the opponent's turn and is not an activation.
- **Demise (tombstone):** the effect triggers when the creature is destroyed.
- **Conditional line:** a line that starts with a number followed by a colon (for example "3 Black: Poison 2", written with the Black icon) only applies if your allegiance in that faction reaches that number when the line resolves. Otherwise, skip it.
- **Soul icon (blue dot):** each dot gives you 1 soul essence.

- **"You may", "up to X":** the effect is optional. Every other effect is mandatory.

Example: a card that requires 2 Red icons and 1 White icon can only be played if you have at least 2 Red allegiance and at least 1 White allegiance.

RESOURCES

SOUL ESSENCE

Soul essence is used to buy cards and raise your allegiance. You gain it by playing cards with the Soul icon: Lost Souls, Volatile Essences, Essence Collector and some faction cards. The gain is mandatory. Essence never goes below 0. It stays available until the end of your turn, then it is lost.

Playing a card costs nothing. A card's soul cost is its purchase price. Once in your hand, a creature is summoned and a spell or trap is played for free, as long as you have the required allegiance.

Buying: pay the soul cost of a card in the recruitment zone and put it in your discard pile. Replace it immediately with the top card of the recruit deck, before any reaction. You can buy as many cards as your essence allows, one at a time. If the recruit deck is empty, emptied slots stay empty and the other cards don't move. Buying is optional. You can buy a card without the required allegiance: allegiance is only needed to play it.

ALLEGIANCE

Allegiance measures your bond with each faction, from 0 to 6. It never decreases.

- **Once per turn**, during the strategy phase, you may pay 1 essence to gain 1 allegiance in the faction of your choice.
- **Allegiance X** effects on cards are added on top of this action and don't count toward the once per turn limit.
- Any point beyond 6 in a faction is lost.
- Allegiance is checked once when you play a card, then again when each conditional line resolves.
- **Threshold:** on cards, "3 Blue: effect" reads "if you have at least 3 Blue allegiance, resolve the effect". Otherwise, the line is skipped.

TURN SEQUENCE

Each turn has three phases, always in this order: initiation, strategy phase, cleanup.

1. INITIATION PHASE

1. **Poison:** if you have at least one poison counter, take as much damage as you have counters, then remove 1.
There is no limit to the number of counters. This damage is not Wound: nothing can cancel or reduce it.
2. If your health drops to 0, you are eliminated immediately and the game ends.

2. STRATEGY PHASE

You take the following actions as many times as you want, in any order, unless stated otherwise:

- **Play a Soul card:** gain the essence shown.
- **Raise your allegiance:** 1 essence for +1 in a faction, once per turn.
- **Cast a spell:** resolve its effects, then put it in your discard pile.
- **Summon a creature:** put it on your battlefield, exhausted.
- **Activate a creature:** exhaust a ready creature and resolve its ⚡ ability.
- **Buy** cards from the recruitment zone.

An action only starts once the previous one is over, waiting effects included. Wound is dealt as soon as the effect that produces it resolves. There is no separate attack phase.

3. CLEANUP PHASE

No cards are played during this phase.

1. **Ready** all your creatures.
2. Resolve "end of your turn" effects. They are waiting effects of the active player: you choose their order.
3. Unspent soul essence is lost.
4. **Keep** 0, 1 or 2 cards from your hand, your choice. Discard the others, along with the Soul cards played this turn. Spells and traps are already discarded after they resolve; creatures stay on the battlefield.
5. **Draw until you have 5 cards in hand.** If your deck is empty, shuffle your discard pile to form a new deck. Do it as soon as you have to draw, even in the middle of an effect, as many times as needed. If both are empty, draw what you can.

So during the opponent's turn, you hold the 5 cards of your next turn. You play your traps from this hand, and an opposing Discard effect targets it. Cards you receive during the opponent's turn are added to it without limit: the 2 kept cards limit only applies at step 4 of your cleanup.

PLAYING A CARD OR ACTIVATING A CREATURE

Every card played and every ability activated follows the same steps. Splitting them this way tells you exactly when each trap and each effect happens.

1. **Announce.** Show the card or point at the creature. Check that the action is allowed: required allegiance, a free battlefield slot for a creature, a ready creature not yet activated this turn for an activation, a Sacrifice cost that can be paid in full. If a condition is missing, the action doesn't happen: take the card back, with no consequence.
2. **The card is played.** It leaves your hand and stays in front of you while it resolves. A summoned creature enters the battlefield. An activated creature is exhausted. From this moment, the card counts as played, the creature as summoned or the ability as activated. Effects triggered by this event (Rite of the Blaze) wait.
3. **Opponent's window.** Before anything resolves, the opponent may play traps without a trigger or "each time" traps. Anointing of Souls played here protects their creatures before the card destroys them. After a summon, this is also the window for Call from the Grave and Burning Hand.
4. **Pay the cost.** Every Sacrifice on the card is paid now, together, even if written further down.
5. **Resolve.** Read the lines from top to bottom. Each line does what it can, then reading continues, even if the previous line did nothing. Nobody acts during resolution, except with a "when" trap.
6. **Finish.** A spell goes to the discard pile, a Soul stays in front of you until cleanup. Then waiting effects resolve, down to the last one.

A summon has nothing to resolve: it goes from steps 1-2-3 to step 6. A trap follows steps 1, 2, 5 and 6: no trap ever responds to a trap.

CREATURES, SPELLS AND TRAPS

CREATURES

- **Summon:** a summoned creature enters your battlefield **exhausted** (turned sideways). You can have at most **5 creatures** in play. With 5 creatures, the creature stays in your hand; as soon as a slot frees up, you can summon it. To free a slot yourself, use a Sacrifice effect.
- **Activate:** a **ready** (upright) creature can be activated once per turn, during your strategy phase: exhaust it and resolve its ☞ ability. A creature can't be activated the turn it is summoned, unless it has Rush.
- **Rush:** a creature with Rush enters ready and can be activated the turn it is summoned.
- **Ready:** your creatures are readied at the end of your turn. So they are ready during the opponent's turn, which lets Guard protect you from the turn right after the summon.
- **Passive abilities** (Aegis, Rush): they work while the creature is in play, even exhausted.
- **Destroyed:** the creature goes straight to its owner's discard pile and loses its abilities. Its Demise waits. It will come back to its deck at the next shuffle.
- **A card that changes zones is a new card.** A creature returned to hand and summoned again enters exhausted, with no memory of its past.

SPELLS

A spell is cast during your strategy phase, if you have the required allegiance. Resolve its effects from top to bottom, then put it in your discard pile.

TRAPS

A trap (wolf icon) is played from your hand **during your opponent's turn**, if you have the required allegiance. Never during your own turn, cleanup phase included. It resolves, then it is discarded, even if it had no effect. When you play a trap, draw a card: a trap doesn't cost you a card from your next hand. Its effect no longer depends on the card: if it lasts until the end of the turn, it keeps working after being discarded.

There are three kinds of traps:

- **No trigger** (Divine Shield, Anointing of Souls): play it when nothing is resolving, especially in the step 3 window, right after a card is played or an ability is activated. Never between two lines of a card. It works until the end of the turn, but not on an effect that has already resolved.
- **"Opponent's turn: each time..."**: same timing. Then, until the end of the turn, it reacts to each matching event, whatever its cause. No retroactive effect. Its effect is a triggered effect: it waits.
- **"Opponent's turn: when..."**: play it right after the described event, even in the middle of an opponent's card. It only reacts to an event caused by your opponent. The trap resolves fully, then the effects it triggered resolve following the usual priority, then the opponent's card resumes where it was. This is the only exception to the rule "a card resolves fully". The window closes as soon as reading resumes.

You can play several traps during the same opponent's turn, including several "when" traps on the same event, one after the other. A trap never responds to another trap, nor to what a trap causes. A card that reached your

hand during the opponent's turn can be played as a trap as soon as nothing is resolving, but not against an event that already happened.

Keeping cards in hand at the end of your turn (up to 2) lets you hold a trap for the opponent's turn, or make them believe you have one.

The 8 traps of the game:

Faction	Trap	Effect
Black	An Eye for an Eye	Opponent's turn: this turn, each creature that wounds you is destroyed and your opponent suffers that much. Unblockable. Draw a card.
Black	Call from the Grave	Opponent's turn: when a creature with Demise is summoned, destroy it. Its Demise triggers. Draw a card.
White	Divine Shield	Opponent's turn: each Wound effect aimed at you is reduced by 1. Draw a card.
White	Anointing of Souls	Opponent's turn: this turn, your creatures can only be destroyed by Guard. Return 2 creatures from your discard pile to your hand. Draw a card.
Blue	Cloning Station	Opponent's turn: each time your opponent buys a card, you may draw a card. Draw a card.
Blue	Soul Trap	Opponent's turn: when your opponent buys a card, exile it. They don't get the essence back and draw 1 card. Draw a card.
Red	Burning Hand	Opponent's turn: when they summon a creature, they choose: Discard 1 or Wound 3. Unblockable. Draw a card.
Red	Return from Hell	Opponent's turn: when your creature is destroyed, take a card from their discard pile or exile. Draw a card.

The clarifications for each trap are in the Reference.

EFFECTS AND KEYWORDS

Only commanders have health. Creatures don't: they never take damage, they are only destroyed. Vocabulary: Wound is the keyword, damage means the health lost. You buy a card from the recruitment zone, you play a spell, a trap or a Soul, and you summon a creature. A keyword written with a capital letter (Destroy, Sacrifice, Wound...) always means the keyword itself: "Destroy" on a card refers to the Destroy X effect, not to every way of destroying a creature.

Keyword	Effect
Soul	Gain 1 soul essence per icon.
Wound X	Deal X damage to the opposing commander. Each occurrence is a separate effect.
Unblockable	This Wound can't be reduced or cancelled.
Poison X	Add X poison counters to your opponent.
Heal X	Regain X health, up to 40.
Cure	Remove all your poison counters.

Keyword	Effect
Sacrifice X	Cost. Destroy X of your other creatures. If you can't pay in full, you can't play the card or activate the ability.
Destroy X	Destroy X opposing creatures of your choice.
Discard X	Your opponent discards X cards from their hand, of their own choice.
Exile X	Exile X face-up cards from the recruitment zone, one at a time. Each is replaced at once.
Rift X	Swap up to X cards from your hand with as many cards from the exile pile.
Research X	Search your deck for up to X cards of your choice, add them to your hand, then shuffle. Empty deck: nothing.
Allegiance X	Split X allegiance points among the factions of your choice.
Rush	The creature enters ready and can be activated the turn it is summoned.
Demise	Effect that triggers when this creature is destroyed. Not when it is exiled.
Guard	During the opponent's turn, cancels a Wound effect; the creature is destroyed.
Aegis X	Each Wound effect aimed at you is reduced by X.

Destroying and exiling: a destroyed creature goes to its owner's discard pile and triggers its Demise. An exiled card goes to the shared exile pile and triggers nothing. Only a Rift effect can take it back.

Each keyword has its full entry in the Reference.

ORDER OF RESOLUTION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- The card text takes precedence over the rulebook.**
- One duel, two players.** "The opponent" is always the other player. A card belongs to its owner and never goes to the opponent; an exiled card belongs to nobody, and a card taken back from the exile pile with Rift belongs to the player who takes it. Each card has a single type: Soul, Creature, Spell, Trap or Rite. Allegiance never decreases.
- Every effect is mandatory**, unless it says "you may" or "up to X": in that case, you choose a number between 0 and X.
- As much as possible.** An effect without enough targets does what it can, then reading continues. An effect with no target does nothing. A card can be played even if its effects have no consequence, as long as its cost is paid.
- No action during a resolution.** You can't buy, play a card or spend essence between two lines of a card, nor while effects are waiting. Only exceptions: the opponent's window, right after a card is played or an ability is activated (even if effects are already waiting), and "Opponent's turn: when..." traps.
- Who chooses.** The player resolving the effect chooses its targets: destroyed creatures, exiled cards, allegiance split. Exception: for Discard, the victim chooses.
- Public information.** Played cards, the battlefield, the discard pile, the exile pile, the counters and the number of cards in each deck and each hand are visible to everyone. The contents of hands and decks are

secret.

8. **Immediate end.** As soon as a commander drops to 0, the game ends, even in the middle of a card. Everything left to resolve is ignored.

CHAINS

A card always resolves fully before anything else happens. Triggered effects wait their turn.

1. **A card or activation resolves completely**, effect by effect, from top to bottom.
2. **Triggered effects wait.** A Demise, an "each time" effect, a Rite or end of turn effect is put on hold. Waiting effects resolve when the card or activation is over. They never modify a card being resolved.
3. **The active player goes first.** While effects are waiting, the active player resolves one of theirs, of their choice, if they have any; otherwise, the opponent resolves one of theirs. After each resolved effect, start over. A newly triggered effect joins its owner's waiting effects: the active player always has priority, even over effects that appear along the way. An effect belongs to the owner of the card that produces it: the Demise of an opposing creature you destroy is your opponent's effect.
4. **A waiting effect always resolves**, even if its source left play. If it no longer has a target, it does nothing and disappears.
5. **A card's text can make an exception.** "Immediately" acts right away. "After its effects" waits for the end of the activation.
6. **Conditional lines are checked as they are read.** If the allegiance threshold isn't reached at that moment, the line is skipped. Allegiance gained further down the card doesn't count for a line already read, but counts for the following ones.
7. **Guard, Aegis and Divine Shield are not triggered effects.** They modify a Wound effect at the very moment it resolves.

DEFENSE

Three things protect your commander against Wound: Guard, Aegis and the Divine Shield trap. None of them works against poison or against Unblockable Wound. A Wound effect always targets the opposing commander of the player who produces it.

♣ **Guard:** during your opponent's turn, when a Wound effect targets you, you may exhaust this ready creature to **cancel that effect entirely**. The creature is then destroyed, and its Demise triggers. One Guard cancels a single effect. Guarding is not an activation: the creature only needs to be ready.

Aegis X: while this creature is in play, each Wound effect aimed at you is reduced by X. It isn't exhausted and isn't destroyed. Several Aegis don't stack: only the strongest applies.

Facing a Wound effect aimed at you:

1. Aegis reduces the damage.
2. Divine Shield, if active, reduces the remaining damage by 1 more.
3. You decide whether to use a Guard to cancel what remains.
4. The remaining damage is dealt. If a commander drops to 0, the game ends.

Damage cancelled or reduced to 0 is not dealt and triggers nothing.

RITES (PASSIVE CARDS)

The first player to reach **6 allegiance** in a faction takes that faction's Rite and keeps it in front of them until the end of the game. There is only one copy of each Rite: once taken, it is no longer available. Each player can own only one Rite for the whole game, placed on their Rite slot. If they reach 6 in another faction while already owning one, they take nothing: that Rite remains available to the opponent. A Rite once gained can never be lost.

Faction	Rite	Effect
Black	Rite of Ruin	Each time one of your creatures is sacrificed or destroyed: Poison 1.
White	Rite of Grace	End of your turn: Heal 1, then convert all your unspent essence into Heal or Wound.
Blue	Rite of Antimatter	When you exile a card: Wound 2 (3 for a creature). Unblockable.
Red	Rite of the Blaze	Your creatures have Rush. Each time you summon a creature: Wound 1. Unblockable.

A Rite is taken the moment 6 is reached, even in the middle of a card or during the opponent's turn, and acts from the next event on, never on what happened before. Its effects are triggered effects: they wait and follow the order of resolution. A Rite is neither a creature nor a card in play: no effect can target it. The clarifications for each Rite are in the Reference.

END OF THE GAME

- **Defeat:** a commander whose health drops to 0 loses immediately, at any time during the turn, including during their initiation phase.
- **Victory:** the commander still alive wins. The game ends at the first commander at 0: everything still waiting or left to read is ignored. No effect wounds both players at once, so there is never a draw.

EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: BLOOD SACRIFICE

You play Blood Sacrifice (Sacrifice 1, Destroy 1, Exile 1). You have a Plaguebearer in play, and your opponent has a Pyrobomb.

1. Cost: you sacrifice your Plaguebearer. Its Demise (Poison 1) waits.
2. Destroy 1: you destroy the opposing Pyrobomb. Its Demise (Wound 2) waits.
3. Exile 1: you exile a card from the recruitment zone.
4. The card has resolved. You are the active player: your Plaguebearer's Demise resolves (your opponent receives 1 poison counter). If you own the Rite of Ruin, its Poison 1 also goes before the Pyrobomb.
5. Then the Pyrobomb's Demise: your opponent deals you Wound 2. It's your turn: you can't guard.

EXAMPLE 2: HERALD OF THE APOCALYPSE

You activate the Herald (Sacrifice 1, Wound 6, Poison 2) and sacrifice a Biting Skull (Demise: Wound 2). The Herald's Wound 6 and Poison 2 resolve first. Only then does the Biting Skull's Demise deal Wound 2. If your only creature is the Herald itself, you can't activate it: it can't sacrifice itself.

EXAMPLE 3: DESTROY AGAINST TOO FEW CREATURES

You play Death's Embrace (Sacrifice 1, 2 Souls, Destroy 2) while your opponent has only one creature. You must be able to pay Sacrifice 1. You gain 2 essence, then Destroy 2 destroys the only opposing creature. The second Destroy point is lost.

EXAMPLE 4: A TRAP IN THE MIDDLE OF AN ACTIVATION

Your opponent casts a spell: Wound 3, then Exile 1. You have An Eye for an Eye in hand, but it only reacts to creatures: you can't play it. Next turn, they activate their Venomous Warrior (Wound 3, then Poison 1). The Wound is dealt: you play An Eye for an Eye right after, and your opponent also suffers Wound 3, Unblockable. The Warrior finishes its activation (Poison 1), then it is destroyed. Until the end of the turn, every other creature that deals you Wound meets the same fate.

EXAMPLE 5: GUARD, AEGIS AND DIVINE SHIELD

During your opponent's turn, you have Empress Salome (Aegis 2, Demise: Destroy 2) and a ready Blessed Guardian. You play Divine Shield. Your opponent activates Kerberos (Wound 5, then Destroy 1).

1. Wound 5: Aegis reduces it to 3, Divine Shield to 2. You guard with the Blessed Guardian: the effect is cancelled, the Guardian is destroyed and its Demise (Heal 3) waits.
2. Destroy 1: your opponent destroys the Empress. Her Demise (Destroy 2) waits.
3. The activation is over. The active player has no waiting effect: you resolve yours in the order of your choice, Heal 3, then Destroy 2 on two opposing creatures.

EXAMPLE 6: CHAINED DEMISE

You activate your Berserker (Wound 3). Your opponent guards with their Pyrobomb (Guard, Demise: Wound 2): your Wound is cancelled and the Pyrobomb is destroyed. Its Demise waits and resolves after your activation: it deals you Wound 2. It's your turn, so you can't guard against it.

EXAMPLE 7: ANOINTING OF SOULS

Your opponent activates Kerberos (Wound 5, Destroy 1). In the window, you play Anointing of Souls and draw a card. Wound 5: you guard with your Blessed Guardian. It is destroyed despite Anointing, because Guard is the only exception, and its Demise waits. Destroy 1 destroys nothing: your other creatures are protected until the end of the turn. Later, your opponent casts Purgation (Destroy 1, Wound 3): the Destroy has no effect, the Wound 3 is dealt normally. Anointing only protects your creatures: if your opponent sacrifices theirs to pay a Sacrifice, they are destroyed.

EXAMPLE 8: A RITE TAKEN TOO LATE

You have 5 in Black and no Rite. You cast Auto-da-fé (Sacrifice 1, Allegiance 2, Wound 7). The cost is paid first: your creature is sacrificed. Then Allegiance 2 brings you to 6 in Black: you take the Rite of Ruin. It doesn't act

on the creature already sacrificed. However, if one of your creatures is destroyed later in the turn, it triggers.

EXAMPLE 9: RIFT

You cast Wormhole (2 Souls, Rift 1, Wound 1 Unblockable). The exile pile contains a Meteor. You swap a Lost Soul from your hand for it: the Lost Soul goes to the exile pile, the Meteor becomes your card. Your deck loses a starter Soul and gains a strong card. If you have 5 in Red, you can cast the Meteor as soon as Wormhole has resolved.

EXAMPLE 10: A TRAPPED PURCHASE

Your opponent owns the Rite of Antimatter and played Cloning Station earlier in your turn. You buy a Hypernova.

1. You pay, the Hypernova goes to your discard pile, its slot is refilled. Cloning Station triggers and waits.
2. Your opponent plays Soul Trap: the Hypernova is exiled, your essence isn't refunded and you draw 1 card. Their Rite of Antimatter triggers (Wound 2: the Hypernova is a spell) and waits.
3. You have no waiting effect: your opponent resolves theirs in the order of their choice, the Cloning Station draw and the Unblockable Wound 2.

EXAMPLE 11: THE GAME ENDS

Your opponent has 4 health. You activate the Herald and sacrifice a Biting Skull (Demise: Wound 2). The Wound 6 drops your opponent to 0: you win immediately. The Biting Skull's Demise, still waiting, is ignored.

EXAMPLE 12: ELIMINATED BY POISON

You have 3 health and 4 poison counters. In your initiation phase, you take 4 damage: you drop to -1 and lose immediately, before you can play anything.

VARIANT: RECRUITMENT ZONE MULLIGAN

For experienced players who want to depend less on the starting luck.

1. After setup and before the first turn, each player, starting with the first player, may set aside **0 to 2 cards** from the recruitment zone, one at a time.
2. Each card set aside is replaced immediately by the top card of the recruit deck, before choosing the next one.
3. When both players are done, shuffle the cards set aside into the recruit deck.

This variant only affects the recruitment zone. It changes neither your starting hand nor the second player's compensation essence.

CREDITS

- Design: Benoît Morin.
- Icons: game-icons.net, under the [CC BY 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/) license (authors: Lorc, Delapouite and contributors).

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REFERENCE

Use this document during play. The rules are learned in the booklet; here, everything is listed from A to Z. Look up the keyword or the card name: each entry gathers every clarification about it. The same clarification may appear in two entries, since you may look it up under either card.

KEYWORDS FROM A TO Z

AEGIS X

While this creature is in play, each Wound effect aimed at you is reduced by X.

- Aegis is passive: it works even when the creature is exhausted, and the creature is neither exhausted nor destroyed.
- Several Aegis don't stack: only the strongest one in play when the effect resolves counts. Aegis stacks with Divine Shield.
- It stops as soon as the creature leaves the battlefield, even if its Demise is still waiting.
- No effect on Unblockable Wound or on poison.

ALLEGIANCE X

Split X allegiance points among the factions of your choice.

- A faction never goes beyond 6. Extra points are lost, with no carry-over. You may put points in a faction already at 6.
- These points are added on top of the turn's allegiance action (1 essence for 1 point) and don't count toward its limit.
- You can gain allegiance during the opponent's turn, for example with the Demise of Fanatic or Bearer of the Ideal. A Rite can therefore be taken during the opponent's turn. If a single Allegiance X brings you to 6 in two factions at once, you choose which of the two free Rites you take.
- Thresholds remain useful once a Rite is taken: 6 in Blue still counts as 6 for a "6 Blue:" line.
- Allegiance never decreases. A card you could play remains playable.

CURE

Remove all your poison counters.

- Only yours. On the same card, Cure and Poison don't interfere: Poison targets the opponent.

DEMISE

Effect that triggers when this creature is destroyed.

- It triggers whatever the cause of destruction (Sacrifice, Destroy, Guard, An Eye for an Eye), except Call from the Grave. Never when the card is exiled.
- The creature goes straight to the discard pile and loses its abilities. Its Demise waits and resolves even if the card has moved again in the meantime (returned to hand by Anointing of Souls, for example).

- Everything after "Demise:" forms a single effect, read in order. Zealous Defender: Heal 3, then Cure.
- The Demise belongs to the creature's owner. Its Wound targets that owner's opponent. If you destroy an opposing Pyrobomb during your turn, its Demise wounds you, and you can't guard since it's your turn.
- Wound from a Demise doesn't trigger An Eye for an Eye: the creature is no longer in play.

DESTROY X

Destroy X opposing creatures of your choice.

- Only opposing creatures. If there are fewer than X, destroy all you can.
- The chosen creatures are destroyed together. Their Demise effects wait, and their owner chooses the order.
- The Destroy keyword only means the Destroy X effect. Other ways of destroying (Guard, Sacrifice, An Eye for an Eye, Call from the Grave) are not Destroy effects. Anointing of Souls, however, prevents any destruction of the creatures it protects, except by Guard.

DISCARD X

Your opponent discards X cards from their hand, of their own choice.

- They may discard the cards they kept during their cleanup.
- If they have fewer than X cards, they discard their whole hand.
- During your turn, this hand holds the cards of their next turn and their traps.

EXILE X

Exile X face-up cards from the recruitment zone, one at a time. Each is replaced at once.

- The card revealed to replace an exiled card can be exiled by the same Exile X effect.
- If the recruit deck is empty, the slot stays empty. Exile X does what it can if fewer than X cards remain.
- An exiled card goes to the shared exile pile, belongs to nobody and triggers nothing (no Demise). It never returns to the recruit deck. Only a Rift effect can take it back.
- You also exile with Volatile Essence, Hypernova, Soul Trap and the Demise of Disruption Drone and Astral Ravager. All these exiles count for the Rite of Antimatter.

GUARD

🛡️ **Guard:** during the opponent's turn, when a Wound effect targets you, you may exhaust this ready creature to cancel that effect entirely. The creature is then destroyed.

- Only during the opponent's turn. Guarding is not an activation: the creature only needs to be ready.
- You decide after Aegis and Divine Shield, right before damage. Guard cancels everything that remains. If the effect is already reduced to 0, there is nothing to guard.
- The creature is destroyed at once. Its Demise waits, and its owner's Rite of Ruin triggers.
- One Guard per effect. Two creatures can stop two effects, including the Demise of a creature destroyed by the first Guard.
- An exhausted creature can't guard. Your creatures are readied at the end of your turn: a creature summoned or activated on your turn can guard during the following opponent's turn.
- Useless against Unblockable Wound and against poison.

HEAL X

Regain X health, up to 40.

- Only the healing actually applied counts. The rest is lost.
- A commander at 0 has already lost: no waiting Heal saves them.

POISON X

Add X poison counters to your opponent.

- Counters add up, with no limit.
- In their initiation phase, they take as much damage as they have counters, then remove 1. The number of counters doesn't change otherwise: Wound and healing don't affect it.
- This damage is not Wound: nothing reduces or cancels it. Only Cure removes the counters.
- A commander killed by poison loses immediately, before playing anything.

RESEARCH X

Search your deck for up to X cards of your choice, reveal them, add them to your hand, then shuffle your deck.

- Any type of card, only from your deck. Not the discard pile, not the recruitment zone.
- If your deck is empty, the effect finds nothing: the discard pile isn't shuffled in. A card played this turn therefore can't come back through Research.
- Shuffle your deck even if you took nothing.

RIFT X

Swap up to X cards from your hand with as many cards of your choice from the exile pile.

- The swap is only made with the exile pile, never with the opponent. It is optional: 0 to X cards. Impossible if the exile pile is empty.
- You may give any card from your hand, Souls included: it's a way to thin your deck. You may receive any type.
- The cards received are revealed, go to your hand and become yours. Destroyed or discarded, they go to your discard pile.
- They are played under the usual rules, once the current card has fully resolved: a spell or a creature this turn if you have the allegiance, a trap during the opponent's turn.
- The cards you give go to the exile pile, but the swap doesn't count as an exile for the Rite of Antimatter.

RUSH

The creature enters ready and can be activated the turn it is summoned.

- It is only activated once per turn, during your strategy phase, and only once the waiting effects of its summon have resolved.
- Without Rush, a creature is never activated the turn it is summoned.
- The Rite of the Blaze gives Rush to all your creatures, but doesn't ready any exhausted creature.

SACRIFICE X

Cost: destroy X of your other creatures.

- It is a cost. All Sacrifices on a card are paid together, after the trap window and before resolution, even if written further down. Only creatures pay a Sacrifice, never essence.
- Only your other creatures: a creature can't sacrifice itself. An exhausted creature can be sacrificed.
- The cost is paid in full or not at all. With only one other creature, Sacrifice 2 is impossible: the card stays in hand, or the creature stays ready.
- Sacrificed creatures are destroyed together. Their Demise effects wait, and their owner chooses the order. The Rite of Ruin triggers once per creature.
- Anointing of Souls doesn't prevent paying a Sacrifice: it only protects the creatures of the player who played it, during their opponent's turn.
- Sacrificing is the only way to free a slot yourself on a full battlefield.
- Cards with Sacrifice: Auto-da-fé, Blood Sacrifice, Death's Embrace, Essence Collector, Harvest of the Damned, Herald of the Apocalypse (ability), Immolation, Pyro-Inquisitor (ability), Soul Pact.

SOUL (ICON)

Each Soul icon gives you 1 soul essence.

- The gain is mandatory.
- Your essence never goes below 0. It is used to buy and to gain allegiance. The rest is lost in the cleanup phase (see Rite of Grace).
- A Soul card played stays in front of you until cleanup, then goes to the discard pile. It is no longer in your hand: you can't keep it.
- Soul cards go through the same steps as other cards.

UNBLOCKABLE

This Wound can't be reduced, cancelled or prevented by any effect.

- Guard, Aegis and Divine Shield have no effect on it. You can't guard against it: no creature is destroyed.
- Unblockable only applies to Wound. Unblockable cards: Banishment, Burning Hand, Fireball, Hypernova, Meteor, Multiverse Journey, Rite of Antimatter, Rite of the Blaze, Wormhole.

WOUND X

Deal X damage to the opposing commander.

- A Wound effect always targets the opposing commander of the player who produces it. Creatures never take damage.
- Each occurrence is a separate effect, even on two consecutive lines. Each is reduced separately, and each Guard cancels only one.
- Order against a Wound effect: Aegis, then Divine Shield, then the decision to guard, then damage.
- An effect reduced to 0 or cancelled deals nothing and triggers nothing.
- Defeat is checked after each effect: at 0, the game ends at once.
- Vocabulary: "Wound" is the keyword, "damage" means the health lost. Poison deals damage, not Wound.

CARDS FROM A TO Z

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

Black trap. *Opponent's turn: this turn, each creature that wounds you is destroyed and your opponent suffers that much. Unblockable. Draw a card.*

- "When" trap: play it right after an opposing creature in play has dealt you at least 1 damage with its ability, after Aegis, Divine Shield and Guard.
- It stays active until the end of the turn: each opposing creature that later deals you Wound with its ability meets the same fate.
- Return: each time, your opponent suffers as much Wound as you just did, Unblockable. Example: the Venomous Warrior deals you Wound 3, you play An Eye for an Eye, your opponent suffers Wound 3, the Warrior still resolves Poison 1, then it is destroyed.
- A creature is only destroyed once, after the end of its activation. If it has already left play, nothing happens.
- Doesn't react to spells, to Demise (the creature is no longer in play) or to Rites.
- Anointing of Souls doesn't protect this creature: it only protects the creatures of the player who played it.

ANOINTING OF SOULS

White trap. *Opponent's turn: this turn, your creatures can only be destroyed by Guard. Return 2 creatures from your discard pile to your hand. Draw a card.*

- Trap without a trigger. Play it when nothing is resolving, especially right after a card is played or an ability is activated, before it resolves. Never between two lines of a card. The protection doesn't bring back a creature already destroyed.
- **Protection:** until the end of the turn, your creatures can't be destroyed. An opposing Destroy X effect, including one from a Demise (Carnage, Blastling, Empress Salome), destroys nothing. The rest of the opposing card resolves normally.
- **Guard:** the only exception. One of your creatures that guards is destroyed normally, and its Demise triggers.
- **Only your creatures:** Anointing doesn't protect your opponent's creatures. If they sacrifice one to pay a Sacrifice, or if you destroy it with An Eye for an Eye or Call from the Grave, it is destroyed normally.
- **Return:** when you play Anointing, return up to two creatures from your discard pile to your hand. They go to your hand, not into play.

AUTO-DA-FÉ

Spell. *Sacrifice 1, Allegiance 2, Wound 7.*

- The Sacrifice is paid before everything else. If Allegiance 2 brings you to 6 in Black, the Rite of Ruin is taken too late for this sacrificed creature: no Poison 1.

BURNING HAND

Red trap. *Opponent's turn: when they summon a creature, they choose: Discard 1 or Wound 3. Unblockable. Draw a card.*

- "When" trap: play it right after an opposing creature is summoned. One copy, one trigger.

- The opponent chooses: discard 1 card from their hand, or suffer Wound 3, Unblockable. Empty hand: they suffer the Wound.
- A creature destroyed right after being summoned (Call from the Grave) also counts.
- Doesn't react to spells, Soul cards, activations or traps.
- The choice waits: it resolves after the summon and after the active player's waiting effects.

CALL FROM THE GRAVE

Black trap. *Opponent's turn: when a creature with Demise is summoned, destroy it. Its Demise triggers. Draw a card.*

- "When" trap: play it right after the summon of an opposing creature that has Demise.
- Its Demise triggers normally and waits, like the other effects of the destruction (opposing Rite of Ruin).
- The summon did happen: Burning Hand and the Rite of the Blaze can trigger on it.
- Anointing of Souls doesn't protect this creature: it only protects the creatures of the player who played it.

CLONING STATION

Blue trap. *Opponent's turn: each time your opponent buys a card, you may draw a card. Draw a card.*

- Play it before the purchase. One trigger per purchase.
- The draw is optional. It waits and follows the usual priority. Empty deck: shuffle your discard pile.
- A card drawn can be played as a trap as soon as nothing is resolving, but only against a later event: a Soul Trap drawn this way can't exile the purchase that made you draw it.

DIVINE SHIELD

White trap. *Opponent's turn: each Wound effect aimed at you is reduced by 1. Draw a card.*

- Trap without a trigger: play it when nothing is resolving, for example right after a card is played or an ability is activated.
- Until the end of the turn, each Wound effect is reduced by 1, whatever its source: creature, spell, Demise, Rite of Grace. Not Unblockable Wound.
- It applies after Aegis and adds to it: Aegis 2 and Divine Shield reduce Wound 5 to 2. It never reduces below 0 and never increases anything.
- It doesn't act on an effect that has already resolved.

ESSENCE COLLECTOR

Starter Soul. *Sacrifice 1, then 2 Souls.*

- You need a creature to sacrifice to play it.

FANATIC, BEARER OF THE IDEAL

White creatures. *Demise: Allegiance 1.*

- Destroyed during the opponent's turn, they make you gain allegiance during that turn. Reaching 6 gives you the Rite at that moment.

HERALD OF THE APOCALYPSE

Black creature. ⚔ *Sacrifice 1, Wound 6, Poison 2.*

- It must sacrifice another of your creatures. If it is your only creature, it can't be activated.
- With a Biting Skull sacrificed, the Wound 6 and Poison 2 resolve first, then the Biting Skull's Demise (Wound 2).
- If the Wound 6 kills the opponent, the game ends: the waiting Demise is ignored.

HYPERNOVA

Blue spell. *Destroy 5, Wound 4 Unblockable, then exile it.*

- It goes to the exile pile instead of the discard pile. This exile counts for the Rite of Antimatter (Wound 2).
- Under Anointing of Souls, Destroy 5 destroys nothing, but the Wound 4 is dealt and the card is still exiled.
- Once exiled, Rift can take it back.

PYRO-INQUISITOR

White creature. ⚔ *Sacrifice 1, Destroy 1, Wound 2.*

- You need another creature to sacrifice.

RETURN FROM HELL

Red trap. *Opponent's turn: when your creature is destroyed, take a card from their discard pile or exile. Draw a card.*

- "When" trap: play it right after one of your creatures is destroyed during the opponent's turn, whatever the cause (Destroy, Guard...).
- Choose a card that isn't a Soul, from your opponent's discard pile or from the exile pile, and add it to your hand. It now belongs to you.
- Nothing to take: nothing happens, but you still draw.
- You can play the card taken under the usual rules: a spell or a creature on your turn if you have the allegiance, a trap during the opponent's turn.

RITE OF ANTIMATTER

Blue Rite. *When you exile a card: Wound 2 (3 for a creature). Unblockable.*

- Every card you exile counts, wherever it comes from: Exile X, Volatile Essence, Hypernova, Soul Trap, Exile on a Demise.
- The Rift swap doesn't count.
- "Creature" refers to the card's type, wherever it is.
- Each exiled card triggers the Rite separately. The trigger resolves even if the card has left the exile pile in the meantime.
- A card taken back with Rift and then exiled again counts again.
- No retroactive effect: only exiles after the Rite is taken count.

RITE OF GRACE

White Rite. *End of your turn: Heal 1, then convert all your unspent essence into Heal or Wound.*

- It resolves at step 2 of your cleanup phase, before essence is lost. Taken during the turn, it acts from that cleanup on.
- You choose when resolving it: all the essence becomes a single Heal, or a single Wound effect, never a mix. 5 essence: Heal 5 or Wound 5.
- The Heal 1 applies at every end of turn, even without essence; without essence, the conversion does nothing. Healing beyond 40 is lost.
- Its Wound is not Unblockable. Your opponent can reduce it (Aegis, Divine Shield) and guard against it, since it's your turn.
- It comes from the Rite, not from a creature: An Eye for an Eye doesn't react.

RITE OF RUIN

Black Rite. *Each time one of your creatures is sacrificed or destroyed: Poison 1.*

- Once per creature: being sacrificed means being destroyed. Three creatures sacrificed at once give three Poison 1.
- Every cause counts, including a Guard during the opponent's turn or Call from the Grave.
- The Rite and the creature's Demise are two separate effects, in the order of your choice.
- No retroactive effect: a creature sacrificed before you take the Rite doesn't count, even on the same card (see Auto-da-fé).

RITE OF THE BLAZE

Red Rite. *Your creatures have Rush. Each time you summon a creature: Wound 1. Unblockable.*

- Every creature you summon after taking the Rite enters ready and can be activated at once. Your creatures already in play gain Rush, but no exhausted creature is readied.
- Wound 1 for each creature you summon, even if it is destroyed right away (Call from the Grave).
- Only your own summons count, including those of a creature taken back with Rift.

SOUL TRAP

Blue trap. *Opponent's turn: when your opponent buys a card, exile it. They don't get the essence back and draw 1 card. Draw a card.*

- A purchase goes like this: payment, card placed in the buyer's discard pile, slot refilled. Soul Trap is played right after and exiles the card from that discard pile.
- The buyer draws 1 card, shuffling their discard pile if their deck is empty. The purchase did happen.
- If you own the Rite of Antimatter, it triggers (Wound 2, or 3 for a creature) and resolves after the trap.
- A card drawn during this purchase (Cloning Station) can't be used as a Soul Trap on that same purchase.
- The exiled card can then be taken back with Rift, by any player.

VOLATILE ESSENCE

Starter Soul. *1 Soul. Or exile it: 2 Souls.*

- When playing it, choose: 1 essence, or 2 essence by exiling it to the exile pile.
- Exiled, it counts for the Rite of Antimatter (Wound 2) and can be taken back with Rift, by any player.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Activate	Exhaust a ready creature to resolve its ☞ ability. Once per turn, during your strategy phase.
Active player	The player whose turn it is.
Allegiance	Level of bond with a faction, from 0 to 6. Determines the cards you can play. Never decreases.
Battlefield	Your zone of creatures in play, 5 at most.
Commander	The player. Both words mean the same. The only one with health (40 at the start). Hosuld, Loth, Dr. Zetètíkós and Narr'manox are the characters the players embody, not cards.
Destroy	Put a creature in its owner's discard pile (Sacrifice, Destroy, Guard or any other effect). Triggers Demise, unless an exception is written.
Discard pile	Pile of your played, discarded or destroyed cards, face up. Its order doesn't matter. It becomes your deck again when your deck is empty.
Exhausted	Creature turned sideways: it can neither activate nor guard. Its passive abilities still work.
Exile	Put a card on the shared exile pile. Doesn't trigger Demise.
Exile pile	Shared face-up pile of exiled cards. Only Rift takes cards back from it.
Owner	The player whose deck the card is in. A card in the exile pile belongs to nobody. The one you take back with Rift becomes yours.
Ready	Upright creature, which can activate or guard. To ready: turn a creature upright again.
Recruitment zone	The 8 face-up cards that can be bought.
Rite	Passive faction card, taken the first time a player reaches 6 allegiance. One per player. It is neither a creature nor a card in play: no effect can target it.
Soul essence	Resource gained with Soul icons, never negative, lost at the end of the turn.
Target	A Wound effect always targets the opposing commander of the player who produces it.
Threshold	"3 Blue: effect": the effect only resolves if you have at least 3 allegiance in that faction when the line is read.
Triggered effect	Effect caused by an event (Demise, "each time", Rite, end of turn). It waits.
Opponent's turn	Prefix of traps: they are played during your opponent's turn. Playing a trap draws you a card.
Unblockable	This Wound can't be reduced or cancelled.
Waiting effect	Triggered effect waiting for the current card or activation to end before resolving.
Window	Moment when the opponent can play a trap: when nothing is resolving, and right after a card is played or an ability is activated.