



Houses - Skirmish (Official Rules)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
 - Game Overview
 - Object of the Game
 - About These Rules
 2. Game Terminology
 3. Game Layout
 4. The Cards
 - General Card Information
 - Soldier Units (Cards 2-10)
 - 2-Cards
 - 3-10 Cards
 - House Traits
 - Blood Bond
 - Jacks
 - Queens
 - Kings
 - Aces
 - Jokers
 5. Starting the Game
 6. Turn Sequence
 - READY Phase
 - DRAW Phase
 - DEPLOY Phase
 - RESPONSE Phase
 - COMBAT Phase
 - RESOLUTION Phase
 - END TURN Phase
 7. Combat Actions
 - Declaring Attacks
 - Declaring Defenders
 - Resolving Damage
 8. Summary
-

1. Introduction

Game Overview

War is upon us! The kingdoms are divided and the land is in turmoil. Bring stability to the people by defeating the opposition to rule supremely over all. To do this, you must recruit forces from the four royal houses; the quick Diamonds, brutal Clubs, vigilant Hearts and cunning Spades.

Houses-Skirmish is a game of luck and strategy. Each turn a random member of the four houses is drawn from the shared deck and chooses to fight by your side. Who will come to your aid? Will you be victorious?

This game uses a standard deck of playing cards. Inclusion of the Jokers is optional, see below for more details. This game can be played with 2 or more players.

Object of the Game

The primary object of the game is to be the last player remaining by reducing all opponents' life points from 40 to 0. Players lose life points when they are successfully attacked by an opponent's units. Points lost are directly relational to the attack power of each card.

If the last card is drawn from the deck then a "sudden death" scenario occurs. Each player takes one more round starting with the player who drew the last card. The player with the highest life points following this final round wins the game.

About These Rules

This guide is the complete rule set for Houses-Skirmish. Many of the rules below are similar to other card combat style games. As an **experienced player** of such games, you may simply glance through this document and then refer to the Game Layout and Summary sections to begin. As a **first time player** you are encouraged to read through this entirely before starting your first game.

2. Game Terminology

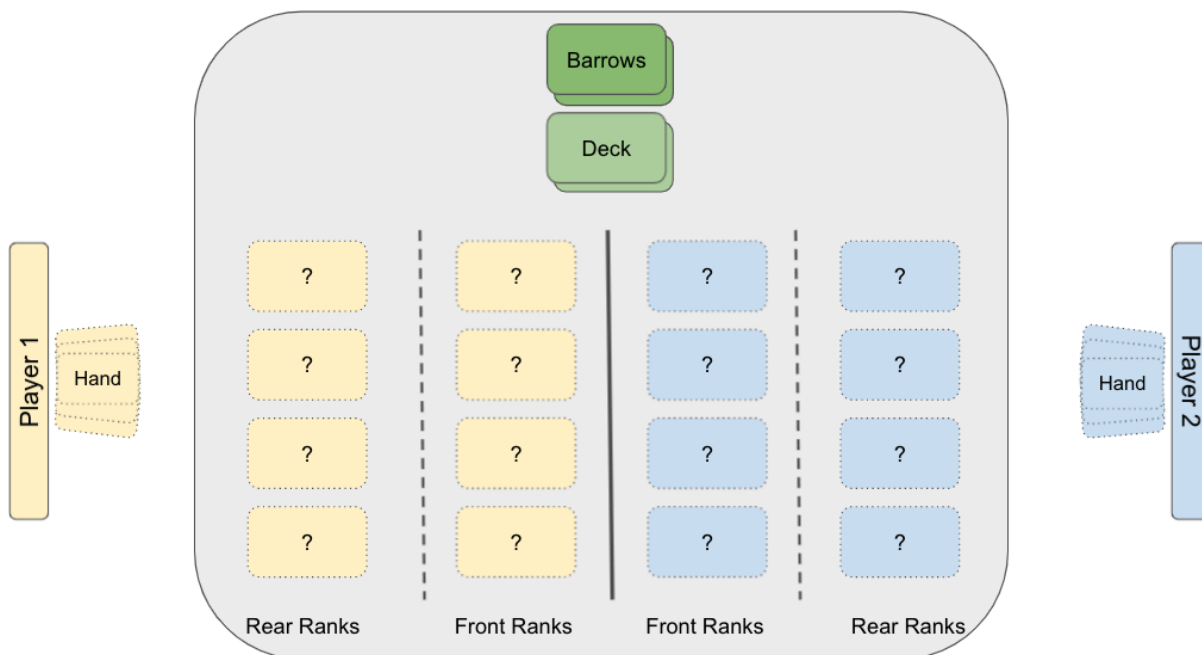
This section highlights some of the most common terms used throughout the game.

- **Barrows:** The shared discard pile. Face-up cards may be resurrected; face-down cards are Soul Burned and permanently out of play. Players may look through the Barrows at any time they wish.
- **Exhausted:** A unit that has performed an action (like attacking or being newly deployed) is turned sideways. It cannot perform actions until it is readied.
- **Reveal:** To show a card's face to all other players. The card remains in its current zone unless an ability says otherwise.
- **Randomly Select/Reveal from Hand:** The target opponent shuffles their hand and holds it face down. The active player picks one card without looking. This card is then affected as per the ability.

- **Soul Burned:** A card that is permanently removed from the game (placed face-down in the Barrows). This happens if a resurrected unit is defeated again, or if a unit summoned by the Necromancer Joker expires. Soul Burned cards cannot be resurrected or returned to play.
- **Unit:** Any card deployed to the battlefield representing a part of a player's army.

3. Game Layout

- **The Deck:** A single, shared draw pile accessible to all players.
- **The Barrows:** A single, shared discard pile accessible to all players.
- **Player Area:** Each player has their own play area in front of them, divided into two ranks:
 - **Front Ranks:** Where soldier units (cards 2-10) are deployed. A player may have a maximum of four units in their Front Ranks. (Note: A Blood Bonded unit counts as a single unit).
 - **Rear Ranks:** Where Kings, Queens, Jacks, Aces, and Jokers are typically deployed or have their effects originate. A player may have a maximum of four units in their Rear Ranks.



4. The Cards

General Card Information

Most cards have an attack and defense value, shown as Attack/Defense (e.g., +5/+5).

Attack Value: Determines damage dealt by the card. **Defense Value:** Indicates damage a card can sustain before being defeated. Defeated or used cards go to the Barrows.

Soldier Units (Cards 2-10)

Deployed to Front Ranks. They utilize their House Trait (see House Traits). All soldiers are deployed in an exhausted state and cannot attack for one round (unless card ability allows otherwise).

2-Cards (Scouts/Soldiers): The two cards of each house may be deployed in two different ways.

1. **Deploy as a Scout:** The two may be deployed as a scout. Each house's card offers a different tactic for scouting. Following the deployment as a Scout, the two will typically move to the Barrows, unless stated otherwise.
 - **2 of Diamonds (Scout):** Randomly select 2 cards from opponent's hand; reveal. Send 2 of Diamonds to Barrows.
 - **2 of Clubs (Scout):** Randomly select 1 card from opponent's hand; reveal. The revealed card goes to Barrows. Send 2 of Clubs to Barrows.
 - **2 of Hearts (Scout):** Randomly select 1 card from opponent's hand; reveal. You may deploy the 2 of Hearts as a +2/+2 soldier in the Front Ranks.
 - **2 of Spades (Scout):** Randomly select 1 card from opponent's hand; reveal. Take the revealed card into your hand. Send 2 of Spades to Barrows.
2. **Deploy as a Soldier:** Deploy as a +2/+2 soldier unit. Follows normal soldier rules (exhaustion, House Trait).

3-10 Cards (Soldiers): Standard military units. Attack/Defense = card number (e.g., 7 is +7/+7). Deployed to Front Ranks, exhaust when attacking.

House Traits (Applied to Soldiers 2-10)

Each suit (House) has a unique trait for its soldier units (2-10). This can be Enhanced by a same-suit King from your Rear Ranks.

1. **Diamonds: *Agile Deployment***
 - Normal: Diamond soldiers enter the battlefield un-exhausted and ready to act on that turn.
 - Enhanced (with Diamond King): If defending an ally, Diamond's soldiers may deliver damage first during the RESOLUTION Phase.
2. **Clubs: *Raging Charge***
 - Normal: When attacking Clubs soldier deals all excess damage to an opposing unit or player of choice.
 - Enhanced (with Club King): If defeated while attacking, Clubs soldier deals its full attack value damage to an opposing unit or player of choice.
3. **Hearts: *Magic Shield***
 - Normal: As an exhausted unit, Hearts soldiers may still defend an ally unit.
 - Enhanced (with Hearts King): If a Hearts soldier would receive lethal damage while defending an ally, they may block the damage and return to

their owner's hand instead of the Barrows. A poisoned Heart will always go to the Barrows rather than the owner's hand.

4. **Spades: *Dual Wielding***

- Normal: When attacking, Spades soldiers may target up to two units in an opposing player's Front ranks.
- Enhanced (with Spades King): When attacking, Spades soldiers may target up to two units in either an opposing Front or Rear ranks.

Blood Bonds

Two soldier cards of the same house (suit) may work together to form a single unit. A Blood bonded unit may be created or split during the DEPLOY Phase. A Blood Bonded unit only occupies a single space in a player's Front Ranks.

- When a Blood Bonded unit is created, one of the cards must be designated as the leader by placing it on top. All damage is applied to this card first.
- When splitting a Blood Bonded unit during the DEPLOY Phase, any card that does not fit within the space requirements of the Front Ranks must move to the Barrows face up.
- Blood Bonded units should be treated as a single unit. Any ability or action that impacts a unit, would impact both cards within a Blood Bonded unit.
- Summoned cards may not form a Blood Bonded unit.

Jacks (+0/+11)

The Jacks represent a sudden decision or action that may be activated during the DEPLOY or RESPONSE Phases. Following this action, the Jack is placed face up in the Barrows. Jacks are deployed to the owner's Rear Ranks.

- **Jack of Diamonds:** The turn is immediately ended and the last card played will be sent to the Barrows.
- **Jack of Clubs:** A unit of choice will deal double damage this turn.
- **Jack of Hearts:** A unit of choice is protected from all damage that may be dealt to it this turn.
- **Jack of Spades:** Immediately gain ownership and move into your Ranks, any unit on the Battlefield. You must have space within your Ranks to accommodate this.

Queens (+0/+12)

The Queens represent a powerful action or maneuver that may be activated during the DEPLOY or RESPONSE Phases. Following this action, the Queen is placed face up in the Barrows. Queens are deployed to the owner's Rear Ranks.

- **Queen of Diamonds:** Following the completion of your next turn, immediately take one more.
- **Queen of Clubs:** Choose any two units currently on the battlefield and send them to the Barrows.

- **Queen of Hearts:** Choose a face-up card from the Barrows and place it directly onto the Battlefield. This unit can only join your forces if you have room within your ranks. If this unit is defeated it is placed **face down** in the Barrows.
- **Queen of Spades:** Look at the top four cards of the deck. Keep one and place the remaining three back on top in any order.

Kings (+0/+13)

The Kings join the Battlefield to support their army and greatly boost the House Traits of Soldiers. All allied units that share a suit with the King may use the Advanced version of their House Traits. Each player may only have a single King on the Battlefield at a time, and Kings are deployed to the Rear Ranks.

Aces (+1/+0 - Poison)

The Aces are professional assassins from each house and deployed to Rear Ranks. Aces can target any Unit on the Battlefield and this cannot be blocked. Targeted units are poisoned and will be placed in the Barrows at the end of the turn. Unless specified otherwise, the Ace will be moved to the Barrows as well, after striking its target.

- **Ace of Diamonds:** The Ace of Diamonds may deploy and attack on either the DEPLOY or RESPONSE Phases. The target is immediately moved to the Barrows. During that phase.
- **Ace of Clubs:** When the Ace of Clubs target leaves the battlefield, that unit's owner must send an additional random card to the Barrows.
- **Ace of Hearts:** The Ace of Hearts may redeploy to the Rear Ranks as a (+0/+1) defender after its target has been defeated. Any unit blocked by this Ace of Hearts will be poisoned.
- **Ace of Spades:** If the Ace of Spades targets a unit in the Front Ranks, then an additional Front Rank unit may be targeted. Both targets will be poisoned.

Jokers (+0/+14 - Variants)

The Jokers are rare and powerful entities. The player may choose which variant of the Black or Red Joker is deployed. Jokers are deployed to the Rear Ranks. Effects or abilities of Jokers take effect during the DEPLOY Phase in which they are deployed onto the Battlefield. Inclusion of the Jokers is optional, so both players must agree to include them at the start of the game.

1. **Black Joker** (*Choose one*):
 - **Doppelganger:** Imitates any other unit of the Player's choice. The Doppelganger gains all abilities and stats of the chosen unit and is deployed to the appropriate rank.
 - **Necromancer** (+0/+14): The Necromancer may (once per turn) allow the player to summon a face up Soldier card from the Barrows during the DEPLOY Phase. That summoned card is immediately placed unexhausted onto the Battlefield (if space permits) and may attack that same turn. Summoned cards will leave the Battlefield during the owner's READY Phase (*at the start of the next turn*) and placed in the Barrows **face down**.
2. **Red Joker** (*Choose one*):
 - **Insane Wizard** (+0/+14): The Insane Wizard casts a spell of madness on all units in the opposing Front Ranks. All opposing Soldiers lose access to utilize their House Traits and the ability to form Blood Bonds. Any existing

Blood Bonded units must be separated. All Front Rank size limits apply. The opposing player must decide which 4 units remain on the Battlefield and all others will move to the Barrows face up.

- **The Binding Spirit** (+0/+14): The Binding Spirit flows about your army, infusing them a sense of togetherness. Now all allied units may form Blood Bonds, regardless of their affiliated house. The Blood Bonded unit's leader defines the House Trait for the unit as a whole. All other Blood Bond rules still apply.
-

5. Starting the Game

1. **Shuffle and Place Deck:** Shuffle the deck (Jokers are optional) and place it within reach of all players.
 2. **Draw Starting Hands:** Each player draws 1 card at a time until all have 5 cards.
 3. **Determine Starting Player** (Advantage Draw):
 - All players draw one additional card.
 - Card values for this draw: Jokers (lowest), Ace (1), 2-10 (face value), Jack (11), Queen (12), King (13, highest).
 - The player with the highest card wins advantage. Ties redraw until single winner.
 - The winner chooses to start first **or** defer.
 4. **Cards to Barrows:** All cards from Advantage Draw go face up into the Barrows.
 5. **Begin First Turn:** The First player cannot draw a card and must begin the match with the 5 cards in their hand.
-

6. Player Turn Sequence

Each player completes these phases in order on their turn:

READY Phase

- Straighten all your exhausted units to indicate a ready status.
- Any units summoned by the Necromancer still in play from your last turn are removed from the Battlefield and become Soul Burned. Place them in the Barrows **face down**.

DRAW Phase

- Draw one card from the shared deck.

DEPLOY Phase

- The following actions must take place in any order:
 - Deploy a new unit to the battlefield into a valid space within your Ranks

- Return one of your units from battlefield to hand (cannot redeploy this turn).
- Split or form any Blood Bonds (see Blood Bond for details).
- Resolve any abilities triggered upon deployment of Scouts, Jacks, Queens, Kings, Aces, etc..

RESPONSE Phase

- After the current player finishes DEPLOY actions, opponents may make their RESPONSE with any cards that are specifically able to Deploy or Activate during this phase.

COMBAT Phase

1. The current player declares which readied units will be attacking and their targets.
2. The owner of targeted units, will declare which available units will defend.

RESOLUTION Phase

1. Calculate and apply damage simultaneously to all attackers and blockers (unless card ability allows otherwise).
2. Remove Defeated Units to Barrows (face up, unless Soul Burned then face down).
3. Resolve any post-combat effects or abilities.

G. END TURN Phase

1. "End of turn" effects or abilities.
2. Pass turn to the next player.

7. Combat Actions

Declaring Attackers (COMBAT Phase)

- **Rear Rank Attackers** (Aces, Jokers, Queens, Kings): Can target any unit within the opponent's ranks (Front or Rear) or the opponent directly.
- **Front Rank Attackers** (Soldiers 2-10): Can only target opposing players or units in opposing Front Ranks (unless card ability allows otherwise).
- Multiple units can target one enemy unit/player.
- Attackers must be ready or not exhausted (unless card ability states otherwise).

Declaring Defenders (COMBAT Phase)

- The defending player declares units that will be defending.
- Any readied Front Rank unit may intercept or defend an attack directed to an allied unit or player (unless card ability allows otherwise).
- Each defender can only be assigned to block one attacker (unless card ability allows otherwise)

Resolving Damage (RESOLUTION Phase)

- Blocked attackers and the defender damage each other simultaneously (unless card ability allows otherwise).
 - Unblocked attackers apply damage to targeted units or players.
 - Consider relevant or active House Traits/abilities.
 - Units taking more damage than their defense value are defeated and sent to Barrows (face up, unless Soul Burned).
-





Summary

This is a quick reference guide for experienced players.

Player Turn Phases:

1. READY: Unexhaust units. Summoned units move to Barrows.
2. DRAW: Draw 1 card.
3. DEPLOY: Deploy move, return, split or create Blood Bonds for units.
4. RESPONSE: Opponents respond to deployments.
5. COMBAT: Declare attackers/defenders.
6. RESOLUTION: Calculate damage, apply traits, remove defeated units.
7. END TURN: "End of turn" effects, pass turn.

House Traits (Soldiers 2-10):

-  (Quick Recovery):
 - *Normal*: Enter battlefield un-exhausted.
 - *Enhanced (w/ King)*: Defending damage to be resolved first.
-  (Raging Charge):
 - *Normal*: Excess damage is passed onto the unit or player of choice.
 - *Enhanced (w/ King)*: Defeated while attacking, full damage to one target.
-  (Magic Shield):
 - *Normal*: Defend while exhausted but cannot apply damage when doing so.
 - *Enhanced (w/ King)*: If defeated while defending aly, return to the player's hand.
-  (Dual Wielding):
 - *Normal*: Target two units in opposing Front Ranks
 - *Enhanced (w/ King)*: Target two units in any opposing rank

Blood Bonds: Two soldiers of the same House (suit) combine into a single unit .

The Cards:

- **Twos** (Scouts or Soldiers +2/+2):

- *Scout* ♦: Reveal 2 random opp. hand cards.
- *Scout* ♣: Reveal & Barrows 1 random opp. hand card.
- *Scout* ♥: Reveal 1 random opp. hand card. Deploy as +2/+2 soldier.
- *Scout* ♠: Reveal & take 1 random opp. hand card.
- **Jacks**: (+0/+11, Rear Ranks)
 - ♦: End turn, last deployed card to Barrows.
 - ♣: Target allied unit will deal double damage this turn.
 - ♥: Negate all damage to an ally this turn.
 - ♠: Gain control of any unit; place it in your hand.
- **Queens**: (+0/+12, Rear Ranks)
 - ♦: Take an additional turn following your next turn.
 - ♣: Remove any two units from the Battlefield to the Barrows.
 - ♥: Resurrect 1 card from Barrows to Battlefield
 - ♠: Look at the top 4 deck cards, keep 1, return 3.
- **Kings** (+0/+13, Rear Ranks): Enhance same-suit soldiers' House Traits. Max 1 King.
- **Aces** (+1/+0, Rear Ranks):
 - ♦: Deploy & may attack instantly and target is removed immediately.
 - ♣: Target unit poisoned and opponent discards 1 random card.
 - ♥: Target unit poisoned. May remain as +1/+0 guard (poisons blockers).
 - ♠: Target unit poisoned. If a soldier, poison 1 adjacent soldier too.
- **Jokers** (+0/+14, Rear Ranks - Declare Variant):
 - Black - **Doppelganger**: Copies another non-Joker card (stats, abilities, type and Rank location).
 - Black - **Necromancer**: Summon 1 soldier from Barrows per turn, then Soul Burn
 - Red - **Insane Wizard**: Opp. soldiers lose House Traits. On entry: Separates opp. Blood Bonds.
 - Red - **Binding Spirit**: Your soldiers can Blood Bond regardless of House (suit).

Designed by:

Ryan Jennings, Micah Jennings, Hayden Jennings, Marshall Jennings