

Battle

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Introduction

Games very similar to Magic: the Gathering can be played with regular playing cards. *Battle* is one relatively simple example. Imagine that people thought of a combat-oriented card game in 1393—seven hundred years before it was originally released. This is an example of what such a game could be like.

Battle is a card game using playing cards. Players build an army of soldiers and some cards have special abilities. A player loses after being attacked with five unblocked soldiers. These cards destroy the opponent's castle.

Battle can be played with no preparation using a single deck, or two players can create their own piles to use from a single deck. Any number of players can play simultaneously, but one deck is needed for every two players.

Basic Rules

Starting a game

Before the game begins, the following must happen:

1. Randomly determine who goes first. In a two player game, the player who takes the first turn skips his or her first draw step.
2. If more than two players are going to play, then one additional deck of playing cards should be shuffled together for every additional two players.
3. Players shuffle the deck.
4. Players each draw seven cards. To draw a card, take the top card of your deck and keep it hidden from the other players. If there are no cards left in your deck, shuffle your discard pile into your draw pile.

Win condition

A player to be attacked with unblocked soldiers five times loses the game. You can consider each unblocked soldier a “hit” against your castle. The soldiers do not all have to attack a player at the same time, so players need to keep track of how many times unblocked soldiers attacked them. The last player to remain in the game wins.

Game zones

Each player has four zones (areas):

1. **In play** – Cards in play are soldiers that can attack or block through a permanent presence. They are controlled by the player who played them. These cards are face up.
2. **Discard pile** – Cards in the discard pile are no longer of use. Soldiers that are destroyed are put into the discard pile. These cards are face up.
3. **Draw pile** – Cards in the draw pile are face down and random, and cards drawn are taken from the top of the draw pile. Players use their deck as a draw pile. If a player draws a card and no cards are in the draw pile, then the discard pile is shuffled into the draw pile.
4. **A hand** – Cards in each player's hand are face down but they can be seen by their owner, and they can be played by their owner.

Players usually share a single deck and discard pile, but there are ways for players to create their own pile of cards to use as a draw pile. If players each use a different pile of cards for their deck, then their draw pile is their deck, and each player has their own discard pile.

Taking turns

Players take turns in a clockwise direction. (Whoever is to the left of the first player goes second.)

Turn order

There are the following steps during each player's turn:

1. **Draw step** – Players draw a card during their draw step.
2. **Attack step** – Players can attack with soldiers during the attack step.
3. **Main step** – Players can put any number of spot cards (cards with a number or an “ace”) onto the table face up in front of them during their turns during the main step. They can also play one court card (face card) or special ability during the main step, but not both.

After a player's turn, it's the beginning of the next player's turn (in a clockwise direction).

Card types

There are two main card types—spot cards and court cards. Jokers are an optional third card type.

1. **Spot cards** – Also called “pip cards.” The cards with a number on them or an ace (with an “A” on it). These are soldiers and they can be used to attack or block. The number on each card determines its “combat skill” (how good it is in combat). The ace, two, and three all have “special abilities.”
2. **Court cards** – Also called “face cards.” The cards with a person on them (the jack, queen, and king). These are the most power soldiers in combat. The jack has a combat skill of 11, the queen has a combat skill of 12, and the king has a combat skill of 13. Only one court card can be played during a player's turn, and only if the owner already controls a card with the same suit.
3. **Joker** – Joker cards are the weakest soldiers with 0 combat skill, but they have a “special ability.” One court card or special ability can be played a turn. The joker has no suit, so the joker's special ability does not require the controller to control a soldier with any particular suit. The Joker's special ability is to cause the controller to “gain control of a soldier controlled by an opponent of that player's choice.”

Soldiers

Soldiers are put onto the table in front of their controller face up. Their controller is the player who played them. They are used attack and block. Soldiers can't attack the same turn they are played because the attack step is before the main step (when cards are played). They each have combat skill to determine how powerful they are, which is generally equivalent to how good the card is in any other card game (other than the fact that aces only have one combat skill).

Combat skill

Every soldier has combat skill. This is how powerful the soldier is in combat. When an attacking soldier is blocked, it enters combat against the soldiers blocking it. The soldier with the highest combat skill gets to strike first, and each soldier strikes once during combat based on the order of highest to lowest combat skill. When a soldier strikes, it destroys another soldier. Destroyed soldiers are put into the discard pile.

soldiers can be destroyed before they have a chance to strike. For example, an ace attacks and it's blocked by a 2. The 2 strikes first and destroys the ace. The ace does not get to strike at all because it was destroyed too quickly.

Special abilities

The ace, 2, 3, and joker cards all have special abilities. These cards can be played as soldiers for free, or they can be played for the special ability. Only one court card or special ability can be played during a player's turn, but not both. A card can only be played for the special ability if the controller has a soldier that has the right suit. For example, the special ability of the ace of hearts can only be played if the controller already has a soldier of hearts. Cards that are played for the special ability are put into the discard pile.

The special ability of each of these cards in the following:

1. **Ace** – You draw two cards.
2. **Two** – Destroy two soldiers an opponent controls of his or her choice. (Put those cards into the discard pile.)
3. **Three** – Destroy a soldier. (Put it into the discard pile.)
4. **Joker** – You gain control of a soldier controlled by an opponent of that player's choice.

Attacking

Attacking is divided into four moments:

1. **Choosing attackers** – When a player attacks, any number of soldiers that player controls are chosen to attack and the player must choose which opposing player each soldier is attacking. Soldiers can attack in groups. A group of soldiers can all be blocked by any number of soldiers. For example, a group of two attacking soldiers can be blocked by a single soldier controlled by the opponent.
2. **Choosing blockers** – The defending player(s) chooses any number of soldiers he or she controls to block with and which attacking creatures to block with it. Attacking creatures that are blocked enter combat against the creatures blocking them. Any number of soldiers can block a single attacking soldier (or a group of attackers). If any soldiers are unblocked, then the defending player gets that many hits. The first player to be attacked with five unblocked soldiers loses the game.
3. **Strike** – Soldiers with the greatest combat skill strike first and that soldier's controller chooses any soldier it's in combat against to destroy (put into the graveyard). Soldiers then continue to strike in the order of highest to lowest combat skill, and each soldier only strikes once each combat. If two soldiers have the same combat skill, then they both strike simultaneously.

Control

Cards are controlled by the player who plays them. Soldiers who are controlled by a player are put on the table in front of that player face up.

It is possible to create your own deck for Combat. This would be done before the game begins

or prior to game matches during a tournament. There are three main ways to make your own deck:

Constructed

Make a 40-card deck out of a deck of playing cards. That means that 12 cards would basically be removed from a 52-card deck of playing cards (assuming no Jokers are included) and the deck would be played without those other cards.

Sealed

For each player in an event, shuffle one deck of playing cards together. For example, four players would shuffle four decks of playing cards together. Then randomly deal a deck worth of face-down cards back to each player. (52-cards if you are using 52-card decks.) Players use those random piles of cards to create their own 30-card deck.

Draft

For every player in a draft event, shuffle one deck of playing cards together. For example, three players would shuffle three decks of playing cards together. Then give each player three piles of 15 random face-down cards.

Each player then picks up the first pile of 15 cards, takes one card, looks at them, and passes the rest to the player to their left. Each player then takes the pile that was passed to them, looks at them, takes one card, and passes the rest to the left. Continue this process until no cards are left of the first pile.

Then do the same thing, but pass the piles to the right instead.

Then do the same thing, but pass the piles to the left again.

At some point all the cards will be taken by the players. The players use those cards to make their own 30-card decks.

Teams

Players in four and six-player games can play teams with two to three players per team. There are two ways to play as a team:

1. **Alliance** – Players on a team are part of an alliance. A team of players can't attack each other, and they must both lose the game before the entire team loses the game.
2. **As one** – A team of players share a turn simultaneously. A team of players attack at the same time, can be attacked, and either team can use soldiers to block. If either team is attacked by unblocked soldiers five times, then the entire team loses the game.

Tournaments

Tournaments are events where 6 or more players all compete to see who is best. Tournaments have “matches” where two or more players compete to continue in the event. Each match requires at least one game to be played, but they can also be “two out of three” or “three out of five.” Multiplayer matches generally only have one game. Each match can have a time

limit (usually of at least 50 minutes). If there is no winner in the limited time, then the winner is the player that has been attacked with the fewest number of unblocked soldiers. If no winner can be determined in this way, then the first player to have an unblocked soldier is the winner. (If teams are used, then the entire team wins or loses each game of the match instead of merely one player.)

Tournaments can have two, three, or four-player matches. It should be decided ahead of time how many people will be in each game. Four-player games can have teams of two players. Tournaments that have teams generally require the players to decide who their teammates are before the matches begin, and they generally keep the same teammates throughout the tournament. The entire team would hope to win the tournament together.

Tournaments can be off-the top, constructed, sealed, or draft. The main differences between constructed, sealed, and draft were described above. The rules for off-the top are the regular way to play the game:

An “off the top” tournament uses a single deck for all players of each match. (Two decks are shuffled together for three to four player games.) Each player share a deck of cards to use as a draw pile, and they all have the same discard pile.

The easiest type of tournament is “single elimination.” That means that players are randomly assigned their opponents for each match and players who lose a match are eliminated. Only the winners stay in the tournament and are assigned to play against another random opponent. This process continues until only a single winner remains. If teams are used, then the entire team wins or loses each match instead of a single player.