

# ESCHAION



Rules Booklet





# ESCHATON

Welcome, cultist! Eschaton is upon us. The days of Armageddon draw nigh and the Dark One shall again be upon us in all of his unholy grandeur. Gather the cults, delve into the arcane, and conquer in his name.

In this game you are the leader of a cult engaged in a desperate struggle for the favor of the Dark One. To win, you must collect relics, conquer territories, and fulfill omens that manifest over the course of play. The cult that has accumulated the most favor by these means will stand triumphantly as the Dark One's chosen. All others are doomed to perish in the fires of the end times.



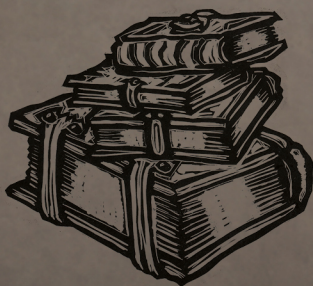
# Game Setup

Eschaton is a game for 2-6 players.

The play area for Eschaton consists of five key elements: the Realm Map, the Arcana Deck, the Conclave, the Event Deck, and the individual Player Areas. The following sections will describe how to organize the game's components before play begins.

## The Realm Map

The Realm Map represents the accursed lands where the cults will wage war in the name of the Dark One. The Realm Map is central to gameplay during Eschaton and should be unfolded and set in the middle of the play area.



## The Conclave

The Conclave is where players will recruit new cultists for their decks and enact special powers to affect gameplay. It consists of fourteen unique stacks of cultist cards, four power cards, a stack of 18 Curse tokens, and a stack of 13 Plague tokens. Cards in the Conclave are initiated with the Influence attribute (page 10), and will make up the majority of a player's deck. The Conclave is set up by placing the four power cards and fourteen cultist card types face up in individual piles next to the Realm Map.

## The Arcana Deck

The Arcana Deck (consisting of cards with a grey background) represents the dark powers and evil allies available to a cult from outside the veil of reality. Through use of the Divination attribute (page 9) players can delve through the Arcana Deck in search of Relics, Edicts, Auras, and Fiends to add to their deck and ultimately earn more Favor with the Dark One. The Arcana Deck should be shuffled thoroughly and placed face down next to the Realm Map.



# Eschaton Game Setup

player area

round marker



player area

event deck

## THE REALM MAP



player area



player area

arcana deck

## THE CONCLAVE



player area



player area



## The Event Deck

The tempo of Eschaton is set by a semi-randomized Event Deck.

To prepare the Event Deck for play, collect the Event and Omen cards and shuffle them as two separate piles.

Create four piles of two Event cards without revealing any cards in the process.

Atop each of the first three of these piles add one Omen card. Add the Armageddon card to the fourth pile. Shuffle each of the four piles separately.

Place the four piles in a stack with the pile containing the Armageddon card at the bottom of the stack. The Event Deck is now ready for play.

## Player Areas

The space in front of where a player is seated is considered their Play Area. This consists of a player's Deck, Discard Pile, Sacrificial Pyre, active Auras and tokens, and an open space for any cards in play.

A player begins the game with a pool of 25 colored cubes which they will add to the Realm Map throughout the game.

## Starting Decks

Each player begins the game with a deck of seven cards from the Conclave that represents the foundation of their cult. For every player in the game make a pile consisting of **three initiates, three fanatics, and one acolyte**. Distribute one starting deck to each player. Each player should then shuffle their deck and place it face down in front of them.

A player's deck represents their cult, and will take shape based on the choices they make over the course of the game. Players will build their cult by initiating new cultists from the Conclave and through Divination of the Arcana Deck. While each player's deck begins as a humble seven cards, it can grow significantly during play.





# Gameplay

## Overview

In this game you are the leader of a cult engaged in a desperate struggle for the favor of the Dark One. To win, you must recruit cultists, collect relics, summon fiends, conquer territories, and fulfill omens that manifest over the course of play. The cult that has accumulated the most Favor (page 16) by these means will stand triumphantly as the Dark One's chosen.

A game of Eschaton will last a randomized number of rounds based on the revelation of cards from the Event Deck. A standard game will last anywhere from nine to eleven rounds. Each round consists of a full rotation of turns for each player. A card from the Event Deck is revealed at the beginning of each new round except for the first.

## The First Round

The first round establishes the presence of the cults in the realm. Randomly determine who will take the first turn and give them the Round Marker. After this player has

been determined, everyone will draw their starting hand of five cards.

At the beginning of each player's first turn, before they play their opening hand, they will place four cubes in the territory marked "The Citadel."

Each round proceeds clockwise and consists of one turn taken by each player.

## A Player's Turn

Each turn consists of drawing cards, playing Edicts and Auras, resolving cultist attributes, and sacrificing cards.

## Drawing a Hand

At the beginning of each round, players will draw a new hand consisting of five cards. Any cards beyond these five will remain face down as the remainder of the player's deck.

## Playing a Hand

When a player takes a turn during a round, they will reveal their entire hand.

If a player reveals any Edicts or Auras, they must resolve the effects

listed on those cards immediately. For more information on Edicts and Auras see page 13,

For all the cultists and fiends revealed, the player adds and resolves their attribute totals in the following order: Zeal, Divination, Influence, and Aggression. For more on cultist attributes, see page 9.

If a player chooses not to use a card's ability or attributes, they may sacrifice it.

### **Discard Pile**

Once a player has resolved all of their cards and has announced the end of their turn, they will then place those resolved cards into their discard pile face-up.

### **Reshuffling**

When a player has exhausted their entire deck they will then take their discard pile and shuffle it. This reshuffled pile will act as the player's deck until it is again exhausted. If at any point a player needs to draw cards while no cards remain in their deck, they will reshuffle their discard pile into a new deck and continue to draw as normal.

### **Sacrificing Cards**

As the decks grow, players may find that certain cards that had proved useful earlier in the game are now slowing them down. To maximize the efficiency of their deck, players may choose to sacrifice cards in their hand, or drawn through Zeal, before that card's attributes or abilities are resolved. Cards sacrificed in this manner are placed from a player's hand into the Sacrificial Pyre in their play area. These cards will not return to a player's deck, but will continue to count towards Favor at the end of the game.

### **Ending the Round, and Beginning the Next**

Once each player has completed their turn, the round ends.

As the next round begins, the turn order changes. The player seated to the left of the person who went first on the previous round takes the Round Marker and reveals the top card of the Event Deck.

The player holding the Round Marker will take the first turn of the new round.



# Cultist Attributes

Each Cultist has four primary attributes listed on their card in the following order: Zeal, Divination, Influence, and Aggression. Some cultists, such as the Archon and Disciple have bonus abilities listed above their Divination and Influence attributes.

## Zeal

Zeal is the dark flame that drives a cult towards victory. When a hand is played, count the total Zeal between

the cultists and fiends revealed. This total value is the number of extra cards a player can draw from their deck and play immediately. Any additional cards with Zeal played in this way will cause additional cards to be drawn. This process continues until no further cards with Zeal are drawn, or a player's deck is completely exhausted.

## Divination

This attribute allows a cult to channel gifts from the Dark One. When a hand is played, count the total Divination between the cultists and fiends revealed. This total is the number of cards a player may draw

**Cultist Attributes**

flavor text _____  scour _____  inspire _____	NAME _____  ZEAL _____  DIVINATION _____  INFLUENCE _____  AGGRESSION _____	 <p>The card is titled 'DISCIPLE' with a cost of 3. The flavor text reads 'The whispers in the shadows.' The card features an illustration of a woman in a red headscarf and brown robe. On the left side of the card, there are four icons: a Zeal icon (three circles), a Scour icon (shield with eye), an Inspire icon (shield with eye), and a Zeal icon (three circles). At the bottom right, there is a Favor icon (shield with X) and a value of 1.</p>
---	---	--

(shown with favor as example only)

from the Arcana Deck. After these cards have been drawn, the player may choose one card to place into their discard pile. The remaining cards are placed at the bottom of the Arcana Deck.

## **Influence**

Influence represents your cult's ability to manipulate the Conclave. When a hand is played, count the total Influence between the cultists and fiends revealed. This total value is the amount a player has available to spend on initiating cards or powers from the Conclave. A card's cost is listed in the upper right corner of their card. Only cards from the Conclave will have a cost listed. A player can make as many initiations as they like, as long as the total cost of their initiations does not exceed the Influence they've generated on their turn. Cultists initiated from the Conclave are placed into the player's discard pile. Powers (page 12) initiated from the Conclave go into play immediately.

## **Aggression**

The Aggression attribute represents a cult's ability to command armies and destroy enemy forces on the

Realm Map. When a hand is played, count the total Aggression between the cultists and fiends revealed. With this total, the player has three options that must be taken in the following order: Bolster (add cubes), Advance (move cubes), Slaughter (destroy cubes).

### **Bolster**

The player will first announce if they wish to add cubes to any territory in which they presently have cubes. They may also elect to add cubes to The Citadel (even if they have no cubes on the map). If the player adds any cubes, the number of cubes added is subtracted from their Aggression total for the turn.

### **Advance**

Once a player has finished placing any cubes they wish to place, the player may choose to move cubes between territories. A cube can only move once per turn using Aggression, and only to an adjacent territory. If a player moves any cubes in this manner, the number of cubes moved is subtracted from their Aggression total for the turn.



## Slaughter

Once a player has finished moving cubes, that player may choose to destroy enemy cubes in any territory where they have presence. A player may only destroy cubes equal to or less than the number of cubes that they control in that territory. A player may also destroy their own cubes. Destroyed cubes will return to a player's pool of available cubes. The number of cubes destroyed is subtracted from the attacker's Aggression total for the turn.

## Bonus Abilities

Certain cards acquired from the Conclave and Arcana Deck may have abilities beyond the standard attributes found on other cultists. These abilities resolve as follows:

### Scour

This ability demonstrates a cultist's mastery of Divination. If a card with Scour is played that player may keep an additional card during Divination for each point in this ability.

### Inspire

This ability demonstrates a cultist's strategic prowess. If a card with Inspire is played, the owning player

may move one of their cubes to an adjacent territory during their Influence step as if they had bought the March power from the Conclave.

# The Realm Map

The Realm Map consists of thirteen territories, and printed in each territory is a number that signifies the Points of Favor that land is worth if a cult dominates it at the end of the game.

Certain territories (The Old City, The Great Road, The Wretched Mire, and the Isle of Storms) also provide a static +1 attribute bonus to the cult that dominates them. A player must be dominating that territory at the beginning of their turn to receive this bonus. A cult dominates a territory while they maintain the largest presence within that territory.

Presence on the map is represented by a cult's colored cubes, and can be manipulated with the Aggression attribute (page 10).



## Powers

Alongside the various cultists in the Conclave are four powers which players can initiate with Influence: March, Plague, Curse, and Dispel. These powers are represented by card-sized tokens. Rather than taking a card, a player will announce the power they are initiating.



### March

Marching is a strategically advantageous way that a player can move cubes on the Realm Map before the Aggression step. March is initiated with one Influence per cube that a player wishes to move. A cube can only be moved to a territory adjacent to the one they

started in. This movement occurs during the Influence step. A cube can only be moved once per turn with March.



### Plague

A plague will wither a territory's population until the last cultist is laying dead on the ground. A Plague is initiated by spending four Influence. The player initiating the plague will take a Plague Token and place it in a territory of their choice on the Realm Map. Cults with cubes in the affected territory will destroy two cubes at the beginning of each of their turns in the affected territory. When there is no cult presence in the affected territory, the plague has run its course and the Plague Token will be removed. Territories can be



afflicted by multiple plagues, and cults will suffer cumulative losses should this occur.



## Curse

By initiating a Curse, a player will reduce an unlucky player's influence over the Conclave. By spending three Influence, a player can pass a Curse Token to any player (including themselves). On that player's turn, they will suffer a -1 penalty to their Influence total. Players can have up to three Curses on them at a time, and the effect is cumulative.



## Dispel

Through the use of Dispel, a player can seek to save themselves from Curses that may be afflicting them, or to disenchant an Aura that may be bolstering a rival cult. A Dispel is initiated by spending two Influence and choosing an Aura or Curse that they would like to remove. The Dispel will cause a Curse token to return to the Conclave, or force a player to move an Aura to their Discard Pile.

# Arcana Cards

Through Divination, players will acquire powerful cards from the Arcana Deck to play alongside their cultists. These cards include Auras, Edicts, Relics, and Fiends.

## Auras

Auras are mystical forces that enchant a player and provide them with a static ability that persists between rounds. When an Aura is put into play, it is placed in the space designated for that player's Auras. The Aura takes effect immediately, providing its bonus on the turn it was played. It will continue to benefit that player for as long as it is in play.

## Edicts

Edicts are divine mandates asserted in the name of the Dark One. When an Edict is put into play, its ability is resolved immediately. Once played, it will return to the owning player's discard pile unless otherwise stated on the card.

## Relics

Relics are hallowed treasures that can improve a cult's standing with the Dark One. Within the Arcana Deck can be found Relics, Sacred Relics, and Divine Relics. All Relics are worth Points of Favor at the revelation of Armageddon. The value of a Relic is indicated upon each Relic card.

Relics themselves have no attributes or abilities that directly affect gameplay, so they are generally best sacrificed when drawn into a player's hand.

If at any time a player has a matched pair of Relics in their Sacrificial Pyre, they will receive the static bonus indicated on those cards.

## Fiends

Fiends are powerful allies summoned from the void to aid in a cult's conquest. Fiends play exactly like cultists and resolve their attributes in the same way. Fiends are worth one Point of Favor each at the end of the game.

# Events & Omens

Rounds beyond the first begin by flipping the top card of the Event Deck and reading the details of that card out loud. This card can be an Event, Omen, or Armageddon.

## Events

Events are global effects that impact gameplay on the round they are revealed. Simply follow the instructions written on the card.

## Omens

Omens represent valuable objectives the cults can strive for. Players have until the next Omen (or Armageddon) is revealed to fulfill the conditions written on the card. When the next Omen is revealed, players will check to see if they've met the prior Omen's conditions. If a single player achieves those conditions, they will take that Omen and place it on their Sacrificial Pyre. It is worth seven points of Favor at the end of the game. If the Omen's conditions are achieved by more than a single player or no players at all, that Omen is disregarded and no one takes it.



# Armageddon

When the Armageddon card is revealed, the final Omen is resolved.

The world crumbles, everyone dies, and the players tally their Favor to see who has ascended to become the Dark One's chosen. The game is over.



# Winning

With the revelation of Armageddon, Eschaton has passed and the end is nigh! It is time to assess who has earned the most Favor in the eyes of the Dark One.

Players will take all the cards from their Deck, Discard, and Sacrificial Pyre and place them in a single pile.

Each player then sums the value of all relics, fiends, thralls, completed omens, and dominated territories they control.

The player who has accumulated the most Points of Favor has won. They shall wander the glorious oblivion at the Dark One's side, laughing gleefully at the torment of mortals for the throes of eternity.

## Points of Favor

**Omen** - Seven Points of Favor

**Relic** - One Point of Favor

**Sacred Relic** - Two Points of Favor

**Divine Relic** - Three Points of Favor

**Territory** - Points of Favor as indicated by the territory.

**Thralls** - One Point of Favor per Thrall

**Fiends** - One Point of Favor per Fiend

There is no shared victory in Eschaton. Any outcome that results in a tie means no player prevails, and the Dark One's favor is lost to all.





# Variant Rules

Experienced Cult Leaders may enjoy using one or more of the following alterations to the basic game rules.

## Realm Conquest - Dark Favor

Each time an Omen is revealed, players tally points of Favor for territories they control. This Favor is added to their total Favor at the end of the game.

## Legacy of Evil - Starting Deck

All players begin the game with the starting deck of 7 cards: 2 Initiates, 3 Fanatics, 1 Acolyte, and 1 Suppliant.

## Arcane Barrier - Scour Limit

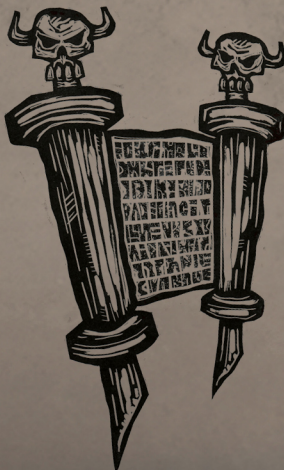
Players may keep a maximum of 2 cards from their Arcana deck during Divination. Additional Scour beyond the first point is ignored.

## Humble Fervor - Zeal Limit

The maximum number of cards that can be played per turn is 10. Further Zeal is ignored.

## Cult Legion - Initiate Horde

The player who has amassed the most Initiates receives Seven Points of Favor upon the revelation of Armageddon.







# Credits

## Design & Development

Adam Watts, Petras Vaznelis, Diha, Tracy Burnham

## Rules

Petras Vaznelis, Adam Watts

## Art Direction & Graphic Design

Adam Watts

## Artwork

Diha, Tracy Burnham, Adam Watts

## Playtesting

Eliot Alexander, Colin Coleman, Sean Cordes, Sanna Deerrose, Tashi Duane, Jake Fisher, Jared Folcik, Brian Forte, Peter Gill, Charles Gottlieb, Liam Gyori, Peter Hauschulz, David Heller, Liz Ionkina, Matt Johnson, Michael Kerr, Richard Mafera, Andrew Scherer, Britt Scherer, Erik Smith, Jake Staggs, and Owen Wears.

## Additional Development Support

Brian Forte, Peter Hauschulz, Owen Wears, Laura Wei

**ARCHON**  
**GAMES**

[www.archongames.net](http://www.archongames.net)

# Components

- This Rulebook
- 1 Realm Map
- 204 Conclave Cards
- 90 Arcana Cards
- 23 Event Cards
- 11 Omen Cards
- 1 Armageddon Card
- 6 Sets of 25 Colored Cubes
- 13 Plague Tokens
- 18 Curse Tokens
- 4 Territory Dominance Tokens
- 6 Deck Playmats
- 6 Sacrificial Pyre Playmats
- 6 Reference Cards

Eschaton © Archon Games MMXVI

ISBN: 978-1-946596-00-0