Rule Book

BATTLE FOR EMPYREAN

RULE BOOK

Note: if you are viewing this rule book as a PDF, it does not contain animated gifs that appear on the website.

Background, Objective

The Creators have vanished! In their absence, a power vacuum has formed in the high heavens - the realm known as Empyrean. Armies across space and time have gathered on battlefields across Empyrean to stake their claim and rule over all of existence.

You and your opponent will assume command of an historical or mythical army from the past, present, or future and strategically deploy your forces to overwhelm the other.

Who will exert their might across these battlefields to defeat their foes and win the Battle for Empyrean?

Objective: accumulate more might than your opponent on 2 of the 3 battlefields after 10 rounds. You will accomplish this by spending available essence each round to strategically deploy your cards on these battlefields and maximize their ability to gain Might.

## Game Components, Table Layout, and Setup

The core game components are as follows:

- Game decks comprised of 24 cards that follow the same card-cost profile

- Battlefield cards each having 2 unique effects that randomize gameplay

- Counters/tokens used to mark cards and keep track of game elements

- Helper cards to give players information on decks, tokens, and round phases

- A First Player Token to keep track of round play order

Note that some components vary slightly between the virtual game on Tabletopia and the physical game. Tabletopia is always shown in this rule book.
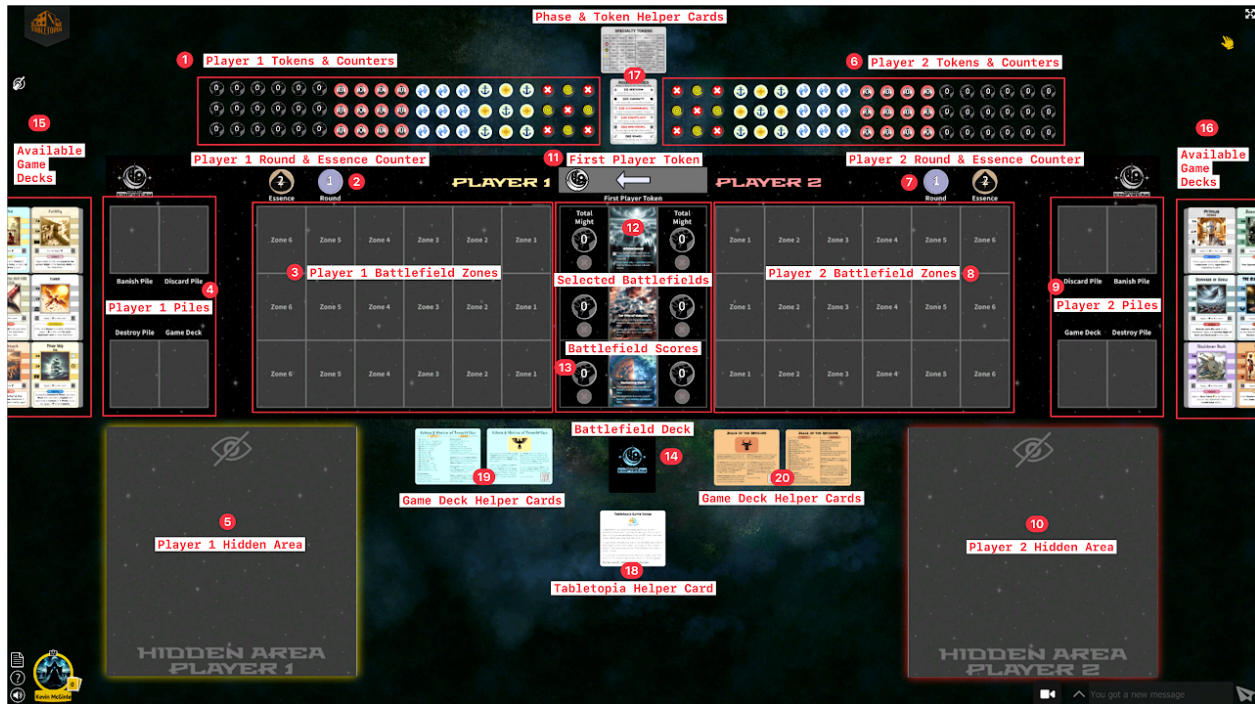
Tabletopia Game Layout

The game surface area from Tabletopia is shown above. This reflects a side-by-side layout where players share 1 battlefield card arrangement. Player 1 plays right-to-left on the left side of the battlefields, and player 2 plays right-to-left on the right side of the battlefields.

For the physical game, it's not uncommon for players to play across from each other. In this instance, each player has their own battlefield cards.

The numbered areas in the image above are as follows:

1. Stop, Stun, Anchor, Shield, and Move tokens, along with Might and Captive counters for use by Player 1. Some tokens are double-sided.

2. Round and essence counters for Player 1.

3. The 18 battlefield zones where Player 1 can deploy their cards right-to-left.

4. The 4 spaces where Player 1 can collect piles of cards, including where they place their game deck to begin.

5. Player 1's hidden area where it can search through piles & the game deck for specific cards if needed.

6. Stop, Stun, Anchor, Shield, and Move tokens, along with Might and Captive counters for use by Player 2. Some tokens are double-sided.

7. Round and essence counters for Player 2.

8. The 18 battlefield zones where Player 2 can deploy their cards left-to-right.

9. The 4 spaces where Player 2 can collect piles of cards, including where they place their game deck to begin.

10. Player 2's hidden area where it can search through piles & the game deck for specific cards if needed.

11. The First Player Token which can be flipped (F-key) back and forth between players each round.

12. 3 battlefield cards randomly selected for each new game.

13. Battlefield might counters to tally total might on that battlefield. Player 1's are on the left, Player 2's are on the right of the cards.

14. The additional cards from the battlefield deck. If you don't like the starting 3 randomly selected, you can select new ones here.

15. The game decks available for each player to play, which may vary by the game link you joined or the edition you have.

16. More game decks available for each player to play, which may vary by the game link you joined or the edition you have. A player can pick from either side.

17. Token and round phase helper cards if you need a quick reminder.

18. Tabletopia setup and gameplay tips. This card can be flipped (F-key).

19. Game deck helper guards for Player 1. You can randomly select a deck (R-key) or you can right-click to select a deck on both cards.

20. Game deck helper guards for Player 2. You can randomly select a deck (R-key) or you can right-click to select a deck on both cards.

To start a game:

- Each player selects a deck and moves it to their "Game Deck" space (#4 / #9 above). They can also select their helper cards accordingly (#19 / #20 above).

- Right-click on the deck and shuffle it.

- Right-click on the deck and draw 4 cards.

- Randomly select who gets the First Player Token (#11 above) by hovering over it and randomizing it (R-key).

- Move to the draft phase of round 1.

Essence and Might

Essence and might are the primary currencies in the game. Each is described in more detail below alongside its symbol.
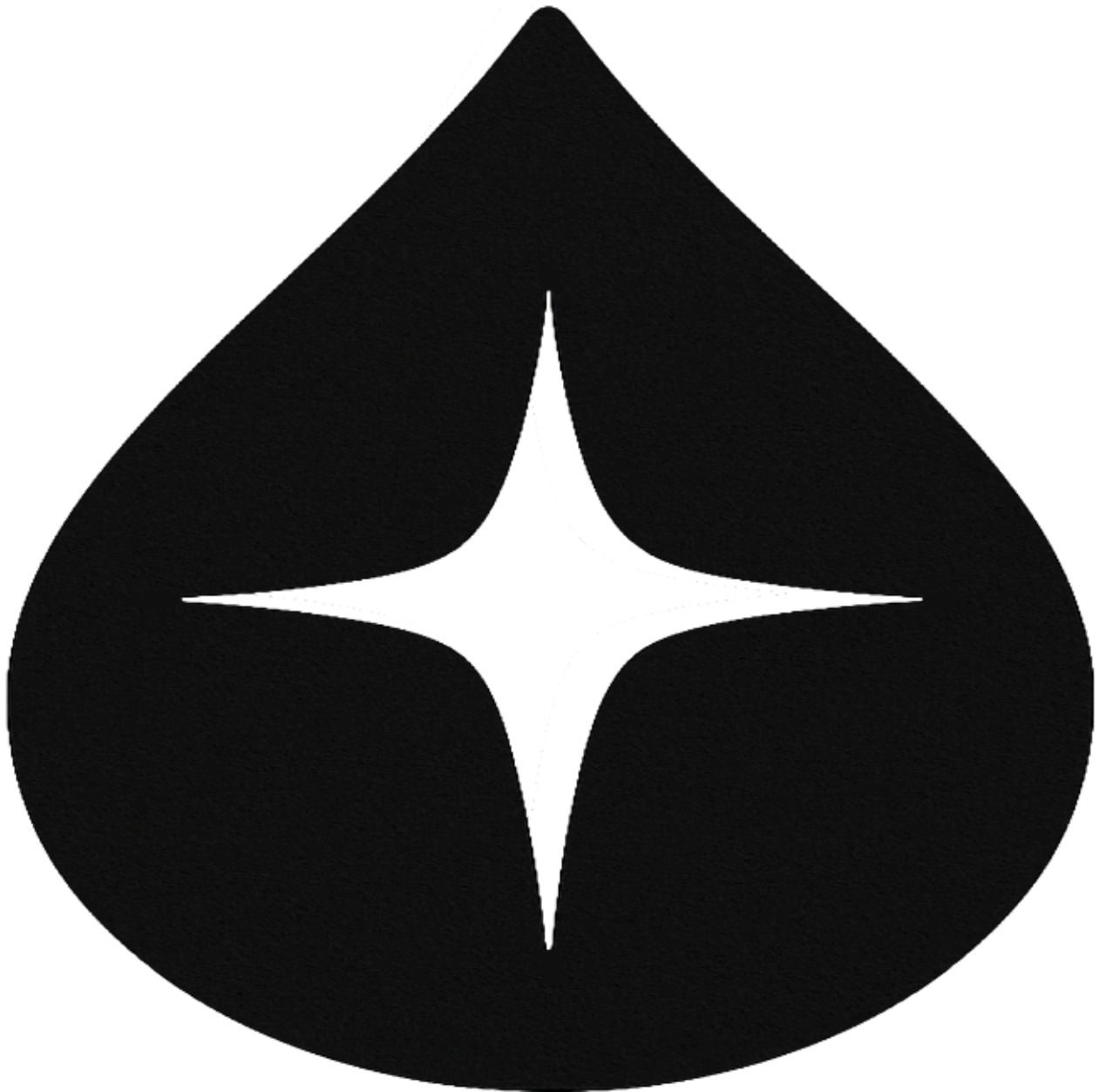
Essence

- Each player starts with 2 base essence in round 1.

- Your base essence increases by 1 each round. For example, you'll have 3 base essence to spend in round 2.

- Essence can be added or subtracted from this base amount each round by card abilities or battlefield effects, typically resolved in the prior round. These increases or decreases only last for a single round.

- All cards have an essence cost, which is the top left number on the card next to the essence symbol.

- Unspent essence does not roll over between rounds.

Might

- All game deck cards have a reveal might indicated on the card. When a card is revealed on a battlefield, apply this might to the card using a might counter/token. This reveal instruction also resides above the card's ability box.

- You may apply or remove additional might to a card because of a card's own ability, other cards' abilities, or battlefield effects.

- If a card has a maximum might value, only battlefield effects allow the card to exceed this might.

- A card can never go below 0 (zero) might, despite the counters allowing this.

Round Phases and End of the Game Phase

Each round has 6 phases. Each is described in more detail below alongside its symbol. Phases 3-5 follow the First Player Token order.

Phase 1: Begin

(do not perform on round 1) - Increase the round counter by 1 and set the essence counter to 1 more than the round cube number, regardless of what it was last round. Add or subtract any essence gained or lost last turn. Do this for both players simultaneously.

Phase 2: Draft

Draw 2 cards and keep 1 of them, placing the other on the bottom of the game deck. There is no maximum hand size. Do this for both players simultaneously. Since each deck has 24 cards, you start the game with 4 cards in your hand, and a game has 10 rounds, this means you will see every card in your deck once - unless a card causes you to shuffle your game deck. Deciding between acquiring a specific card in your deck and insuring that you see every card is one of many strategic decisions you may need to make during the game.

If your game deck is reduced to 1 card, you may simply draw that card. If it's reduced to zero cards, skip the draft phase.

Phase 3: Command

Activate the command phase abilities of your revealed cards on any battlefield based on the rules of that card. Repeat for the other player in first player token order. If no command phase abilities are available on the battlefield for either player, skip this phase. Only some decks have cards that can utilize the command phase.

All activity in the command phase resolves fully before moving to the deploy phase. This allows players to assess the full impact of the phase before deciding where to deploy cards.
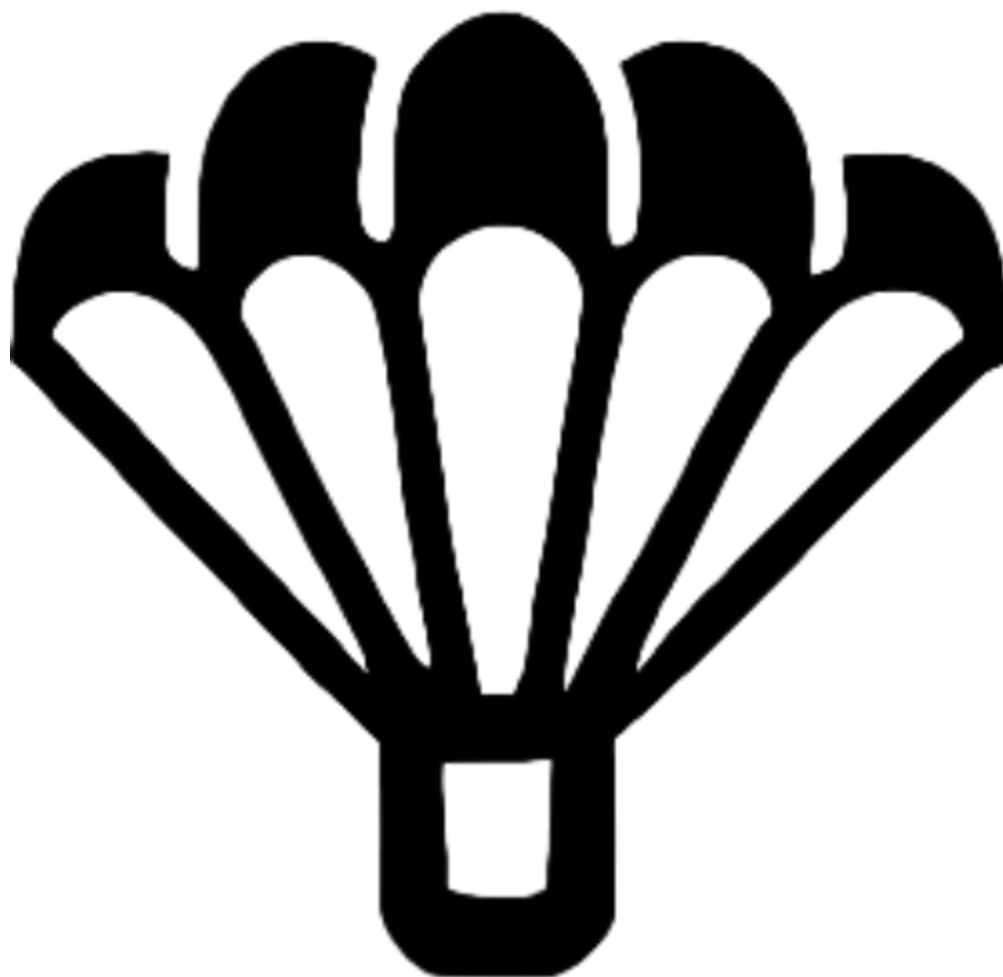
Phase 4: Deploy

Spend essence to deploy one or more cards face-down on the lowest numbered open zone of a given battlefield, noting the order in which cards were deployed (you can use might tokens to mark the order if it helps you remember). Repeat for the other player after the first player deploys all of their cards.

You do not need to announce nor adjust your essence tracker while deploying cards; the honor system is used.

You may decide to "pass" your deploy phase if you don't have enough essence to deploy any cards in your hand or if you simply don't want to deploy available cards at this time in the game for strategic reasons.

If you come across a battlefield with a deploy effect, follow the rules of that effect during the deploy phase.

Phase 5: Reveal

Reveal cards face-up one at a time in the order they were deployed. A card and its ability is not active on the Battlefield until it is revealed. With each reveal, do the following in order, then repeat the below reveal steps for the other player.:

1. Apply might tokens equal to the card's reveal might.

2. Resolve the card's ability, if applicable.

3. Resolve any ally card abilities that may trigger based on this card's reveal.

4. Resolve any battlefield effects that may trigger based on this card's deploy or reveal.

Phase 6: End

Resolve any card and/or battlefield "end phase" effects (cards first, then battlefields). Pass the first player token to the other player. After round 10, move to the "end of the game" phase.

End of the Game Phase

After round 10 is complete, resolve any "end of the game" effects (if any) for each player. After that is complete, you will:

- Tally the might for each player on each battlefield. The player with the highest might on each battlefield wins that battlefield. If a player wins 2 of the 3 battlefields, that player wins the game!

- If there is a tie on any battlefield that prevents a player from winning 2 battlefields, then total each player's might across all 3 battlefields. The highest total might wins!

Now that you know how the game flows, read on to understand game deck cards and their abilities, tokens, battlefields, and game actions.

Game Deck Cards

Every game deck comes with 24 cards. While each deck uses different fonts, colors, and textures, the cards all follow the same layout structure:

Langskip
Ship

1

2

3

4 5 ◆

5 3 ✊

6 🚢

7 🔄

8 🎧

9 Apply 3 ✊ to this card.

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10 Passive

During the **Command Phase**, you may **Move** this card and **1 or 2 Ally Vikings**. If you do, Add 1 ✊ as a **Viking Raid Token** to your Tracker.

11

Following the red number bubbles on the card above:

1. Card name

2. Card type - a class or grouping of certain cards; abilities may affect only a specific type of card

3. Card image

4. Essence cost - required to deploy the card and ranges from 1-8

5. Reveal might - gained upon reveal of the card, which can be zero; same as #9 below but here for easier visibility

6. Deck symbol - a fun identifier for the deck

7. Affixed token - a permanently applied token for this card; not all cards have this

8. Phase indicator icons - identifies the card has abilities that trigger during these phases of a round; there is a max of 2 and not all cards have these

9. Reveal might ability - might to apply when the card is revealed; some cards have no reveal might

10. Ability type badge - indicates an Instant (red background), Conditional (yellow background), or Passive (blue background) ability

11. Card ability - super power for the card; note bold phrases, capitalized keywords, the use of essence and might symbols, and ability names in brackets [ ] that represent specialized deck abilities

Ability Types and Keywords

There are 3 ability types:

1. Instant (red colored badge) - these abilities resolve one time as soon as you reveal the card and do not resolve again unless a card says otherwise.

2. Conditional (yellow colored badge) - these abilities may resolve when you reveal the card and may continue to resolve throughout the game if their condition is triggered by another action in the game.

3. Passive (blue colored badge) - these abilities are always active, but they resolve based on the instructions on the card.

Some card abilities are deck-specific and use keywords in brackets ([Ability Name]:) to refer to those abilities, as shown below. On lower cost cards (Bondi), this ability will typically be explained on the card to indicate the meaning of the named ability. On higher cost cards (Blendingur), the explanation is often omitted in favor of the bracketed text to refer to the ability. If the named ability in brackets contains a might indicator number after it, that number represents how much might should be applied when that ability resolves. In the below example, Blendingur gets 2 might for each Viking Raid, where Bondi only gets 1. As you can see on Blendingur, it's likely that another distinct or related ability could appear on these higher cost cards.

Bondi
Viking

1 ✦

1 ✊

Apply 1 ✊ to this card.

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Conditional

Viking Raid: If you **Move** this card with a **Ship**, Apply 1 ✊ to this card.

Blendingur

Viking

7 ✦

6 ✊

Apply 6 ✊ to this card.

Conditional

[Viking Raid]: 2 ✊ to this card.
If you **Reveal Wolf Spirit** on this Battlefield, Apply 2 ✊ to this card.

Also pay attention to the presence of capitalized (and often bolded) keywords on cards. Capitalized keywords can reference card names and types, but they can also be special words that have specific instructions. These are listed below in alphabetical order, but note they can be articulated on cards using multiple word forms (Deploy/Deployment):

- Acquire - Search your game deck for the specified card, add it to your hand, then shuffle your game deck. If the specified card is no longer in your game deck, ignore this ability and do not shuffle your game deck.

- Add/Subtract - Increase or decrease the amount of essence available to a player, typically on the next round.

- Adjacent - A card is considered adjacent to another card if it is one zone higher or lower (left / right) on the same battlefield, or in the same numbered zone (same column) in the battlefield above or below.

- Ally <Name>, <Type>, card - Other revealed cards you deployed from your game deck (if neither Ally nor Opponent are listed, both apply).

- Apply/Remove - Take the appropriate circle token (numbered or symbol) and put it on or remove it from the appropriate card.

- Banish - Remove a card from your hand or the battlefield and put it face-down in the banish pile. This card is effectively removed from the game unless another card says otherwise.

- Between - A card is considered to be between two other cards if it is in any zone higher than the first card and any zone lower than the second card on the same battlefield, or in the same numbered zone (same column) on the middle battlefield as the first card on the top battlefield and the second card on the bottom battlefield.

- Bites - The act of spending essence to have one card "bite" another card using the Bloodlust ability.

- Deploy - Put a card face-down on a battlefield zone by spending its essence cost during the deploy phase, or put it face-down during the reveal phase if instructed by a card ability.

- Destroy - Remove a revealed card from the battlefield and put it face-up in the destroy pile.

- Discard - Take a card from your hand and put it face-down in the discard pile. You may look at cards in your discard pile.

- Draw - Take the top card from your game deck. This is not the same as drafting. Only draw the number of cards indicated and you do not get to choose which cards to keep.

- Fills/Full - A card is considered to "fill" a battlefield if it is deployed to the last open zone on a battlefield. A battlefield is considered to be full if there are no open zones to deploy a card to on that battlefield.

- Here - A short way to say "on this Battlefield."

- Move - Take a revealed card on a battlefield and put it on an open zone on another battlefield.

- Open Zone - Refers to any unoccupied battlefield zone.

- Opponent <Name>, <Type>, card - Any revealed cards your opponent deployed from their deck (if neither Ally nor Opponent are listed, both apply).

- Remove/Apply - Take the appropriate circle token (numbered or symbol) and put it on or remove it from the appropriate card.

- Resolve - Implement the effect of an ability to its completion when a card is revealed or its ability triggers.

- Return - Take a revealed card from the battlefield or a designated pile and place it into your hand, removing all might from it.

- Reveal - Turn a face-down card face-up; -ed refers to a face-up card.

- Shift - "Slide" a card within the same battlefield to the next open zone. Note: this is not the same as the Move ability, as all Moves are between battlefields, not within them.

- Stack - Put two cards on top of each other on the same battlefield zone. Combine all might tokens onto the top card, but retain only the top card's specialty tokens. Only the top card's ability is "active" on the battlefield. You may choose which card is the top card.

- Subtract/Add - Increase or decrease the amount of essence available to a player, typically on the next round.

- Swap - Take a card from your hand or game deck and put it on the same battlefield zone as an existing card; the existing card returns to the same location the new card came from. This is not a Deploy nor Reveal and does not cost extra essence, however the new card does Resolve its reveal might and its ability. The existing card loses all might.

- Tracker - This is the card or area used to track the round number and your available essence. If you are using the mobile app, any designated area can be considered the Tracker.

- Zone - Refers to any available card space on a battlefield. There are typically 6 available zones, but this can be reduced or increased by a battlefield effect.

Tokens / Counters

There are a variety of tokens and counters used to track things in the game. Counters are only used in the Tabletopia version of the game and are a replacement for using multiple tokens for tracking might and captives on cards, total might on a battlefield, and round / essence on the tracker area.

Essence Counter (Tabletopia only)

Tracks essence for a given round.

Might Counter (Tabletopia only)

Apply to: Your revealed cards

Effect: Adds might to the card or battlefield. Can be increased or decreased, but not below 0.

Duration: Permanent (except by battlefield effect)

Might Token (values 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10)

Apply to: Your revealed cards

Effect: Adds might to the card. Use multiple tokens to sum to the card's total might. No tokens = 0 might.

Duration: Permanent (except by battlefield effect)

Stop Token

Apply to: Opponent battlefield card area (unless otherwise stated)

Effect: Prevents the next instant ability revealed on this battlefield from resolving.

Duration: One-time prevention

Stun Token

Apply to: Opponent revealed cards

Effect: Prevents a conditional ability from triggering for the remainder of the game.

Duration: Permanent

Shield Token

Apply to: Ally or opponent revealed cards

Effect: Prevents a card from being destroyed for the remainder of the game. It does not protect from anything else.

Duration: Permanent

Anchor Token

Apply to: Opponent revealed cards

Effect: Prevents a card from returning or moving for the remainder of the game. It does not prevent stacking, shifting, collapsing, swapping or other future game actions.

Duration: Permanent

Move Token

Apply to: Ally revealed cards

Effect: Allows a card to move during the command phase. A card may accumulate multiple tokens.

Duration: One-time use

Captive Token (Physical) / Counter (Tabletopia)

Apply to: Ally revealed cards

Effect: No immediate effect and typically triggers with another card ability. A card may accumulate multiple tokens.

Duration: Permanent, but may be reduced/removed by another card ability.

Battlefields

While battlefields add a fun thematic element to the game by adding "locations" throughout Empyrean, their primary purpose is to randomize every game by presenting each player with rewards, penalties, difficult decisions, and gameplay alterations that will affect deployment choices.

Darkwall Prison

◎ The **first time** you Reveal a card Here, **Banish a card** from your hand.

✓ If you **have 4 cards Here** during the End Phase, **Return that Banished card** to your hand.

Eldritch Rift

ALL This Battlefield does not exist on the **last Round** of the game and **nothing can happen Here**.

If you Deploy a card Here **after Round 6**, you may Deploy a 1 ♦ or 2 ♦ cost card Here for free.

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Each battlefield has two effects. Keep the following in mind:

- Effects trigger during a specific phase (indicated by the phase icon) unless the icon says "ALL".

- Effects apply separately to each player unless a battlefield refers to the first player to achieve a milestone.

- Effects are capable of changing the base game rules. When this happens, those rule changes are always in effect.

- Effects can trigger each round, on specific rounds, or at the end of the game; pay close attention to this timing as you play.

- The phrase "the first time you ..", refers to the whole game.

- When an effect triggers from a card reveal, it is the last thing resolved as part of that card's reveal.

- Key text is highlighted in blue to help you read the effects quickly and icons help you keep track of the phase in which the effect occurs.

Game Actions

There are a variety of actions that you might do in a game, and most depend on which game deck you play. These actions are:

- Moving

- Collapsing

- Destroying

- Shifting

- Returning

- Swapping

- Stacking

- Discarding

- Banishing

Each game action is described in more detail below. If you are viewing a PDF version of the rule book, visit the website to view animated gifs of each action.
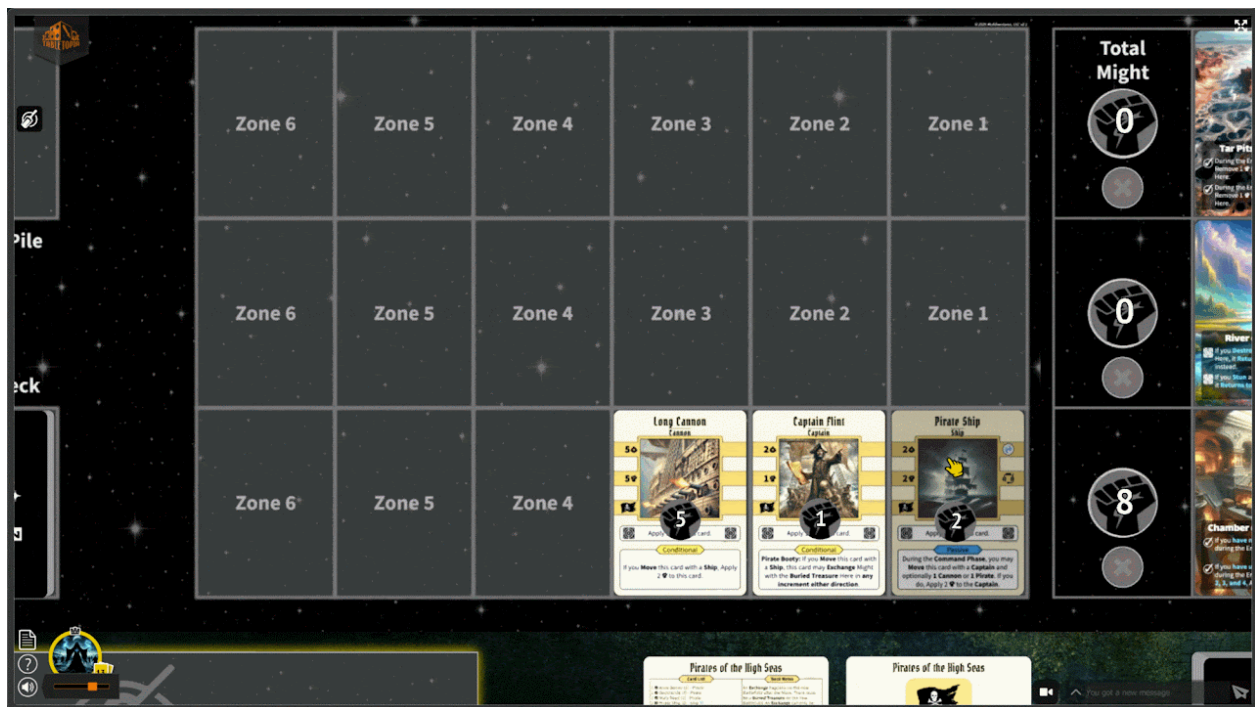
A Pirate ship moving a Captain and a Cannon with it.

Moving

Some cards can move between battlefields if a card ability enables it. A move is always between battlefields and is different than a collapse or shift, which happens within a battlefield.

When cards move, they always move to the lowest numbered zone on another battlefield of your choice. Some cards can move of their own accord via a move token, while others require another card to move them.

Moving a card during the command phase is optional. Cards that move due to the reveal phase of another card are not optional moves unless there are no open zones to move to.
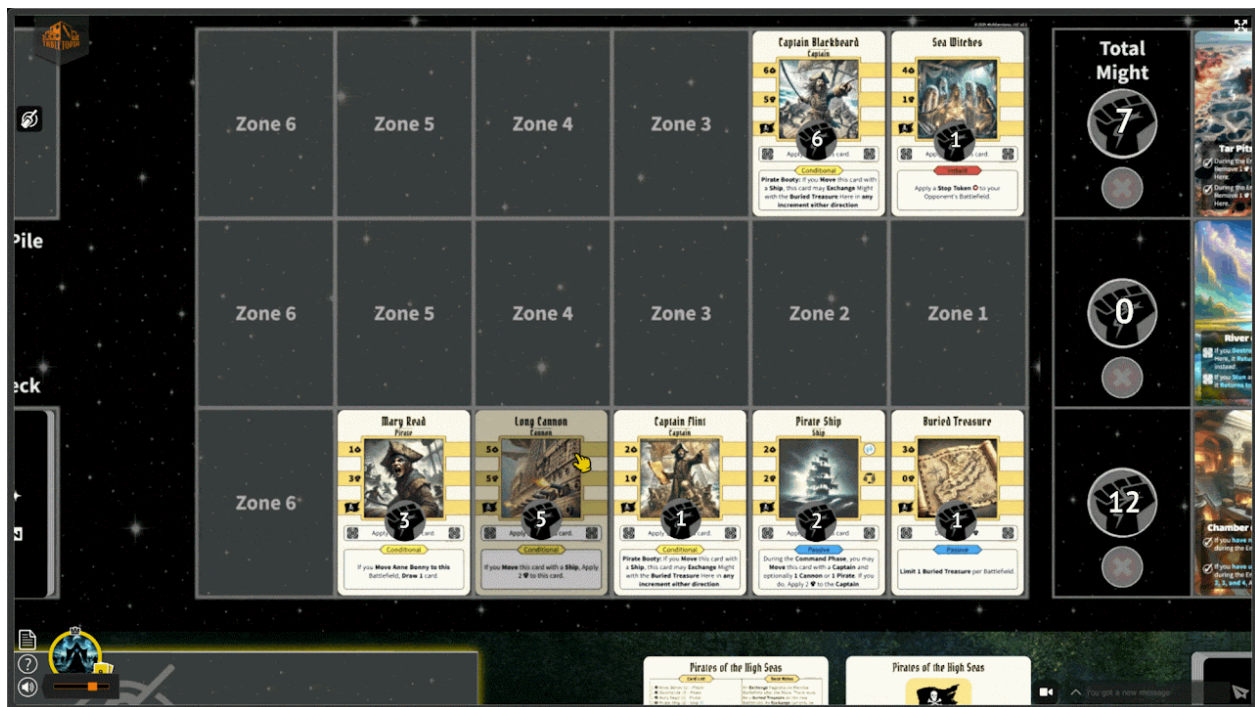
A card collapsing into a lower numbered zone after a move.

Collapsing

Cards collapse when a revealed card vacates a zone number on the battlefield while there are one or more cards occupying higher zone numbers on the same battlefield.

Cards can vacate a zone because of other game actions, like move, shift, stack, return, destroy, banish or some other future game action. A collapse does not count as a card move and does not trigger conditional move abilities.

Two cards being destroyed by Eater of Souls

Destroying

When a card is destroyed, either by an ally or an opponent, it leaves the battlefield and is placed face up in the destroy pile. This may cause a collapse of cards due to a vacated zone. It may also trigger a chain reaction of abilities.

If one of your card's ability causes the destruction of one or more ally cards, destroy one card at a time, following the normal resolve order for each card: first determine the impact to the card causing the destruction, then resolve any conditional cards that apply from a card being destroyed, then put the card into the destroy pile. If a card with a conditional ability is actively being destroyed, the condition is still resolved unless it has a stun token.
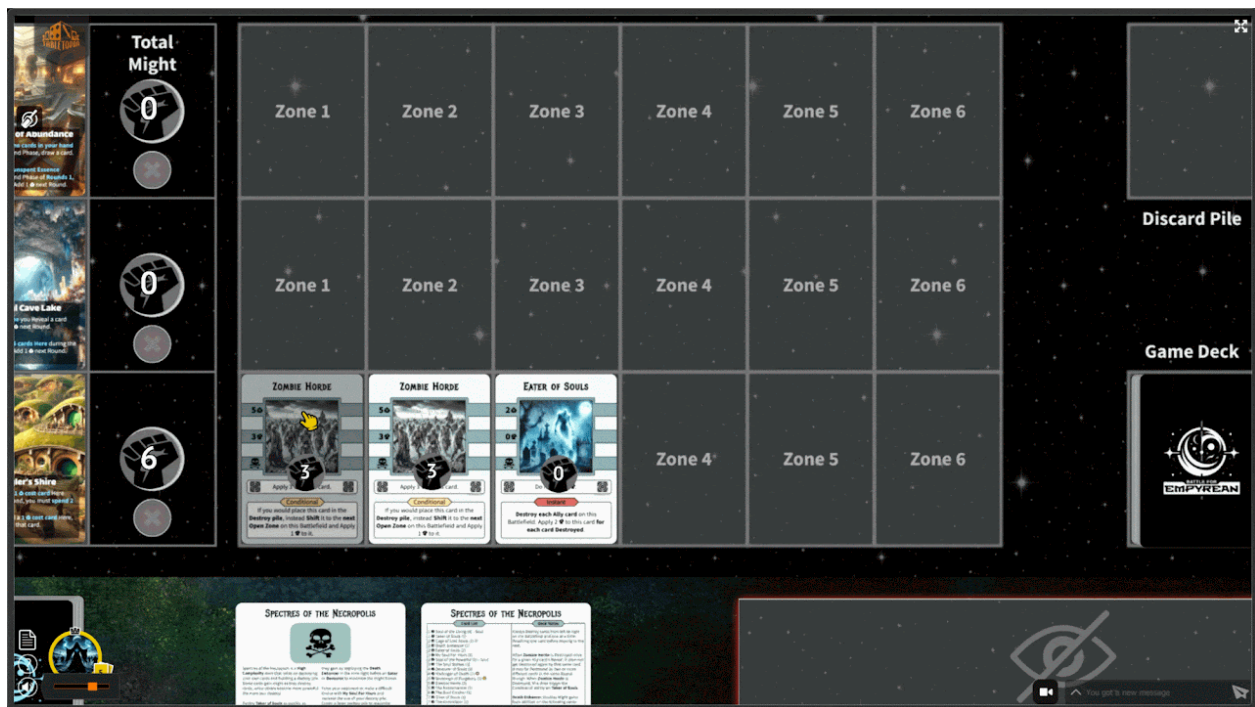
Zombie Hordes shifting after destruction by Eater of Souls.

Shifting

A card shifts by moving to the next highest open zone number on its current battlefield. You can think of this shift as the card temporarily leaves the battlefield (to purgatory!) and is automatically re-deployed to that same battlefield, all in one action.

Cards can shift because another card destroys it or because of some other future game action. When a card shifts because it was destroyed, it does count as being destroyed for other card abilities, but it does not lose its current might or any other specialty tokens.

A shift does not count as a card move and does not trigger conditional move abilities.

A Chariot returning Builders to your hand.

Returning

When a card says to return a specific card or category of cards to your hand, immediately remove all might tokens from those cards and put the cards in your hand. This is not optional. If the specified card(s) are not on the battlefield, ignore this ability. You cannot return cards that have not been revealed yet.

A return may cause a collapse of cards due to a vacated zone. It may also trigger a chain reaction of abilities. It does not count as a card move and does not trigger conditional move abilities.

Cards returned to your hand may be re-deployed to any battlefield on a future turn for their essence cost.
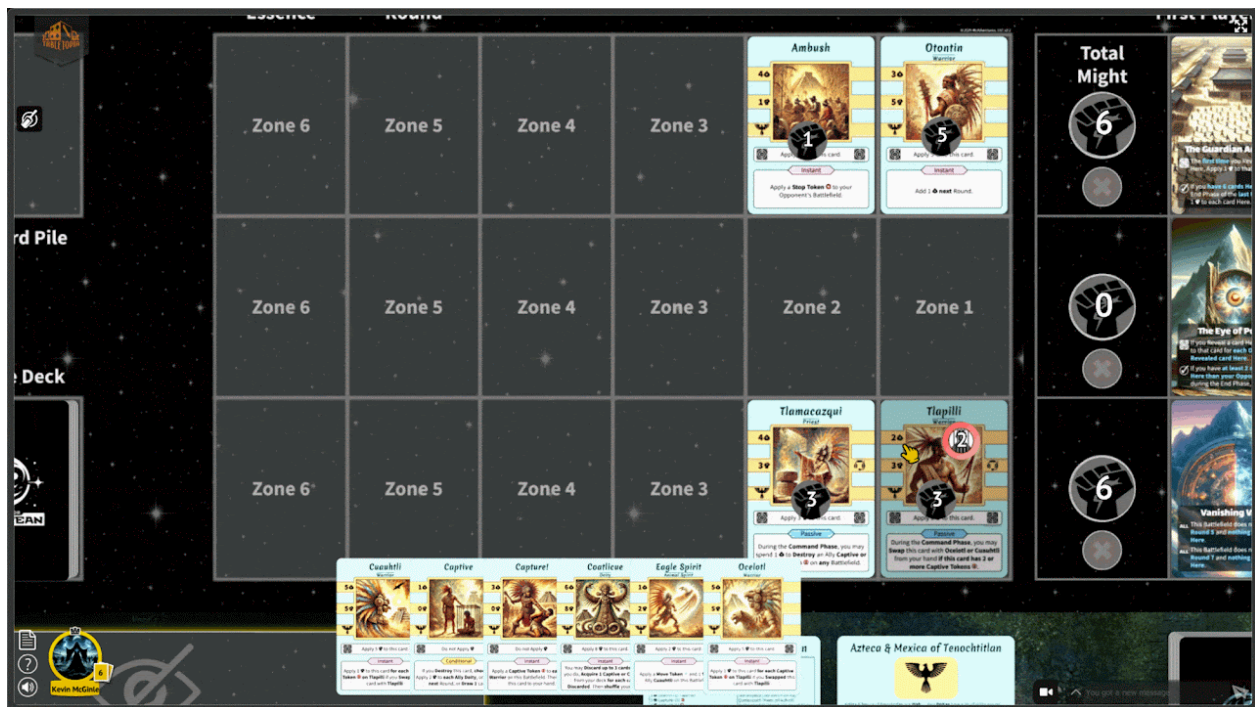
An Ocelotl swapping with Tlapilli.

Swapping

A swap occurs between a revealed card on a battlefield and a card in another game space, like your hand or your game deck. You can think of a swap as the card on the battlefield transforming into another.

When a swap triggers, the indicated cards switch places. For example, the card on the battlefield (card A) has its tokens removed and goes to your hand, and the card in your hand (card B) will replace card A on the same battlefield zone vacated. Apply the reveal might and resolve the ability of card B as if it were deployed and revealed normally.

A swap is neither a move nor a return and does not trigger either conditional ability.

Stacking Robots with the Collective ability.

Stacking

A stack is created when one revealed card on a battlefield is put on top of another revealed card, typically on the same battlefield. Creating a stack may cause a collapse of cards due to a vacated zone. When stacking cards, the following rules apply:

- The might of both cards is combined

- Only the ability of the top card is active; you may choose the top card

- All specialty tokens for the bottom card are removed

A stack may be created with a card and an existing stack; either may go on top. Stacking is neither a move, a shift, nor a destroy and does not trigger those conditional abilities.

Note: in Tabletopia, cards will not stack while tokens/counters are on them. Remove them first, then stack, then re-apply the tokens/counters.
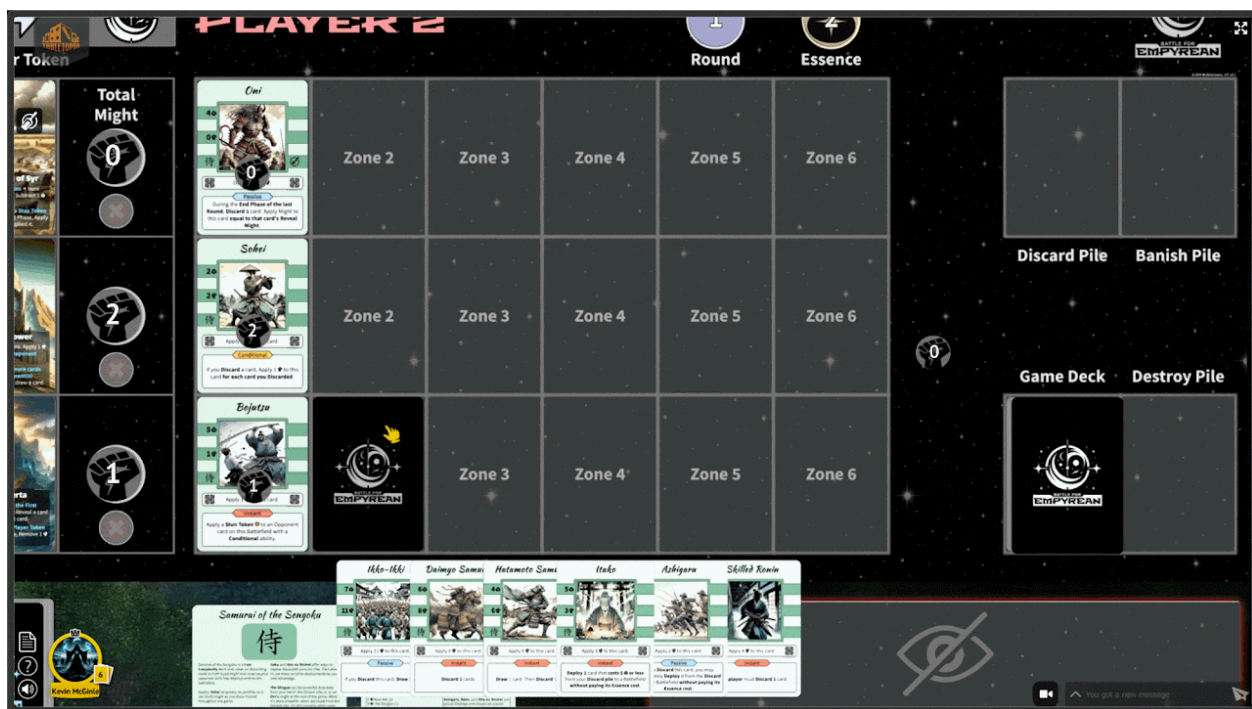
Discarding a card with the Samurai deck.

Discarding

When a card says to discard a certain number of cards, immediately choose that number of cards from your hand to put face-down in your discard pile. This is not optional unless an ability or effect says so. If you have fewer cards in your hand than directed to discard, discard all cards in your hand. If you have no cards in your hand, ignore this ability.

You may look at the contents of your discard pile at any time. Some cards have abilities that allow a player to deploy a card to a battlefield from the discard pile instead of your hand.

A discard is neither a banish nor a destroy and does not trigger either conditional ability.

Various banish actions with the Robots deck.

Banishing

When a card says to banish another card or itself, immediately put that card or the selected card face-down in your banish pile. Banishing is different from destroying and discarding, therefore these cards are put in a separate pile. Banished cards are not available to abilities that reference the discard or destroyed piles. Banished cards are typically inaccessible the rest of the game unless a card says otherwise.

A banish is neither a discard nor a destroy and does not trigger either conditional ability.

Final Tips for Playing

- The first few games will take a little longer as you get familiar with the flow of the game and the intricasies of your first game deck, so playing with the same deck multiple times before trying a new one helps to accelerate your acclimation to the game.

- Read the deck strategy card before playing a deck for the first time. While this doesn't cover everything you can do with a game deck, it does give you core things to think about, which helps.

- Remember to apply reveal might as soon as you reveal a card. This step can be easily forgotten as a player jumps straight into reading their card's ability, and forgetting to apply this might can cause you to lose the game!!

Tabletopia Specific Tips

- Before starting a game, use Tabletopia's Camera View feature (shift+1-9) to pre-define zooms and pans that make it easy for you to move your perspective around the surface area of the game. Unless you like an angled perspective, the game plays better top-down, which you can achieve by holding right-click and dragging your mouse up/down to adjust the perspective tilt.

- Agree on how you will pass the First Player Token each turn. Generally speaking, either one player always flips it, or the player who has it flips it during the end phase.

- It is generally faster and easier to perform the draft phase using Tabletopia's Draw feature (right-click on deck > Draw > 2). Your drafted cards will appear on the right-hand side of your hand, which makes it easy to know which of one of two cards to put back on the bottom of your deck.

- Conversely, Tabletopia's Hidden Area is much easier to acquire a specific card from your deck. Use Tabletopia's Take feature (right-click on deck > Take > 9) and take up to 9 cards at a time, which is the number of cards that fit cleanly in the helper area. You will need to drag the cards completely into the hidden area before flipping them. Remember that you can shift-click on multiple cards or lasso-drag across multiple cards to select them as a group that you can move at once. After you find the card you want, drag it to your hand, add the other cards back to the deck (bottom or top, it doesn't matter), and shuffle (right-click on deck > Shuffle).

- The hidden area can also be used by the Samurai deck to view the contents of the discard pile, and it can also be used by the Zulu deck when resolving your "spy" ability on the inZwebeli card.

- Remember that Tabletopia will not stack cards while they have counters or tokens on them. Remove the counters or tokens to the side, address your cards as needed, then re-apply the counters or tokens as appropriate.

- Apply a card might counter to a card, even if no reveal might is applied. This is a good way to note the card has 0 (zero) might and it makes it easy for you to add might the card from other abilities or effects if needed.

- Viking Raid tokens can be tracked using a card might counter, typically placed near your round/essence counters. Should you find that both players need all 36 card might counters for deployed cards, a Captive Token can be used as well. When the Viking Jarl is revealed, use this might counter and simply add 10 to it for its reveal might.

- Stop/Stun and Shield/Anchor tokens are on opposite sides of the token from each other, so if you need more of either, simply flip them by hovering over them and using the F-key.