

LEARN TO PLAY



RULEBOOK

ver 1.0.0



Welcome to Arakiel

A fantastical realm where rival factions clash over territories to assert their faction's dominance. In this game, you take control of your Commander and their army, manage your Resources, and engage with your opponent by lowering their Commander's Health Points to 0!

This official rulebook is built to help you understand how to play the game if you're new to it. Knowing the rules will allow you to come up with the best strategies, so keep it in hand for your first couple of games.

This rulebook is designed for players to learn to play Soul Masters, so it doesn't cover every detail of every mechanic. For a comprehensive rulebook, visit:

www.soulmasterstcg.com





Table of Contents

How to Build a Deck.....	1
How to read your cards.....	3
Gameplay Area.....	5
Main Deck Cards.....	7
Reserve Deck Cards.....	9
How to Play the Game.....	11
Playing a Game.....	13
Taking a turn.....	14
Energy.....	15
Key Mechanics.....	17
Combat.....	21
Shields.....	23
Combat Keywords.....	24
Appendix.....	25
Additional Rules.....	35



How to Build a Deck

For your first few games, we recommend using a prebuilt deck. To design your own, follow these rules:

Your deck must contain exactly **50 cards: 25 unit cards**, and **25 non-unit cards**. The non-unit cards may be any combination of spell, ability and Artifact Core cards.

The rarity of each card determines how many copies of the same card you can put in your deck.

1st Evolution **Starter** **2nd Evolution**

A Resource Count (4, 3, 5)
B Faction Icon (Wolf)
C Mercenary Limit (2, 1, 3)
D Core Energy (6, 6, 6)

Keshi Savageclaw
 Commander - Base
 Regenerate - ONCE PER ROUND Pay ☉: Heal 1 HP.
 Conjure (☉)

Rarity			
	Common ○ No limit		Epic ◇ Maximum of 2 copies per card name in your deck
	Uncommon □ Maximum of 3 copies per card name in your deck		Legendary ☆ Maximum of 1 copy per card name in your deck
	Rare △ Maximum of 3 copies per card name in your deck		Celestial ✦ Maximum of 1 Celestial card in your whole deck

- A** In addition to your main deck, you must have a Resource Deck containing a number of resource cards exactly equal to your commander's Resource Count. They must all be of your faction's resource type.
- B** Your commander's faction determines the faction and resource type for your whole deck.

Faction	Faction Symbol	Resource	Resource Symbol
Draconian		Scales	
Necromancer		Crux	
Valkyrian		Focus	
Vampyrian		Bleed	
Wolven		Rage	

Any faction can use Universal cards, Mercenary cards, and Celestial cards.

Some cards have a commander's name printed under the card name. Those cards can only be in your deck if that's your commander's name. (Some other cards have a clan or faction name printed there. This doesn't affect deckbuilding.)

- C** Your commander's Mercenary Limit indicates how many mercenary cards you can have in your deck. Mercenary cards may be allocated from your 25 unit cards and/or your 25 non-unit cards, as you choose.
- D** Your 25 non-unit cards must include a number of Artifact Core cards exactly equal to your commander's Core Energy stat.

In addition to your main deck, you must have a Reserve deck of 8 cards, consisting of exactly 2 Weapons, 2 Armors, 2 Battlefields and 2 Feats. Each Reserve card must be unique.

For non-tournament play, you and your opponent may agree to play with 5-card Reserve decks consisting of only 1 Weapon, 1 Armor, 1 Battlefield and 2 Feats.



2 Weapons

2 Armors

2 Battlefields

2 Feats



How to read your cards

1 Casting Cost 1

2 Attack 1

3 Shield Capacity 0

4 Card Name SKELETON Nightcrawler

5 Faction Skeleton

6 Faction Subtype Awakened

7 Attributes Unit - Awoken

8 Card Rules Text
Ravage (ON ATTACK) You may rest another unit you control to gain +Atk this combat equal to that unit's Atk.)
Fragile (ON ATTACK) KO this unit at end of combat. If you do, generate 1 Resource.)

9 Shield Power 1

10 Rarity Common

11 Card Number 11

12 Health 12

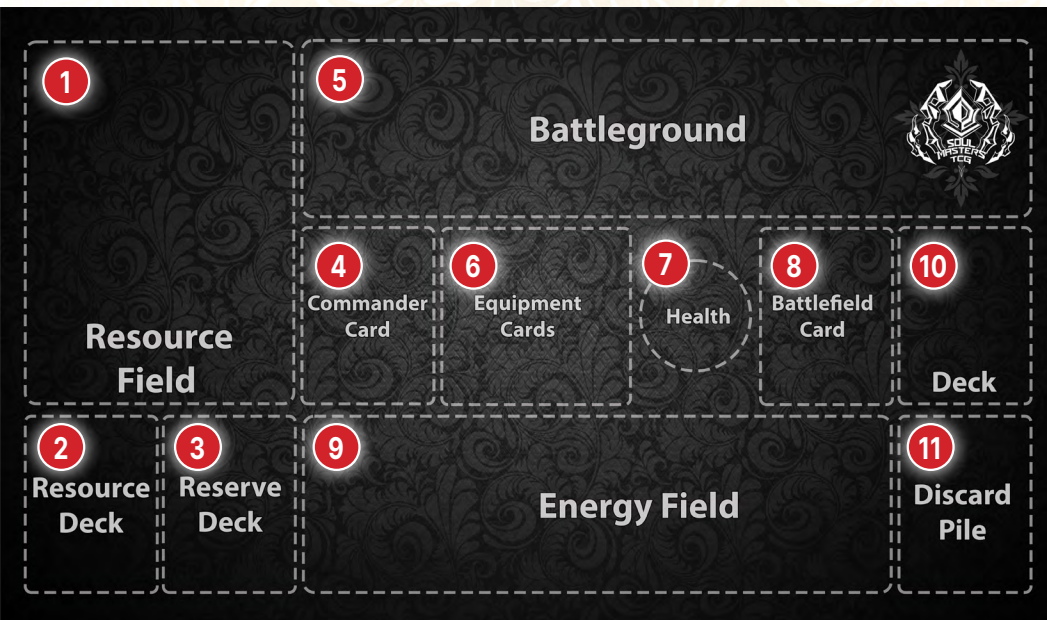
Soul Master Games LLC © 2026
 Illust. Von Milane SM-OT-011

- Casting Cost**
This is how much Energy it takes to cast a card. Since Commanders are present at the beginning of the game, they have no casting cost.
- Attack ("Atk")**
Usually shortened to "Atk", this is how much damage the card deals as it attacks. Usually, only Commanders and Units have Atk.
- Shield Capacity**
The number of cards you can play as Damage Shields, protecting this unit or commander from damage. See Page 23.
- Card Name**
This is the name of the card. If cards have the same name, they are considered to be the same card.
- Faction**
This is the faction that the card belongs to.
- Faction Subtype**
This is the faction subtype that the card belongs to.
- Attributes**
These are the special traits a card possesses.
- Card Rules Text**
Any special rules for this card, such as the effects of a spell, or the skills a unit has, are written here.
- Shield Power**
If you play this card as a damage shield (see page 23), this is how much damage it shields.
- Rarity**
A card's rarity tells you how many copies of that card can be in your deck. See page 1.
- Card Number**
This is the card's number, useful for collecting.
- Health**
How much damage it takes to KO this unit. On a commander, this tells you your Max HP.



Gameplay Area

The gameplay area helps organize your cards during gameplay.



1 Resource Field

Resource cards are placed here when generated.

2 Resource Deck Zone

Place your Resource cards face-up here; this is also where you generate Resources from.

3 Reserve Deck Zone

Place your Reserve cards here face-down.

4 Commander Zone

Place your Commander cards here.

5 Battleground Zone

Unit cards are placed here. A maximum of 5 Units can be in play at a time.

6 Equipment Zone

Equipment cards are placed here when played.

7 Health Chip Zone

Track your Commander's health here using health chips.

8 Battlefield Zone

Battlefield cards are placed here when played.

9 Energy Field

Place cards you plan to use as energy here, face down. Your Artifact Cores may also be placed here, face up. You can only have a certain number of cards here, equal to your commander's Core Energy.

10 Deck Zone

This is where your Main Deck is placed.

11 Discard Pile Zone

KO'd units, and spells and ability cards that have been played, end up here. Cards are arranged in the order they arrive, and their order cannot normally be changed.



Main Deck Cards

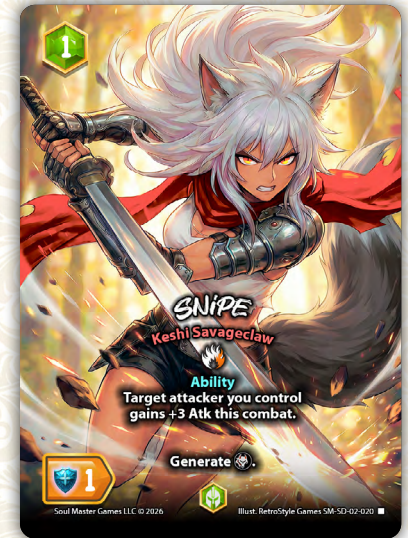
These are the cards that compose the main deck. Following the set rules, use different combos to best help your Commander win the battle!



Unit Card

Unit cards are the commander's faithful soldiers that they lead into battle. They're your main way to deal damage to the enemy and win the game.

- Units can only be cast on your turn. If you have 5 units in play, you can't cast more of them.
- Units can attack the enemy commander, or enemy units that are resting.
- Units suffer from "Summoning Sickness" - on the round a unit enters the battleground, it can't attack and its Rest: skills can't be activated, unless it has Haste.



Ability Card

Ability cards represent the prowess of your commander.

- Ability cards can be cast at any time, even during an opponent's turn, or in response to a player casting another card. When cast in response this way, the ability resolves first.
- When an ability resolves, do whatever the card says. Afterwards, put it into your discard pile.



Spell Card

Spell cards represent the magical incantations conjured up by your commander.

- Spell cards can only be cast on your turn.
- When a spell resolves, do whatever the card says. Afterwards, put it into your discard pile.
- Some spells are "Hexes" - they put themselves onto the battleground as they resolve, and then they stay there, affecting the game - often until your next upkeep.

Artifact Core Card

Artifact Core cards are specially made to be played as energy. Any other card can be played face down into your energy field, but Artifact Cores can (optionally) be played face up instead. This is usually a good idea, because most of them have useful skills you can activate while they're face up!

- Face up cards in the energy field still count as energy and can rest to pay for stuff.



Reserve Deck Cards

Reserve cards represent your commander's magical equipment and powers.



- Reserve cards are identifiable by their orange backs and the red cost icon on the card. You can look through your reserve deck at any time, and you may cast one Reserve card from it per round.
- You can't cast Reserve cards until your second turn of the game.
- Unlike units and the other cards in your main deck, casting a Reserve card doesn't cost energy. Instead, you must pay a number of Resources equal to its cost. (see Page 12)



Weapon Card

Weapon cards represent magical weapons your commander and units can wield.

- Typically, they have skills that deal damage or increase the damage of an attack.
- When you cast a Weapon, put it into your equipment area.
- You can only have one active Weapon at a time. If you play another, Remove the old one.

Armor Card

Armor cards represent magical armor your commander and units can wear.

- Typically, they have skills that heal you, prevent damage or make units tougher.
- When you cast an Armor, put it into your equipment area.
- You can only have one active Armor at a time. If you play another, Remove the old one.



Battlefield Card

Battlefield cards represent special places or fortifications.

- When you cast a Battlefield, put it into your battlefield area.
- You can only have one active Battlefield at a time. If you play another, Remove the old one.



Feat Card

Feat cards are like spells, but more powerful.

- When a Feat card resolves, do whatever the card says. Afterwards, Remove it.
- Most effects that counter spells or protect units from them don't work on Feats.
- Note, although some older Feat cards were printed with "spell" or "ability" on their type line, they don't count as spells or abilities.





How to Play the Game

Health Points

Each player has a number of **Health Points (HP)**. Use Life Chips to track your HP: Blue = 1 HP. Orange = 5 HP. Red = 10 HP. (Some life chips use other colors; check the chip itself for the amount of life it represents.)

- At the start of the game, your HP is equal to your base commander's Max HP.
- Any time your commander is dealt damage, you lose that much HP.
- If an instruction heals you, increase your HP by that much, but it can't go over your commander's current Max HP.



Evolution

If your HP reaches 0, **your commander evolves!** Replace your commander card with its next evolution level and set your HP to your new Max HP (Excess damage does not carry over). Also, draw a card and generate 1 Resource.

If your HP reaches 0 and you have no evolutions left, you lose the game!



Other Victory Conditions

Aside from reducing a player's HP to 0, the other way to end the game is for a player to **run out of cards**. If a player is instructed to draw a card but their deck is empty, they lose the game!

Resting a card

Cards are either **Ready** (upright) or **Resting** (rotated sideways). By default, cards start ready. Many actions, such as attacking, or paying energy, require you to "Rest" a card - in other words, turn it sideways to show it can't do that again. At the start of your turn, in your Upkeep, you "Ready" all your cards - that is, turn them upright, so they can be reused.



Ready State



Resting State

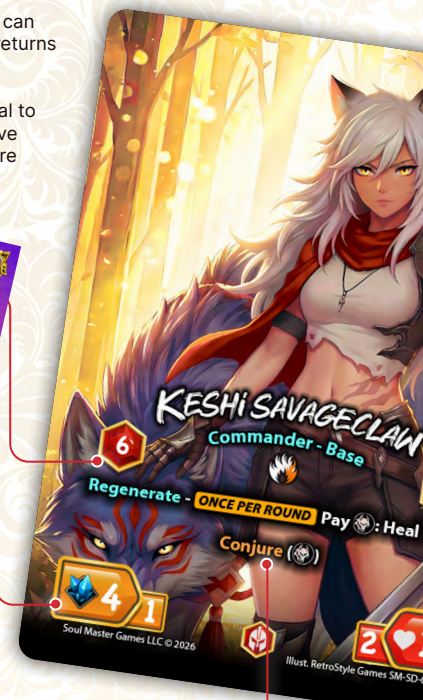
Resources

Each player has a resource deck. When an instruction tells you to generate a resource, move a resource card from your resource deck into your resource field.

- Once a resource card is in the resource field, it's active, and you can spend it when an instruction allows you to pay a resource. This returns it to the resource deck.
- Your resource deck only has a certain number of cards in it, equal to your commander's Resource Count. If all your resource cards have already been put into your resource field, you can't generate more resources! Ignore any instructions that tell you to do so.



- Your commander can **convert energy into resources**. You can do this at any time, even during your upkeep. The amount of energy you have to spend to generate 1 resource is shown at the bottom left of the commander card. This cost usually gets cheaper as the commander evolves.
- Most commanders have the **Conjure** keyword. This means that your commander **generates 1 Resource** each time it attacks. (If it has Conjure 2, it generates 2 Resources!)





Playing a Game

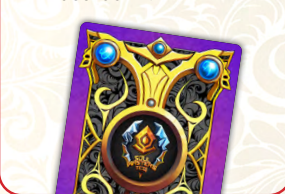
- 1** Greet your opponent politely. Shuffle your Deck, present it for your opponent to cut, then cut theirs in return. Place your Deck in the Deck Area. Handle your opponent's cards with care.



- 2** Place your Main Deck in the Deck Area.



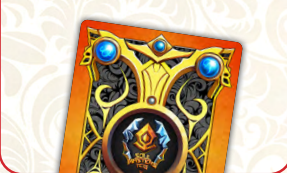
- 3** Place your Resource deck in the Resource Area face-down.



- 4** Place your Commander card and its Evolutions in the Commander Area face-up.



- 5** Place your Equipment, Battlefield, and Feat cards face-down in the Reserve area.



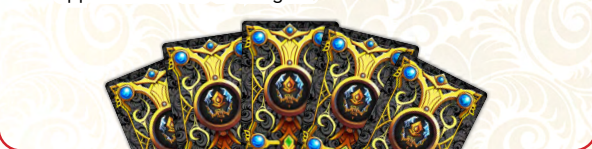
- 6** A random player picks which player should take the first turn.
For example, select a random player by rolling a die, flipping a coin, or any other fair method the players agree on. If you're the random player and you're unsure who to give the first turn to, giving it to yourself is usually a solid plan.



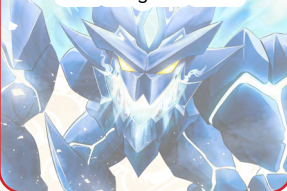
- 7** Each player sets up Life Chips in their HP Area equal to their base commander's Max HP.



- 8** Each player draws 5 cards. Look at the cards you drew, and then you can mulligan once - put any number of them on the bottom of your deck, then draw that many new cards to replace them. If you do, shuffle and let your opponent cut the deck again.



- 9** Then, the players alternate taking turns until the game ends!



Taking a turn



Upkeep

At the start of your turn, ready all your resting cards - your commander and units, energy, and reserves. Also, all your "once per round" skills reset and can be used again.

Then, handle any **ON UPKEEP** triggers.

If you need to pay energy, you can activate energy skills. If you need to pay resources, you can convert energy into resources (see Page 12).

You can't do anything else in this phase.

Draw

After your upkeep, you draw 2 cards. (If your deck is out of cards, you lose the game!) You can't do anything else in this phase.

After your draw phase, what happens next is up to you! Take any number of Main Phases and/or Combat Phases, in any order. Then take an End of Turn Phase.

Main

During each of your Main Phases, you can:

- Play Energy (see Energy, page 15)
- Cast units, spells and reserve cards (see Casting, page 17) (You and your opponent can also cast ability cards and activate skills.)

Combat

During each Combat Phase, your commander, or one of your units, attacks an enemy commander or unit. (see Combat, page 21)

End of Turn

During your End of Turn phase, both players can activate skills and cast ability cards.

This is your opponent's last chance to spend energy before it all readies in their upkeep.



Energy

What is Energy?

You use energy in order to pay for your units and other cards.

- During your main phase, you can place up to 2 cards from your hand face down into your energy field. If you have the first turn of the game, you can only place 1 energy that turn.
- Each card in your energy field is called an Energy. You can rest it to pay the cost of cards you cast (see page 17), or any time you're asked to pay.
- While a card is face down in your energy field, treat it as just an energy. Its skills are inactive and can't be used. (Except for Trap skills - see page 30).
- To cast a unit that costs 3, for example, you'll need to rest 3 energy cards. (The energy cards ready again in your next upkeep, so you'll be able to use up all your energy each round.)



Core Energy

Your commander's Core Energy value determines how much energy you can have in your energy field. Once you're at that limit, you can't place any more energy, except if you swap one out with an Artifact Core.

Artifact Cores

Artifact Core cards are cards specially made to be placed as energy. When you play them into your energy field, you can (optionally) play them face up. (Usually this is a good choice, because most cores have useful skills, and you can only activate those skills if they're face up!)

Face up artifact cores still count as energy and can pay for stuff like any other energy card.



Swapping Artifact Cores

As you play an artifact core face up, you may optionally swap another energy card back to your hand.

This is really useful if you realize there's a card you need but you've played it face down! Note, you can look at your face down energy any time - you don't have to guess which one it was.

When you do a swap, the Artifact Core enters resting if the other card was resting - you can't get ahead on energy this way.





Key Mechanics



Casting Cards

You can cast as many cards from your hand as you want to, as long as you can afford to pay for them. To cast a card from your hand, reveal it and pay equal to its cost (i.e. rest that many energy cards in your energy field). If it has any cost modifying skills (marked **COST**), you must also apply those now. If you can't pay the final cost, you can't cast the card.

Casting Cost



Activated Skill

Activated Skills

Activated skills are written “**cost: effect**” - for example, “Rest: Ready 1 energy” on Yessie, Wyvern Keeper here. Activating a skill works a lot like casting a spell. At any time, you just do whatever the cost says to do - rest Yessie - then it does the effect - you ready 1 energy of your choice.

If a unit has an activated skill with a cost that includes resting that unit, like this one, the skill can't be activated on the round that unit enters the battleground. You'll have to wait until your next upkeep before you can do that.

We use the generic term “playing” to mean casting a card, or activating a skill.

Play Restrictions

- **Units** can only be cast on your turn. You can't cast them during combat, nor in response to a skill or another card being cast. Moreover, each player has a battlefield capacity of 5 units. If you're at this limit, you can't cast any more units, and instructions can't put them onto the battleground.
- **Spells** can only be cast on your turn. You can't cast them during combat, nor in response to a skill or another card being cast.
- **Skills and abilities** can be played at any time, including during your opponents' turns, during combat, and/or in response to other skills and cards (However, some restrictions apply - see pages 19 & 20).
- **Artifact Cores** can't be cast, even if they have a printed cost. You can only place them into your energy field - see page 16.
- **Reserve cards** can only be cast on your turn. You can't cast them during combat, nor in response to a skill or another card being cast. Moreover, you can only cast one reserve card per round, and you can't cast one until your second turn of the game.
- **Cards with Blink** ignore all the normal timing rules for a card of their type - they can be cast at any time, including during your opponents' turns, during combat, and/or in response to other skills and cards.

Resolving

After you play a skill or card, you wait for it to resolve. But first, both players may respond by playing additional skills and abilities. The responses resolve before the original skill or card. Then, once nobody has any further responses, the skill or card resolves. What that means depends on what it is:

- **Unit** - put it onto the battleground.
- **Skill** - do whatever the skill's effect says.
- **Spell or Ability** - do whatever the card says. Then put it into your discard pile, unless it already moved itself somewhere else.
- **Weapon** - put it into your equipment area. If there's already a weapon there, Remove that one from the game.
- **Armor** - put it into your equipment area. If there's already an armor there, Remove that one from the game.
- **Battlefield** - put it into your battlefield area. If there's already a battlefield there, Remove that one from the game.
- **Feat** - do whatever the card says. Then Remove it from the game, unless it already moved itself somewhere else.



Key Mechanics

Targets

Some skills and cards require targets, for example Kaelgrim's "KO target enemy unit that costs ② or less" effect. As you play a skill or card, or a trigger happens, you **must choose legal targets** for all the targets it describes. If you can't choose a suitable target, you can't activate that skill or cast that card, or that trigger can't happen.

In Kaelgrim's case, if your opponent doesn't currently have a unit that costs ② or less, then you can't choose that target, so the whole trigger doesn't happen. You don't heal 1 HP.

After you've chosen legal targets, if any of those targets go missing, or they no longer match the description by the time that skill or card resolves, it can't affect those targets. Just follow the remaining instructions and do as much as possible.



Triggered Skills

Triggers are written "When event — effect", or sometimes "[bubble] effect" for common events like **ON ATTACK** or **ON ENTER FROM HAND**.

You don't activate them on purpose - they just wait until their specific event happens, and then they automatically do whatever they're going to do. If that's not what you wanted to happen, too bad! Triggered skills are not optional.

Kaelgrim here has two triggered skills - one that triggers when he enters from your hand, and one that triggers when a unit is KO'd.

Modes

Some skills and cards require you to "choose 1" from a few different effects. These options are called "modes". You make this choice as you play the skill or card.

For example, Ambush here gives you two different effects to choose from - either give an attacker +3 Atk this combat, or prevent 3 damage.

As you cast this ability, you choose which of these modes you actually want to cast. Ignore the other mode.

For example, if you cast Ambush to prevent 3 damage from an enemy attacker, it doesn't matter that the first mode has no legal target.



Damage Sources

Some skills and cards prevent an amount of damage, for example Ambush's "Prevent 3 dmg" effect.

As you play such a skill or card, you must announce which damage you want to prevent. Unless the text places restrictions on what you can prevent, you can choose anything that's about to deal damage, such as a skill or card you're responding to, or an attacking unit or commander.

If the chosen source is dealing damage to multiple things, also announce which one of those things you're preventing damage to.



Combat

How to Attack

You may make any number of attacks during your turn. Attacks happen one at a time.

To attack, rest your commander or a unit you control, and announce which enemy commander or unit it's attacking. Normally, you can't attack units that are ready. (Commanders can always be attacked, ready or not). While a unit or commander is attacking, it's called "the attacker".

On the turn a unit enters the battleground, it can't attack. On your first turn of the game, nothing can attack, even if it has Haste.



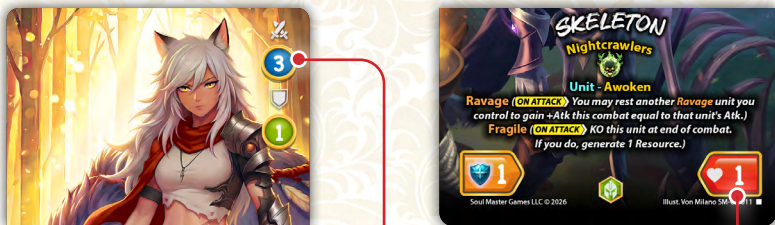
Attack Damage

After each player is done playing skills and abilities to influence the combat, the attacker will deal attack damage equal to its Atk stat (blue circle number) to the victim.

If the victim is a commander, they lose that much HP.

If the victim is a unit, and the damage is greater than or equal to its Health, that unit is KO'd - put it in the discard pile.

If the damage is less than the unit's Health, nothing happens. (Damage doesn't accumulate in Soul Masters.)



Combat In-depth

Each combat is actually subdivided into 6 steps:

- 1 Declare Attack** - The attacking player announces the attack.
- 2 Pre Defender** - **ON ATTACK** and similar triggers happen. Players can respond with skills and abilities. (Note that although you can use shields and damage prevention skills and abilities here, if the attack gets redirected any damage you have already prevented will be wasted. So it's usually wiser to use those in the Post Defender step instead.)
- 3 Defender** - The defending player can use Intercept skills, and other skills and abilities that specifically say they can be used in the **DEFENDER** step. This is the only step in which an attack can be redirected or negated. The attacking player can't do anything.
- 4 Post Defender** - Players can play skills and abilities. This is your last chance to prevent or boost the attack damage.
- 5 Combat Damage** - If the attacker is still alive, the attack damage is dealt. Players can't do anything.
- 6 End of Combat** - **END OF COMBAT** triggers happen, along with anything triggered by combat damage such as **ON KO** triggers. Players can respond with skills and abilities.



Shields

One of the most reliable ways to protect your units and your commander from damage is to play cards from your hand as **Damage Shields**.



Shield Capacity

A unit or commander's Shield Capacity value tells you how many cards you can play from your hand as Damage Shields, for EACH instance of incoming damage to this card. If that value is 0, you can't play any cards this way! Like any other damage prevention effect, you must announce the damage source as you do this.

When you play a card as a damage shield, you shield an amount of damage equal to that card's Shield Power, then put that card into your discard pile.

Cards with shield power 0 don't shield any damage when played this way. (But if you want to get them into your discard pile for some reason, you can still do it!)



Shield Power

Example: You have a unit with Health 2. Your opponent attacks it with a unit with Atk 3. Because your unit's Shield Capacity is only 1, you can only play 1 Damage Shield - you play a card with Shield Power 2, putting that card into your discard pile and reducing the damage to 1.

This is enough to keep your unit alive. Then, your opponent activates a skill that says "Deal 2 dmg to target enemy unit", targeting your unit. Because this is a separate instance of damage, you can play another 1 Damage Shield to protect your unit: you play a card with Shield Power 1, which will reduce that damage to 1 as well. Your opponent has no further responses, so everything resolves - your card with Shield Power 1 card shields 1 damage and goes to your discard pile, then your unit takes two instances of 1 damage. Neither is enough to KO it, and damage doesn't accumulate, so it survives.

Combat Keywords

There are many skills and stats that affect combat. Here are a few notable ones:

- **Armor** - All damage, including attack damage, is reduced by the armor value of the victim. This is not damage prevention - it works on unpreventable damage.
- **Conjure** - Most commanders have this keyword. As they attack, you generate 1 resource. This is not a trigger, just a thing that happens as they attack. (If they have Conjure 2, you generate 2 resources!)
- **Duelist** - Whenever this unit or commander attacks, it gets a +Atk bonus this combat equal to the Shield Power of the top card in your discard pile, and you put that card on the bottom of your deck. This is not optional.
- **Haste** - Normally, a unit can't attack on the round it enters the battleground, and its Rest skills also can't be activated. Units with Haste are unaffected by this rule.
- **Heavy** - Normally, a ready unit can't be attacked, but Heavy overrides this. Units with Heavy can be attacked while they're ready, like commanders can.
- **Initiative** - Can attack ready units. This overrides the normal rule that says only resting units can be attacked. Other restrictions may still make the attack illegal.
- **Intercept** - You can rest this unit to redirect an incoming attack onto it. The attacker is now attacking this unit instead of the original victim. This skill can be used even if the unit has summoning sickness. Note, attack damage from a redirected attack is considered a new instance of damage, so any damage prevention you had already applied is wasted.
- **Piercing N** - This unit's attack damage ignores the first N points of damage shield (see page 23).
- **Scout** - A Scout unit can attack ready Stealth units. This is an exception to the normal rule that ready units can't be attacked. Other restrictions may still make the attack illegal.
- **Stealth** - When you attack with a Stealth unit, you can ignore the Taunt skill: just freely choose any enemy commander or resting unit of your choice (unless some other restriction makes them illegal to attack). Also, while a unit with Stealth is attacking, your opponents can't activate the Intercept skill.
- **Riposte** - If this unit is attacked, at the same time as the attack damage is dealt, it deals damage back to the attacker. The damage dealt is equal to its Atk stat. Riposte damage doesn't count as attack damage.
- **Taunt** - As you declare an attack, if you could attack a resting unit with Taunt, then you have to attack it! (Taunt doesn't force you to attack, just restricts your options when you do.) Note: Taunt doesn't work while the unit is ready. If for some reason you can attack a ready unit with Taunt, you can ignore that it has Taunt.



Appendix





By now, you should now know enough to get you through your first few games. This Appendix covers less common cards and interactions that you might encounter.

Priority

As you probably know by now, skills and abilities can be activated during other players' turns. What happens if you have a situation where two players both want to activate a skill first? No, it doesn't come down to who shouts first: situations like this are resolved by a system of "priority".

In each step and phase of the game (except the ones where nobody can do anything, such as Upkeep or Draw), the player whose turn it is gets priority first.

If a player has priority, they can choose to do something (activate a skill, cast a card, place energy, attack, etc), or else do nothing and "pass priority" to the other player:

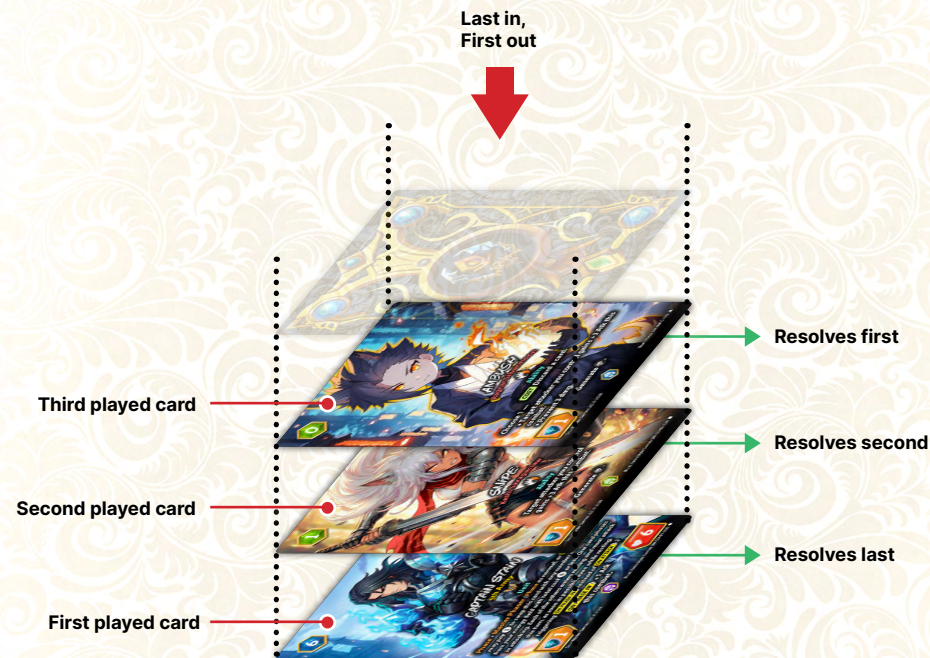
- 1 If the player activates a skill or casts a card, it goes on the stack - now, the other player gets priority, so they can respond to it by casting or activating something of their own. (NB: The other player gets first priority to respond, not the player who just activated or cast something! This is different from how it works in some other games.)
- 2 If the player rests energy for , converts  into resources, places energy into their energy field, or activates an energy skill, that simply happens, and then the same player gets priority again. (Nobody can respond to these special actions.)
- 3 If the player passes priority, the other player gets priority next. Or, if both players have now passed priority in succession with nothing else happening, clearly nobody has anything they want to do right now, so the game progresses - the top item on the stack resolves, then the player whose turn it is gets priority again. Or, if there's nothing on the stack to resolve, instead the game progresses to the next phase or step.

Example: If two players both want to do something this turn, but neither wants to be the first to do it, and they both know this, then the player whose turn it is gets to "win". The turn won't end until both players pass in succession, so during your end of turn phase, you can pass, and your opponent now has to either do their thing, or pass priority. If they also pass, the turn will end and they'll miss their chance. So now, having baited your opponent into making the first move, you can either let theirs resolve and then do your own thing (so yours resolves second), or else you can respond to their thing with yours (so that yours resolves first) - whichever you prefer.

The Stack

In Soul Masters, when you activate a skill or cast a card, it doesn't resolve (have its effect) immediately. Instead you pay its costs, make all the relevant choices, and put it onto "the stack".

The stack is a zone of the game where things wait to resolve, in last-in first-out order. Once you've put something onto the stack, your opponent can respond with their own skill or ability cards. If they do, theirs will also go on the stack, on top of yours, and will be the first to resolve. (But first you can respond to theirs, and so on.) Things resolve from the stack one at a time, so if there are several things on the stack, you can let one resolve, and then activate a skill or cast an ability before the next thing resolves.



Example: Your opponent casts an ability that will deal 3 damage to your unit that has 3 Health. In response, you activate a skill that will prevent 1 of that damage. It goes on the stack on top of your opponent's ability. Your opponent has no further responses, so your skill resolves - the damage from your opponent's ability is reduced from 3 to 2. After this, neither player has any further responses, so your opponent's ability resolves. It fails to KO your unit.

Example: You cast a spell. It goes onto the stack. Your opponent responds by casting Counterspell, targeting your spell. Counterspell also goes on the stack, on top of your spell. Counterspell resolves first, and puts your spell into the discard pile. Your spell never resolves.

Appendix

Skill Bubbles

Many skills have bubbles that indicate common conditions and trigger requirements, such as:

- ON ATTACK** means "Whenever this unit attacks". This trigger resolves during the Pre-Defender step.
- ON KO** means "When this unit is KO'd". Note that "Sacrifice" and "Destroy" effects don't count as a KO, even though they also put the card into the discard pile. On KO skills can only be triggered by damage, or by an instruction that specifically uses the word "KO". If the unit was KO'd by attack damage, this trigger resolves during the End Of Combat step.
- ON ENTER FROM HAND** means "When this unit enters the battleground, if it entered from your hand or you cast it from your hand". This skill can be triggered either by casting the unit from your hand, or by using an effect that puts it directly onto the battleground from your hand. Putting it directly onto the battleground from anywhere else does not trigger it.
- ON UPKEEP** means "At the beginning of your upkeep". This trigger resolves during your upkeep.
- YOUR TURN** means "This skill is only active during your turn".
- IN HAND** means "This skill is only active while this card is in your hand".
- IN DISCARD** means "This skill is only active while this card is in your discard pile".
- PRE-DEFENDER** means "This skill is only active during the Pre-Defender step".
- DEFENDER** means "This skill is only active during the Defender step".
- ONCE PER ROUND** means "Once triggered/activated, this skill won't trigger again/can't be activated again until your next upkeep".

If you look at older cards, you may see **ON ENTER FROM HAND** was previously printed as *On Play*, **YOUR TURN** was printed as *Main*, **ONCE PER ROUND** was printed as *Once*, and **IN DISCARD** and **IN HAND** were printed as *From Discard* and *From Hand*.

These are not functional changes, the older cards were always played as if they had the current text. (Except that Main skills couldn't be used during the End Of Turn phase, and **YOUR TURN** can.)

Understanding Triggers

Triggered skills watch for a particular event to happen, and then automatically activate themselves. You can recognize triggered skills because they start with "When", "Whenever", "The next time", or with one of the predefined yellow trigger bubbles (for example, an **ON ATTACK** bubble means "Whenever this unit or commander attacks").

Any time anything happens in the game, create an instance of each trigger that was watching for that event. The instance waits to go onto the stack the next time a player gets priority. If it has any modes, or targets, its controller will make those choices as it goes onto the stack.

If more than one trigger is waiting to go onto the stack, they do so in APNAP order: the active player puts their triggers on the stack in any order, then the non-active player puts their triggers on the stack in any order. Since the non-active player's triggers are on top, they resolve first.

For example, suppose a unit gets KO'd by attack damage. This triggers its **ON KO** skill. The attacker has a skill which triggers when its attack KO's a unit, so this also triggers. Next time a player gets priority (the end of combat step), both of these skills go on the stack. The attacker is the active player, so their "attack KO's a unit" skill goes on the stack first, followed by the **ON KO** skill. Since the stack resolves top to bottom, the **ON KO** skill will resolve first.

Note that triggers are not optional - you can't refuse to do what the trigger says. (Unless it specifically says "you may" or a similar wording, of course.)

Trigger Costs

Where an activated skill separates its cost from its effect with a colon, triggers separate their trigger condition from their effect with a dash.

In some cases, the effect may have more than one dash, for example "Whenever this unit is attacked — If you pay \heartsuit — Deal 1 dmg to the attacker's cmdr". Each dash indicates an additional window for players to respond. Whenever this unit is attacked, the skill triggers, and puts "If you pay \heartsuit " onto the stack. Players may respond, for example by doing things to generate resources. Then that cost resolves, and you may choose to pay \heartsuit . If you pay, the "Deal 1 dmg to the attacker's cmdr" goes on the stack, and players may respond again, for example with damage prevention skills. Then that skill resolves and deals the damage.








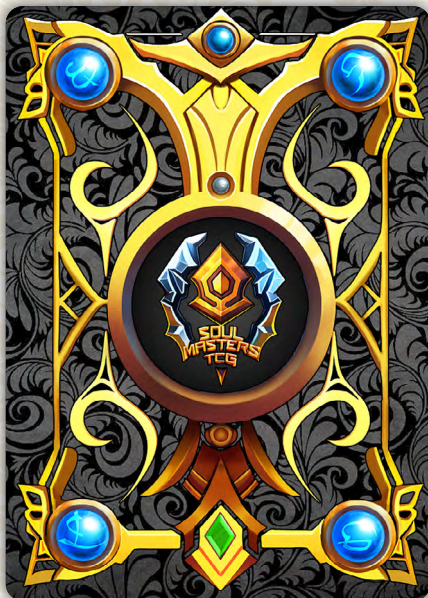
Appendix



Energy Crystals

All cards in your energy field can rest to produce energy crystals, represented with the  symbol. Certain units and reserve cards also have skills that “add ”. These are called Energy Skills.

You can activate your Energy Skills any time anything asks you to pay an energy cost - for example, when casting a spell. You can also activate them like normal skills, any time you want. If you activate them this way, you will create an “Energy Crystal” that you can spend the next time you need to pay some amount of . At the end of each phase or step, all your energy crystals are lost.

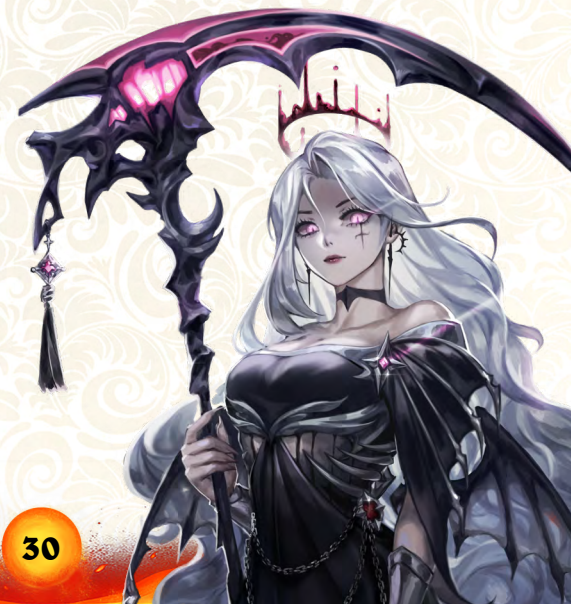


Note: Unlike other skills, Energy Skills don't use the stack. They simply resolve as soon as you activate them, and then you get priority again. Nobody can respond.

Note: Note: Any unspent energy crystals are lost at the end of each phase and step.

Traps

Some cards have special skills that can only be used while they're face down in your energy field. (You can look at your face down energy cards at any time - you don't have to memorize what Traps you have). To activate a Trap, just reveal the card and activate the trap skill like you would activate any other skill - pay its cost and put it onto the stack.





Appendix



Phase

The Phase keyword is the main keyword for the 5th Army. It's also one of the most complex skills in the game.

Phase means " **ON ATTACK** You may pay ① to swap this unit for a card with Phase from your energy field. If that card costs more than this unit, this costs additional ♠ equal to the difference. Then, if you swapped them, and that card costs less, ready energy equal to the cost difference."

To break this down - when a unit with Phase attacks, its Phase skill triggers. When it resolves, you can swap it with a card with Phase from your energy field. (It doesn't matter whether that card is face up or face down). The unit that was attacking is now in your energy field, face up, and is resting if the other card was. The card that phased in is now resting on the battleground, attacking the same victim as before.

However, doing this isn't free. If the card you're phasing in has a cost equal or greater than the attacking unit, you have to pay an amount of ♠ equal to 1 plus to that cost difference.

If the card that's phasing in costs less than the attacking unit, you only pay the ① and afterwards you actually ready an amount of energy equal to the cost difference.

After using Phase, combat continues as though the phased in unit had always been attacking. If it has an **ON PHASE IN** skill, that skill triggers now. Note - Even though the phased in unit is now attacking, its **ON ATTACK** skills don't trigger because it's not declaring a new attack, just continuing the attack the other unit made.

Example: On your first turn, you place 2 energy face down into your energy field, then rest them both to cast Knight Rebeca, a Phase unit that costs 2. She can't attack yet, due to summoning sickness. On your next turn, you place 2 more energy face down into your energy field, one of which is Knight Lt Ezra, a Phase unit that costs 5. Then you attack with Knight Rebeca. Her Phase skill triggers, and you choose to swap her with Ezra. To do this you have to pay the cost difference + 1, in other words (5-2)+1 = 4 energy. Conveniently, that's how much you have, so you rest all your energy and make the swap. Knight Rebeca is now resting in your energy field, and Knight Lt Ezra - a 5 cost unit that you can't even afford to cast yet - is attacking on turn 2!



Master Phaser

The Master Phaser skill is an upgraded version of the Phase skill. When a unit with Master Phaser attacks, you can choose to either use its Phase skill as normal, or else use Master Phaser.



To use Master Phaser, pay ①, and choose any number of cards with Phase that you want to phase in from your energy field. The total cost of those cards must be 6 or less.

Then, swap the cards! The Master Phaser unit goes into your energy field, face up, and is resting if ANY of the other cards were.

One of the chosen cards phases in resting and attacking the same victim, like a normal Phase attack.

The other chosen cards enter the battleground resting. They must all make a Phasing Attack this turn, once each, as soon as possible, in the order of your choice. This special attack is legal even for a unit that's resting, and it triggers the unit's **ON PHASE IN** skills instead of its **ON ATTACK** skills. (Otherwise, treat it as a normal attack - for example, it does trigger other skills that trigger when a unit attacks.)

Note: Unlike the normal Phase keyword, with Master Phaser you don't pay or ready energy equal to the cost difference.



Appendix

Golem Cores

Golem Cores are Artifact Cores that can enter the battleground, where they count as units. To use them, place them into your energy field like any other Artifact Core. There's no universal way for a Golem Core card to enter the battleground, but all the 5th Army's Golem Cores have Phase - they turn into units by phasing in.

Note: Because Golem Cores only count as units while on the battleground, if an instruction puts a "unit" from your hand or discard pile onto the battleground, you can't choose a Golem Core.



Tokens

When an instruction tells you to do so, a Crux resource card can be flipped over, and put onto the battleground as a "Skeleton Token" card. As long as it's on the battleground, treat it like any other unit. If it's KO'd, skills will trigger just like any other unit being KO'd.

However, next time a player gets priority, any resource cards that aren't on the battleground return to their owner's resource deck.



Hexes

Hexes are spells or feats with the **PLACE ON BATTLEGROUND** instruction as part of their effect. As this card resolves, it puts itself onto the battleground. What happens next depends on the card - typically it will have skills that influence the battleground as long as it's there, and some skill that sacrifices itself or otherwise removes itself from the battleground.

Note: Hexes are not units, so they don't count towards your limit of 5 units on the battleground.



Animated Spells

Animated spells are spells that put themselves onto the battleground as they resolve, where they count as units.

You can't cast an Animated spell if you already have 5 units on the battleground.

Note: Because Animated spells only count as units while on the battleground, if an instruction puts a "unit" from your hand or discard pile onto the battleground, you can't choose an Animated spell.





Additional Rules

Attach (action)

To attach a card to another card means to take the first card and place it underneath the second. Usually the card that sets up the attachment will have other instructions that care about how many cards are attached, or remove attached cards to pay costs, etc. The attached cards are not considered to be on the battleground. Any time a card moves from one zone to another, all cards attached to it are simultaneously put into their owner's discard pile.

Concede (action)

To quit the game. Conceding a game immediately causes that player to leave that game and lose that game. Players may concede at any time.

Counter (action)

To destroy a skill or card on the stack. If it's a card, put it into its owner's discard pile. That skill or card will not resolve. Any costs to cast or activate it that have already been paid are not refunded.

Destroy (action)

To destroy a card on the battleground - put it into the discard pile. Destroy does not count as a KO and does not trigger KO-related skills.

Discard (action)

To discard a card, a player chooses a card in their hand and puts it into their discard pile.

Guard (stat)

As long as you have one or more cards on the battleground with Guard, the first time 1 or more unprevented damage is dealt to your commander each round, reduce that damage by the largest Guard value of any one card you control.

Guardian (attribute)

The otherworldly Celestial Guardians obey their own special rules.

- While searching your deck, you can't find Guardian cards.
- Most Guardians have a way to return to the battleground after being KO'd. The second time a Guardian is KO'd, remove it from the game.

Mill (action)

To mill N cards - put that many cards from the top of your deck into your discard pile, one by one. The last card milled ends up on the top. If you don't have that many cards in your deck, put your whole deck into your discard pile.

Negate (action)

To negate an attack - Immediately end the current attack and skip to the Cleanup step. No attack damage is dealt.

Null (status)

If a unit becomes Null for a duration - Turn that unit face down. As long as that duration lasts, treat it as though it doesn't exist, except it still takes up space in its controller's battleground capacity.

Redirect (action)

To redirect an attack to a unit or commander - Set the attack to be attacking that unit or commander.

If the instruction stipulates a "legal" unit or commander, it must be something you could normally attack - for example, it must be resting, unless the attacker has Initiative.

Reforge (action)

To reforge a reserve card - Return it to the reserve deck.

Remove (action)

To remove a card - Put it into the removed-from-game zone, permanently. Nothing can return it to the game.

Resistance (keyword)

No player's skills, spells or abilities can target this unit, including your own. It can still be targeted by Feats.

Return (action)

To return a card to a zone means to put it into that zone. The card doesn't need to actually have been in that zone before.

Sacrifice (action)

To put a card into your discard pile from your energy field or battleground. You can't sacrifice cards you don't control. A sacrifice does not count as a KO and does not trigger KO-related skills.

Shock (action)

A shocked unit doesn't ready during its controller's next upkeep. The card may still be readied by other instructions that specifically ready cards outside of the upkeep.

Summon (action) (obsolete)

The old term for putting a unit onto the battleground.

Unique (attribute)

On cards with the Unique attribute, it's always followed by a unique character attribute, such as "Arsalan". Such cards represent a unique character or essence - each player can only have one unit with a given Unique type on the battleground at a time.

Cheat Sheet

Starting hand: 5 cards. Mulligan to redraw any number of them, of your choice

	Draw	Place Energy	Play Reserves	Activate Rest Skills & Attack
Player 1's First Turn	2	up to 1	No	No (even with Haste!)
Player 2's First Turn	2	up to 2	No	No (even with Haste!)
All Other Turns	2	up to 2	up to 1 per round	Yes, any number

- Place any card from your hand face down as energy, up to twice per turn.
- Optionally, place Artifact Core cards from your hand face up as energy; and as you do, optionally swap another energy back to hand. The core enters resting if the other energy was resting.
- Energy cards can't exceed commander's Core Energy limit (blue gem number) - If you have that much energy, you can't play new energy, except by swapping one out.

Shield a unit or commander from damage by playing Damage Shields.

- Any card in your hand can be a Damage Shield. Its Shield Power (bottom left box) is how much damage it can shield. Then put it into your discard pile.
- The Shield Capacity (green circle number) of a unit or commander is the max number of shield cards you can play to protect it from EACH instance of damage.

Don't Forget

- As your commander evolves, remember to **draw 1 card, generate 1 Resource, and reset your HP** to your new max.
- Normally, **units can only be attacked if resting**. Commanders can be attacked regardless.
- If a unit takes damage less than its Health, nothing happens - **damage doesn't accumulate**.
- Cards that get Removed are gone for the rest of the game.
- Battleground Capacity: 5 units per player. If you're at the limit, **you can't cast units** and instructions can't put them onto the battleground. Non-unit cards have no limit.
- You can look through your reserve deck any time and **can cast one Reserve card from it per round**. Pay for them with Resources, not energy.
- You can only have **one active Reserve card of each type** (one Weapon, one Armor, one Battlefield). When you play a new one, Remove the old one.
- Heal effects can't take you above your commander's **Max HP**.

