

Heart Under  
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# Introduction

*For the first time in generations, the nation is at relative peace.*

*The Shogun rules his vassal Samurai Lords with an iron fist, using his privilege to move among them, relying on his Samurai to protect him even as they grow lazy and wealthy on the riches of the new world.*

*However, all is not well. One vassal is secretly the Lord of the Ninjas and seeks to bring back the days of war by assassinating the Shogun before their agents can be discovered.*

Heart Under Blade is an asymmetrical strategy game in the tradition of the deckbuilding genre though as the Shogun owns everything in this feudal society, he also owns the sole deck being built by all of the players, so be wary of adding to the power of the nation lest you find it being used against you.

The majority of the players aim to protect the Shogun as he visits their domains but one player seeks to assassinate him and must create their opportunity to Strike.

# Components

**Marker cards:** To mark space on the table for the decks.

- 1 Supply Deck card
- 1 Draw Deck card
- 1 Discard Deck card
- 1 Burn Deck card

**Land cards:** Grant resources and power to those who control them.

- 25 Estate cards
- 25 Wealth cards

**Character cards:** Use their skills to respond to attacks.

- 1 Shogun card
- 25 Samurai cards
- 25 Ninja cards
- 25 Farmer cards

**Action cards:** Used to draw cards, build the deck or attack other players

- 25 Infiltrate cards
- 25 Invade cards
- 25 Prepare cards
- 25 Raid cards
- 25 Recruit cards
- 25 Ronin cards
- 25 Search cards
- 25 Strike cards
- 25 Trade cards

# Glossary I

## Deck types

**Draw Deck:** The main deck of cards in play. When instructed to draw a card, you will usually take the top card from this deck.

**Supply Deck:** Cards not yet in play. Certain cards allow cards to be brought into the play rotation from here.

**Discard Deck:** Cards that have been used usually go here. When the Draw Deck is empty, shuffle the Discard Deck and place it on the Draw Deck's position on the table.

**Burn Deck:** Cards moved here are not reshuffled with the Discard Deck and are (almost) permanently removed from the game.

## Card types

**Land:** A resource card that sits in front of a player after it is played and grants abilities each turn such as drawing cards.

**Character:** Samurai, ninjas, farmers and, of course, the Shogun. Each have abilities that affect the game.

**Action:** A card that grants a temporary effect such drawing or discarding cards.

# Glossary II

## Player actions

**Burn:** Place a card face down on top of the Burn Deck.

**Control:** A card, usually a Land, played face up on the table in front of you.

**Counter:** A countered card is discarded without applying its effect.

**Discard:** Place a card face down on top of the Discard Deck.

**Draw:** Pick up a card, usually from the Draw Deck, and place it in your hand.

**Hand:** A collection of cards held by you that only you can see unless told otherwise.

**Pass:** Place a card in another player's hand.

## Starting Faction

Before building the starting hands and decks (see upper right), take one Ninja card plus a number of Samurai cards till you have one card for each player (e.g. for 4 Players, use 1 Ninja and 3 Samurai cards). Shuffle and deal one card to each player. Players can look at their card but do not reveal it and do not disclose if they are a Samurai Lord or the Lord of the Ninjas. Keep your card face down in front of you for the duration of the game.

**For a 2 Player game:** Skip this step. Both players shall play as if they are rival Ninja Lords. Whichever player plays a card that causes the Shogun to be burned, wins.

# Board Setup



1. Supply Deck with Market.
2. Draw Deck.
3. Burn Deck.
4. Discard Deck.
5. Land in play, controlled by Player One.
6. Player One's starting hand.

# Setup

## Starting hands.

Each player receives:

1 Estate, 2 Farmers, 1 Ninja, 1 Samurai

## Starting Draw Deck.

1 Shogun, 1 of each other Action, Character and Land card.

## Starting Supply Deck.

For 2 or 3 Players:

10 Farmers

10 Estates

10 Wealth

5 of each other card

For 4 Players, as 3 Players and add:

All remaining Farmers

10 Estates

10 Wealth

5 of each other card

For 5+ Players, as 4 Players and add:

Add all remaining cards.

## Supply Deck Market.

Shuffle the Supply Deck. Place the top five cards face up on the table. Any time a player is told to draw or discard from the Supply, they choose one of these five cards then replace the empty slot with the top card from the remaining Supply Deck.

# Victory

## Objectives

Heart Under Blade is a partially asymmetrical game based on imperfect and hidden knowledge. Players of the Samurai faction attempt to defend the Shogun and burn Ninja Character cards while the Ninja faction player attempts to prevent Ninja cards from being burned while trying to burn the Shogun.

## Ninja Victory

If, at any time and by the action of any player, the Shogun card is burned (e.g. via the Strike Action card), reveal it. The game immediately ends, players reveal their faction card and the Ninja player wins.

## Samurai Victory

The Samurai players attempt to burn at least three Ninja Character cards. However it is not enough to simply burn them as each player will not know how many have been burned at any time. If, at any time, the Burn Deck is revealed to contain at least three Ninja cards (this is most commonly done via a player using the Search action) then the game ends immediately and faction cards are revealed. The Samurai player who controls the most land cards at that moment wins the game even if they were not the one who burned the ninja cards or who discovered the cards in the Burn Deck.



# The Player Turn

## Turn Progression

Each player's turn consists of three phases.

### Land Phase

- 1) Draw a card.
- 2) Play up to one Land card from your hand OR you may burn any number of Land cards you control.
- 3) Resolve each one of the Land cards you control. Resolve all Draw instructions before any Discard instructions.

### Action Phase

- 4) You may play one Action card.
- 5) You may play additional Actions if other cards allow (such as the Wealth Land card).

### Cleanup Phase

- 6) If you hold more than five cards in your hand, discard down to five. You may choose which cards to discard. Do not reveal them.

# FAQ

## 1) Can a Samurai player accidentally burn the Shogun?

Yes, though the circumstances should be rare and avoidable (don't use Strike on someone holding only one card unless you're sure it's not the Shogun).

## 2) Can the Ninja player burn the Shogun from their own hand?

No. If you play a card that instructs you to burn a card from your own hand (such as Invade) and the only option is to burn the Shogun, do not burn a card (this will almost certainly reveal your faction).

## 3) What happens if all of the Strike and Search cards are burned?

This is mathematically possible but unlikely in normal play. If the unrevealed Supply Deck runs out before either victory condition is met, the game is a draw.

## 4) If I have played more Wealth cards than Estate cards and have an empty hand, can I "discard" zero cards as instructed by Wealth, then draw new cards using the Estates?

All Land cards that instruct you to draw a card should be resolved before any that instruct you to discard. Otherwise, if you have zero cards in your hand and are instructed to discard or burn one, skip that instruction.

# Credits

## Game Design, Concept and Rules

Craig Dalzell

## Fonts Used

Noto Traditional Nushu, Noto Sans Mono CJK JP, Quango Bold

## Playtesters

Ellen Joëlle Dalzell, Scott Robertson, Mark Wakefield

## Card Frame Design

Generated using Cardconjurer.com. Used under licence, CC-BY 4.0

## Board Setup

Generated using Tabletop Simulator.

## Disclosure

The AI image generator Stable Diffusion was used to generate the flavour images on the cards as a pre-production placeholder. AI image generation will not be permitted in any future commercial version of this game.

Thank you for playing  
Heart Under Blade.

If you enjoyed this game, you can  
send me a tip or any comments at:  
[ko-fi.com/craigdalzell](https://ko-fi.com/craigdalzell)

