

Strongholds

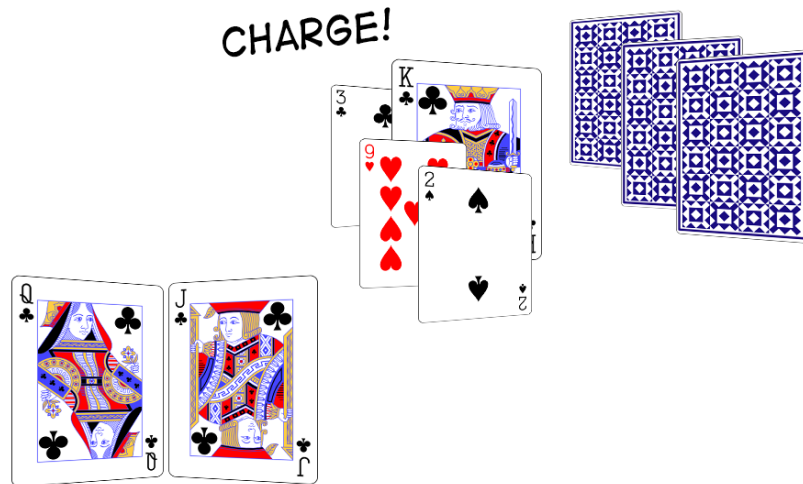
a game for 2 or 4 players
ver. 1

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Abstract

A tactical card game played using a standard deck with two main phases - besieging enemy strongholds and defending against oncoming attacks.



Setup

Played with a standard deck of 54 cards. Play time is 20-30 minutes.

1. The number of players determines how many royals you have in your stronghold.
 - In a two-player game, each picks a colour (black or red) before the game starts.
 - In a four-player game, each player picks a suit.

The royals are shuffled together in a separate deck. Players take turns in drawing the top card from the deck until all players' royal families have been determined. Each player's family needs to be unique, so if they draw a suit/colour that has already been drawn - they draw again.

2. After family ties have been determined, all the royals are distributed to their respective players. These are to be laid out in front of the player (the *Stronghold*), visible to all.
3. The remaining cards (2 to 10, Jokers, and Aces) are shuffled and become the *draw pile*. Each player is dealt out 6 cards, which they must keep hidden from other players. These 6 cards form the troops of the royal family.

The Goal

Protect your royal family and kill all of the opposing families' royals by besieging their strongholds, or by killing them at your doorstep.

Playing

Each turn plays out in the following order:

1. All players secretly determine:
 - which one of their royals will be sent out to besiege enemy strongholds
 - which player to target
 - which troops to send with the royal (henceforth, while in the field: *General*). See explanation later.

Players *must* send out exactly one royal to attack every turn.

2. Once all players announce that they have made up their mind, all players simultaneously lay out their intended cards in front of their chosen enemy's stronghold. Multiple players can attack the same stronghold (see explanation).

3. All players defend their stronghold best they can by laying out which of their remaining troops get assigned to which attacker. The attacking general can be targetted (and killed) after all of their troops have been killed (not just wounded).
4. Remaining damage is calculated and royals are potentially killed in the stronghold (royals that have been sent out as generals need to be killed in battle). The royal to die is chosen based on their health and the damage to be done (highest valued royal that can die, dies first).

If there are no royals in the stronghold (i.e. if the player has one royal left and they are in the battlefield), then any remaining (not countered) damage leads to the stronghold being defeated and the respective player losing the game, even if their royal in battle was not defeated during the turn.

In the unlikely circumstance that two remaining players both have one royal left and are attacking one another, *and* both manage to land damage onto their enemy's strongholds, the game ends in a tie. Both strongholds fall and the world grows silent.

5. Any troops, and General, that have not been defeated at the enemy's stronghold return to the respective player's hand. All troops that were sent out as defence die and do not return.
6. Players draw from the draw pile until they have 6 cards in their hand. At this point, the defeated troops do not yet return to the draw pile.
7. After all players have 6 cards in their hand, the defeated troops are shuffled back into the draw pile.

The game ends when there is one stronghold left standing (i.e. with at least one royal alive that hasn't been defeated).

Generals and Health

When a royal is sent out into the battlefield, they become a general. Each royal has a special ability that gets activated when they are a general, but unless otherwise specified, their power remains the same. Note, that health and (attack) power are one and the same, with the exception of royals - their power does not count towards attack unless they are a Jack.

- Jacks: 5 health. Needs to take 1 troop into battle. Takes on the power (and health) of the troop with him.
- Queens: 6 health. Needs to take 2 troops into battle. Doubles the power of troops with her, given that the troop is of the same colour as the Queen general.
- Kings: 7 health. Needs to take 3 troops into battle. All troops with him take on the power of the highest-powered troop.

Note that a full battalion needs to be sent out under all circumstances, except for when there is only one royal left in the stronghold. In this case, one can send out a general with a minimum of one troop.

Defending and Card Power

A card's power is determined by the number it carries. Joker and Aces are special cards (see later explanation). Card suit/colour does not matter when defending.

To defend against a card, place a number of cards from your hand on top of it. If the cards placed fully cancel out the power of the attacking card, then that card is considered defeated.

You can partly cancel out the power of an attacking card as well. In this case, the attacking card is not defeated and will return to its player's hand after the turn is over. The remaining, not-cancelled-out, power still applies.

One needs to fully kill the troops of a general before being able to target the general themselves.

When being attacked by multiple players, one can pit the troops of the two (or more) players attacking you against one another. In this case, the pitted cards are guaranteed to not return to their respective players' hands. The attack power of two pitted-against cards is the absolute value of their difference. i.e. if being attacked by a 20 (eg: 10 boosted by Queen) and a 18 (eg: boosted 9), then the resulting attack power against the defending player is 2.

When you finish defending and the attackers still have power remaining, some of your royals may have to die. If there is enough power to fully deplete a royal's health, then the royal with the most health in your stronghold falls first (i.e. King, Queen, then Jack). For example, if after defending there is still 9 power left, and you have a King (7 health) and Queen (6 health) in your stronghold, then the King dies but your Queen is remained unharmed and will still have 6 health next turn. If there is enough power to kill two royals, then the same rule applies.

Special Cards

Jokes and Aces are considered special cards. They cannot be sent out as troops, but are very useful when it comes to defending your stronghold.

- Aces: place on top of any card to kill instantly. Reminder that troops need to be killed before the commanding general can be attacked. Alternatively, sacrifice the Ace and draw 2 cards from the draw pile, at any time.
- Joker: place on top of a general to fully negate the special ability of the general.