

<Blood Wars logo>
The Bloodshed Begins

Rule Book

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Introduction

Throughout eternity, the lords of the nether domains have fought an endless Blood War. Leading infernal hordes, they have battled back and forth across reality's lower planes, each seeking to seize sufficient territory to become supreme. And behind the scenes, they have plotted and schemed, endeavoring to win through intrigue what they could not gain through combat.

Now the Blood War has overflowed the nether realms and spills across all the planes of existence. In the Blood Wars ♦ card game, you guide your own warlords and legions in a bid for dominance. The first player to seize enough battlefields for supremacy wins the game!

Core Concept

The Blood Wars game is an expandable card game of intrigue and combat. Each deck contains a random mix of cards representing battlefields, warlords, legions, and elements of fate. Players use their warlords, legions, and fate cards to seize battlefields. The winner is the first player to capture enough battlefields to match a preset number of victory points.

Any number of players can compete in a Blood Wars game session, from two to infinity, though four or five is optimum. By collecting new cards, players can tailor their decks to their own tastes, shaping the game to the style of play they prefer.

Card Diagram

All of the Blood Wars cards use a single design, though details differ from card to card.

[Editor's Note: This page will contain a card diagram with arrows from the following terms.]

Type: Identified as Warlord, Legion, Battlefield, or Fate.

Title: The card's name.

Illustration: Warlords are framed in a shield shape, Legions in an oblong, and all others in a square.

Challenge Box: Lists Alignment (by letter and color), Combat Strength (CS) or Intrigue Strength (IS), and a Random Result (RR). Battlefields list Victory Points (VP) rather than CS or IS.

Text Box: Contains descriptive text and/or special rules.

Icon: Identifies the home plane of a Legion, Warlord, or Battlefield, or the type of Fate card (Acolyte, Item, Orders, Spell, and Support).

Activator: A symbol indicating if use of a special power requires the card to be flipped, discarded, or sent to the Dead-Book (removed from play) when used.

Deck Construction

A Blood Wars deck can be played right out of the box, but there is a great deal of fun in tailoring your own deck. Modified decks can range from 40 to 100 cards. The chart below tells how many cards of each type a deck can contain. Note that some types are also limited by maximum total Combat Strength (CS), Intrigue Strength (IS), or Victory Points (VP) in a deck. Also, a deck can have no more than 3 identical cards.

Deck Size: 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Card type Number Allowed

Warlord	3-5	3-6	3-7	3-8	3-9	3-9	3-9
Max. IS	60	70	80	90	100	110	120

Legion	10-20	10-25	10-30	10-35	10-40	10-45	10-50
Max. CS	120	150	180	210	240	270	300

Battlefield	5-12	5-15	5-17	5-20	5-22	5-25	5-27
Realm	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-6	0-6	0-6
Layer	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-6	0-6	0-6
Site/Town	0-4	0-5	0-6	0-7	0-8	0-9	0-10
Max. VP	40	50	60	70	80	90	100

Fate	0-15	0-20	0-25	0-30	0-35	0-40	0-45
Acolyte	0-10	0-12	0-14	0-16	0-18	0-20	0-20
Item	0-15	0-20	0-25	0-30	0-35	0-40	0-45
Artifact	0-1	0-2	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-5	0-5
Magical	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-6	0-7	0-8	0-8
Other	0-15	0-20	0-25	0-30	0-35	0-40	0-45
Orders	0-3	0-4	0-5	0-6	0-7	0-8	0-9
Spell	0-10	0-12	0-15	0-17	0-20	0-22	0-25
Support	0-8	0-10	0-12	0-14	0-16	0-18	0-20

Icons & Activators

Shown here are icons used on cards for the initial Blood Wars card pack

and the first two Escalation Packs. (Later Escalation Packs will add a few new icons, such as one for the elemental plane of water.)
[Editor's note: Under each heading, I'd like to see the icons and activators set three across the page. As typographical symbols, the activators may need to be enlarged a bit here. The icons will need to be half the size of those in the Spellfire rules book in order to fit.]

Activators

Dead-Book Discard Flip

General Icons

Acolyte Artifact Avatar
Factol Item Magical
Orders Spell Support

Outer Plane Icons

Abyss Acheron Arborea
Arcadia Baator Beast Lands
Bytopia Carceri Elysium
Gehenna Gray Waste Limbo
Outlands Mechanus Mount Celestia
Pandemonium Ysgard

Other Planar Icons

Astral Fire Prime

[Editor's Note: This page is to contain a one-page table layout diagram]

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Turn Sequence Summary

0. Pre-Game Phase

---Set the Stage: Choose game length (number of VP).

---Muster In: Choose number of Challengeless turns.

---Collect Forces: Draw 6 cards, minimum 1 Warlord.

---Seize Initiative: Draw RR for first Acting Player.

1. Opening Phase

---Reinforcements: Draw 2 cards into Command Hand.

2. Assembly Phase (Skip during first turn.)

---Troop Formation: Legions & Fate to Battle Hands.

3. Action Phase (Skip during Mustering Period.)

---Challenge: Reveal Battlefield & type of Challenge. Conduct according to Combat or Intrigue summary.

---Rally: Failed, Acting Player may Challenge again.

4. Resolution Phase

--- Induct New Warlords: Add Warlords to the table.

---Regroup: Unflip Warlords & Battle Hands.

---Cull the Weak: Reduce Command Hand to 7 cards.

5. Victory Phase

---War Report: Acting Player wins if he possesses sufficient VP; otherwise player to the left becomes the new Acting Player.

[Editor's note: this page of text should be boxed.]

Intrigue Summary

---Flex Political Muscle: Acting Player presents his Challenger.

---Dissenting Opinions: Other players declare Warlords in aid or opposition, starting at Acting Player's right.

---Power Caucus: Use Warlords' Intrigue Powers, then Legions'. Use Fate.
---The Ballot: Draw Hidden Ally (RR) for each side. Compare sides' IS totals.
---Bloodless Coup: Successful Challenger takes the Battlefield. His allies draw cards in payment.
---Loss of Status: Unsuccessful Challenger is flipped; his Legions and Fate are returned to the Command Hand. Opposing allies draw cards in payment.
---Lying Low: Flip Warlords used on both sides of Challenge, with their Battle Hands.

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Combat Summary

---Invest the Field: Acting Player presents his Challenger; adds Fate cards to Battle Hand.
---Defender Rouses: Determine Defender's first choice to Acting Player's right. Add Fate to Battle Hand.
---Conduct Battle: a. Use Warlord Powers; b. Use Legion Powers; c. Compare total CSs.
---Spoils of War: Successful Defender draws RR number of cards into his Command Hand as payment for defending. Challenger takes Battlefield if his CS exceeds total of Defender's CS + Battlefield's VP.
---Lying Low: Flip Warlords used on both sides; discard their Battle Hands.

Turn Sequence

0. Pre-Game Phase

---Set the Stage: Players agree upon a game length. Choices are: Conflict (short, to 13 VP), Battle (medium, to 19 VP), or Campaign (long, to 25 VP).
---Muster In: Players agree upon a Mustering Period: an initial number of turns during which no Challenges can be made. Choices are: 2 turns, 4 turns, 6 turns.
---Collect Forces: Each player shuffles his deck and draws 6 cards from it to begin his Command Hand (the hand used in all but Combat). Any player who draws no Warlords discards his entire Command Hand and draws 6 new cards, repeating as necessary until he has at least 1 Warlord.
---Seize Initiative: Determine the first Acting Player by drawing and discarding the top card from each deck. The player who drew the highest RR becomes the Acting Player and takes his turn first. After his turn, play progresses clockwise.

Each Acting Player's turn consists of the following phases, in order.

1. Opening Phase

---Reinforcements: Draw 2 cards into the Command Hand. (If the draw deck is depleted, shuffle the discards to make a new draw deck.)

2. Assembly Phase

(Skip this phase during the first turn.)

Place Legions and Fate cards to build or augment Battle Hands, subject to the following rules:

---General Rule: Battle Hands can only be assembled under Warlords currently on the table and not flipped.
---Legion Formation: Up to 4 Legions can be stacked under each Warlord, if their alignments (see Special Notes) and the Warlord's all match in at least one letter (first letter to first letter, or second to second). Up to 6 can be stacked if they match the Warlord's alignment exactly.

---Fate Formation: Fate cards can be stacked in each Battle Hand as well, as long as they do not exceed the number of Legions in the stack.
---Resource Exchange: Any number of cards can be exchanged from Command Hand to Battle Hand, Battle Hand to Command Hand, or Battle Hand to Battle Hand, subject to the stacking limits above.

Note: Legion and Fate cards in a Battle Hand are hidden from view of all opponents. They are normally revealed only during a Combat Challenge (see below).

3. Action Phase

(Skip this phase during the Mustering Period.)

---Challenge: The Acting Player presents the Battlefield to be taken, playing it from his Command Hand onto the table, and declares the type of Challenge to be made (Intrigue or Combat). Each type of Challenge follows its own, distinctive procedure, as detailed under the appropriate heading, below.

---Rally: The Action Phase may be repeated any number of times (with a new Battlefield, new Challenger, and new Defender(s) each time) until the Acting Player either captures a Battlefield or decides not to issue any further challenges.

Note: A player may only capture one Battlefield per turn.

Intrigue Challenge:

---Flexing Political Muscle: The Acting Player chooses a Challenger from among his unflipped Warlords.

---Dissenting Opinions: Beginning to the Acting Player's right and proceeding counter-clockwise, each other player may choose one of their unflipped Warlords in the same way, to aid or oppose the Challenger.

Opposers are termed "Defenders."

---Power Caucus: Beginning with the Challenger and proceeding counter-clockwise, each Warlord involved in the conflict has a chance to use his Intrigue Power. Then any Legions with Intrigue Powers in the players' Command Hands may activate those Powers, (See "Legion Powers," under "Special Notes.") again beginning with the Challenger and proceeding to the right. Players may also play Fate cards from their Command Hands at any time during this step.

---The Ballot: The Defender with highest IS and the Challenger each draw one card from their decks as a "Hidden Ally," adding its RR to the total IS for their side.

---Bloodless Coup: If the Challenger's side's total IS exceeds the Defender's side's total IS, the Battlefield is won; the Acting Player puts it in his Victory Pool. Allies of a victorious Challenger each draw a number of cards equal to the number of Warlords involved on their side of the Challenge and add them to their Command Hand as payment for their help.

---Loss of Status: If the Challenger's side's total IS is less than or equal to the Defender's side's total IS, the Battlefield is discarded. Any Legions and Fate in the Challenger's Battle Hand are returned to the player's Command Hand, and the Challenger is flipped. The Defender and his allies each draw a number of cards equal to the number of Warlords involved on their side of the Challenge, adding them to their Command Hand. This is their reward for thwarting the Challenge.

---Lying Low: Flip all Warlords used on both sides (along with the Battle Hands they lead).

Note: If a Warlord is discarded or sent to the Dead-Book for any reason during an Intrigue Challenge, discard the entire Battle Hand that he leads.

Combat Challenge:

---Invest the Field: The Acting Player chooses a Challenger from among his unflipped Warlords. He removes from his Command Hand any Fate cards he wishes to devote to the coming battle and places them into the Challenger's Battle Hand. (Note: Fate cards in the Battle Hand may exceed the normal stacking limits at this point.) Then he sets aside his Command Hand and picks up the Battle Hand.

---Defender Rouses: Beginning with the player to the Challenger's right and proceeding counter-clockwise, players have the opportunity to oppose the Challenge. The first to declare his intent to do so chooses a Defender from among his unflipped Warlords. (Unlike Intrigue, Combat uses only one Defender.) He removes from his Command Hand any Fate cards he wishes to devote to the coming battle and places them into the Defender's Battle Hand. (Note: Fate cards in the Battle Hand may exceed the normal stacking limits at this point.) Then he sets aside his Command Hand and picks up the Battle Hand.

---Conduct Battle: Combat proceeds as follows:

a. Warlord Powers: Most Warlord Combat Powers are designed for use at the very beginning of the Challenge. The Challenger has the option to use his Combat Power first, then the Defender may use his. But some special Combat Powers may be used at other times in the Challenge, as indicated on their Warlord's card.

When a Combat Power is used, flip the Warlord and place his card on the table. (Note: Flipped Warlords count as 5 IS, should a card refer to their IS.)

b. Legion Powers: (See Legion Powers, under Special Notes.) Legion Combat Powers are played in alternating sequence. First the Challenger has the option to use one Legion's Combat Power from his Battle Hand. Then the Defender may use one from his. The Challenger can then use a second Legion's Combat Power, followed by the Defender, and so on, until neither side has any remaining that they desire to use.

When a Combat Power is used, flip the Legion and place its card on the table. Flipped Legions count as 1 CS, rather than their normal CS.

c. Combat Strength Comparison: The Challenger and Defender each add up the CS of all Legions and Fate in their Battle Hands and compare them (counting flipped Legions and Fate as 1 CS each). The high total is victorious, though the Defender wins any ties.

---Spoils of War:

Defender: If victorious, the Defender draws an RR and then draws that many cards from his draw pile to his Command Hand in payment for defeating the Challenger. If the Defender is defeated, he receives nothing.

Challenger: If the Challenger is victorious, he subtracts the Defender's CS total from his, and captures the Battlefield if the remainder equals or exceeds its VP rating. The captured Battlefield is placed in his Victory Pool.

If the Challenger is defeated, or if his total CS is less than the total of the Defender's CS total plus the Battlefield's VP, he receives nothing.

---Lying Low: Both Challenger and Defender are flipped and placed back beside the player's other Warlords on the table. Their Battle Hands are discarded.

Note: If a Warlord is discarded or sent to the Dead-Book for any reason during a Combat Challenge, discard the entire Battle Hand that he leads.

4. Resolution Phase

--- Induct New Warlords: The Acting Player may take any Warlords from his

Command Hand and place them on the table. (Note: If a Warlord is marked {Unique}, the player must state so and read the name aloud. If another player already has that Warlord in play, the Acting Player must return the card to his Command Hand.)

---Regroup: Any flipped Warlords the Acting Player has are now turned face up, along with their Battle Hands, ready for use again.

---Cull the Weak: The Acting Player discards, if necessary, to reduce his Command Hand to 7 cards.

5. Victory Phase

War Report: If the Acting Player possesses Battlefield VP equal to or exceeding that chosen for the game length (see {Pre-Game Phase}, above), he wins. Otherwise he announces that his turn is finished, the player to his left becomes the new Acting Player, and the game continues.

Note: A player's Victory Pool, hence VP total, is open to view by all players at all times.

General Notes

The following notes explain some special rules and concepts that span the game.

Alignment

Alignment is a designation of personal values, consisting of the ethical divisions Lawful (L: in blue), Chaotic (C: in red), and Neutral (N: in split blue and red), and the moral divisions Good (G: in white), Evil (E: in gray), and Neutral (N: in split white and gray). Together, these create nine different combinations, such as Lawful Good (LG: in blue and white) or Chaotic Evil (CE: in red and gray).

Fate

Fate cards can be played at any time, even during another player's turn. The only restriction to this rule concerns Items and Support played during a Combat Challenge, which must be played with the Legions using them. In effect, Items and Support are assigned to specific Legions. A single Legion can be assigned only one Item or Support card. If the Item or Support card has an Alignment listed on it, it may be assigned only to a Legion whose Alignment matches the Fate card's in at least one letter. After being played, Fate cards are discarded, unless otherwise noted on a particular card.

Warlord Powers

While most Warlords are marked as having either a Combat Power or an Intrigue Power (in some cases both), a few Warlords are marked as having a {Personal Power}. Personal Powers are general effects that operate even outside of a Challenge, such as a particular Warlord's ability to hold units of varied alignment within a single Battle Hand.

Legion Powers

Some Legions have unique Powers that are explained on their cards. But many have Powers shared by other Legions of similar alignment. Definitions of those Powers follow: ---Combat Powers: Playable during a Combat Challenge.

Berserker: (Chaotic) Discard to send one opposing Legion to discard.

Cutter: (Neutral) This Legion can hold two Fate cards in a Battle Hand (even outside of Combat) and when totalling Combat Strength.

Guardian: (Lawful) Allows the Challenger to claim a Battlefield if his CS total exceeds the Defender's but not by enough to capture the Battlefield normally.

Horde: (Evil) Does not count toward a Battle Hand's 4 or 6 Legion stacking

limit. (even outside of Combat) Also can exceed the limit of 3 identical cards per deck.

Martyr: (Good) This Legion counts as two Legions against Powers that force a discard. When the first discard is forced, flip the Martyr; when the second is forced, discard it.

Shock Troop: (Any) This Legion can be added to a Battle Hand as last-minute recruits, as Fate cards can, exceeding the normal limit of 4 or 6 Legions.

Spirit: (Any) These Legions are not discarded at the end of Combat; they return to the Warlord's Battle Hand instead. But they can be sent to discard by Fate cards and various powers.

---Intrigue Powers: Playable during an Intrigue Challenge.

Advocate: (Neutral) When discarded, guarantees the player the reward of a victorious ally.

Aide: (Good) When discarded, adds its CS to the Warlord's IS total.

Diplomat: (Lawful) When discarded, doubles the RR of its side's Hidden Ally card.

Parasite: (Evil) This Legion, when discarded, subtracts its CS from an opposing Warlord's IS.

Terrorist: (Chaotic) When discarded, forces an opponent to discard from his Command Hand a number of cards equal to its CS.

Fate and Power Interaction

In general, when a card is played immediately in response to another card, the later card affects the earlier one. But some cards preclude another from being played. (Example: A Fate card that ends Combat precludes the play of further Combat Powers in that Challenge.)

Sending Cards to Discard or Dead-Book

When a Fate or Power causes the discard of an opposing card of a particular CS or less, the opponent must discard the card closest to that CS, but not over it. (Example: To discard of a Legion of 5 CS or less, from a Battle Hand containing 3 Legions of 3 CS, 4 CS, and 8 CS (discard the 4 CS card.) If a Fate or Power causes the discard of a card of at least a particular CS, the opponent must discard the card closest to that CS, but not under it. (Example: To discard of a Legion of at least 6 CS, from a Battle Hand containing 4 Legions of 4 CS, 5 CS, 7 CS, and 8 CS (discard the 7 CS card.) Cards sent to the Dead-Book follow the same procedure.

Advanced Rules

The following rules are standard, not optional, but come into effect primarily through rare cards.

New Fate Cards

New Fate cards are introduced in the first Escalation Packs of the BLOOD WARS game. These cards modify the stacking of Battle Hands and their use in Combat.

---Fate: Support Cards: Like an Item card, a Fate: Support card attaches to a Legion and adds to its CS in battle. However, it differs from an Item in that it can be discarded in place of the Legion it is assigned to, whether that Legion is being discarded because of a Combat Power used on it, a Fate card targeting it, or simply because Combat is over. In the last case, the Legion returns to the Battle Hand beneath the flipped Warlord.

---Fate: Acolyte Cards: A Fate: Acolyte card allows a player to make a Legion follow a particular leader, stacking in that leader's Battle Hand. This allows certain classes of Warlords (namely Avatars and Factols (see below)) to stack 6 Legions of varied alignments into their Battle Hands.

Note: An Acolyte card does not count against the Legion's one Fate card limit; thus, a player can stack one Acolyte-card and one other Fate card with a Legion.

Note: Some Acolyte cards work exactly like a standard Legion that has an Acolyte card attached. These Acolyte: Legions have no need for a Fate card in order to stack under their particular Avatar or Factor.

Avatars & Realm Powers

Some Warlords are marked as Avatars. These are deities using their avatar forms to participate in the Blood Wars. Unlike most Warlords, Avatars have two Powers to choose from during a Challenge: the first a Combat or Intrigue Power, and the second a special Realm Power. To gain the Realm power, an Avatar's home realm (noted on both the Battlefield and the Warlord card) must be conquered and placed into the player's Victory Pool.

Factors & Factions in the Blood Wars

Introduced with the Factions & Factors Escalation Pack, Warlord: Factors allow players to use the Factors (Warlords) and the Factions (Legions) that operate out of the city of Sigil.