

# Paperback Adventures Rulebook

In *Paperback Adventures* all sorts of genres and tropes stand in between you and your goal, so an altercation with an alien might be followed by a duel with a dragon. Or maybe you'll conquer an obnoxious suitor with the help of laser eyes and a treasure map. No matter what your obstacle, you'll need to wordsmith carefully to reach and defeat the final boss.

## GAMEPLAY SUMMARY

The original Paperback combined deckbuilding with word games, and the solo game Paperback Adventures adds a “roguelike” system to the mix with increasing, randomized challenges to overcome during each playthrough of the game.

You start every game by picking a protagonist and end it by defeating a final boss, but in order to get to that final boss you'll need to face eight other enemies along the way. Conveniently, each enemy will also help you become more formidable by providing you with new cards for your deck in addition to items and McGuffins that expand your options in battle.

One by one, you'll need to beat each enemy by spelling words with the cards in your hand. Each card has symbols that damage the enemy, block the enemy's incoming damage, or provide you with mana to use items. Additionally, one card in your word will activate a unique ability.

If you advance through all eight enemies and the final boss, you've won! But there are always more enemies to master, rewards to unlock, and combinations to try out.

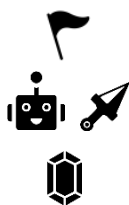
## COMPONENTS

- 1 Rulebook
- 1 Player Track
- 1 Enemy Track
- 7 Status Counters
- 1 Enemy Intent Indicator
- 18 Double-sided Enemy Cards
- 2 Character Boards
- 10 Reward Cards (3 Boss Reward Cards)
- 20 Sleeved Character Starting Cards (10 per character)
- 100 Sleeved Character Growth Cards (50 per character)
- 7 Sleeved Penalty Cards
- 6 Special Vowel & Wild cards
- 6 Double-sided Core Item Cards
- 29 Item Square Cards
- 24 Double-sided McGuffin Square Cards

## SETUP

First, set up your character and the play area.

1. Choose your character: either the robot, *Ex Machina*, or the thief, *Damsel*. Whichever character you choose, grab that character's starting deck, growth deck, and character board.



- a. The starting deck has 10 cards, and the starting cards are marked with a flag icon in the bottom right corner.
  - b. The growth deck for a character will have an icon in the bottom left corner representing the character. Some cards will also have a gem icon in the bottom right corner to mark them as rare cards.
  - c. Each character has their own personalized character board.
2. Place your character board near you, and then place your starting deck below the character board. Keep your character's growth deck within reach but out of your primary play area—you will only use it between battles during Character Development (see pg. 7).
  3. Find the six specific items for your character:
    - a. **Both characters** will need the **Wild Card** and **Wild Card Upgraded** core items. Place the Wild Card next to your character board and keep the Wild Card Upgraded within reach but out of your primary play area.
    - b. If you play **Ex Machina**, the robot, take the **Repair Panel** and **Laser Eyes** core items and place them next to your character board.
      - i. Then, find the **Rocket Punch** and **Battery Pack** (square) item cards and place them next to your character board. They will have icons representing Ex Machina at the bottom of the card.
    - c. If you play **Damsel**, the thief, take the **Dashing Boots** and **Venom Vial** core items and place them next to your character board.
      - i. Then, find the **Poison Dagger** and **Basic Buckler** (square) item cards and place them next to your character board. They will have icons representing Damsel at the bottom of the card.
  4. Shuffle the remaining items and place them in a facedown deck within reach but out of your primary play area.
  5. Shuffle the McGuffin deck and place it next to the item deck you made in the step above. Note that all cards in the McGuffin deck are double-sided. You will draw from the bottom of these decks, so it doesn't matter if you can see the top card of either deck.
  6. Separate the Boss Rewards from the other Reward cards and place both piles within reach but out of your primary play area. You will randomize these cards later.
  7. Place one (purple) hex counter, one (orange) boon counter, and one (blue) mana counter below the "1" slot of your character board. Place your (white) health counter on the "20" slot of your character board—**this is your max HP**.

Next, set up your first enemy. This step will be repeated as you face each enemy—you will draw from different piles of enemy cards as you progress.

1. Take the enemy token tracker board (it's slightly larger than the character boards) and place it in your play area.
2. Shuffle the Book 1 enemy cards (not Bosses!) and then draw a card from the bottom: this is the first enemy you'll battle. Place that enemy card on top of the enemy token tracker board, and make sure the side that says "Stage 1" in the bottom-right corner is face up.
3. Place the rest of the Book 1 enemy cards in a pile within reach—you'll need to draw one more enemy from that pile for your next battle.
4. Place one (purple) hex counter and one (orange) boon counter below the "1" slot of the Enemy Track (unless the enemy's "Special Rules" say otherwise). Then place the enemy's (white) health counter on the number of the Enemy Track matching the Stage 1 HP listed on the enemy card.

Finally, set up your first turn.

1. Put the (yellow chevron) enemy intent indicator over the "A1" square on the left side of the enemy token tracker board to mark which action the enemy will take this turn. It should be pointing at the first action listed on the enemy card.
2. Shuffle your starting deck and draw four cards from the top of the deck.

## ENEMIES AND STAGES

You advance toward the final boss by beating enemies. You just placed the intent indicator token on your enemy, and this shows what the enemy plans to do at the end of your turn.



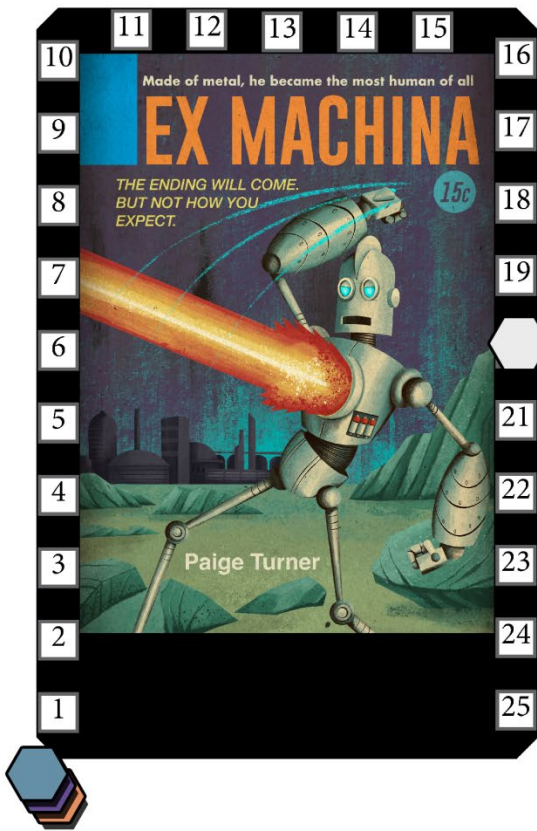
Usually, but not always, an enemy action will try to cause damage to you. These types of actions are called "attacks" and are marked with the attack icon.





When you take damage, move your health counter down the track equal to that damage. If your health counter ever reaches zero, you **lose the game**. Your Max HP starts at 20 and you can't heal above your Max HP. (Some items or McGuffins might adjust your Max HP.)

Enemies can take damage too! When they take damage, move their health counter down the enemy token tracker board. In the top-right corner of the enemy card, you'll see the enemy's Max HP for that stage. When the enemy's health counter reaches zero in the 1<sup>st</sup> stage, you'll flip the card over, stun the enemy, and reset their health counter to their Max HP for the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage.

When an enemy is flipped to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, it is **stunned**—meaning that it will take no action at the end of the turn. When damage flips the enemy, any surplus damage carries over to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage and should be counted on the enemy token tracker.

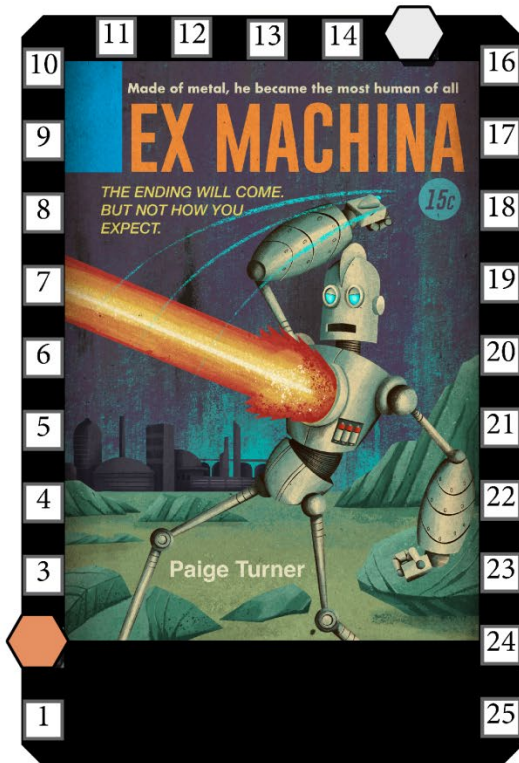
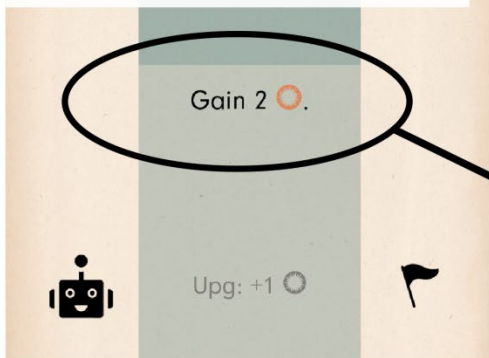
In the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage enemies will usually have different actions and HP. When flipped, move the intent indicator to the first enemy action once again (it will take this action the turn after it is stunned). If the enemy's health counter reaches zero in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, you defeat the enemy.



-  **Boon counters** positively affect the character they're on.
-  **Hex counters** negatively affect the character they're on.
-  **Mana** is used by items and is tracked with this blue mana counter.
-  This white **Health Counter** is used to track a character's HP. Unlike the other three counters this counter stays in its position from battle to battle.

Each character's max health starts at 20. If an enemy attack caused 5 damage, you move the health counter down to 15 on the track.

The mana, hex, and boon counters start at zero. When you gain mana, when you gain boon counters, or when an enemy adds hex counters to you, move them up the track.




## PHASES OF A TURN

Each turn of a battle consists of three phases. After the third phase you will start another turn, and you will keep playing turns until the enemy is defeated in its 2<sup>nd</sup> stage. As soon as the enemy is defeated, the battle is over and you immediately start the steps listed in Character Development (see pg. 8).

- Phase 1: **Prep Phase**. Perform any of the following actions in any order you want.
  - Plan the word you will play this turn from the letter cards in your hand.
  - Use items, spending mana as needed.
  - Use your wild card item to either gain the letter of your choice or to gain mana.
  - Choose if you'll splay your word to the left or to the right.
- Phase 2: **Clash Phase**. The steps in this phase are always performed in this precise order.
  - Perform the text ability on your top card.
  - Count up your total amount of hits and deal that much damage to the enemy, subtracting the block value of the enemy's action this turn, if any.
    - Remember to add any hits generated from items or McGuffins this turn.
  - Count up blocks and mana as well. Adjust the mana on your token track accordingly (see the next section for more info on blocks and mana)
  - Perform the enemy's action for this turn, as shown by the enemy intent indicator. The enemy skips its action if it is stunned. *Note: enemies cannot heal above their Max HP.*
- Phase 3: **Cleanup Phase**. Perform all of these steps in order before continuing to the next turn.
  - Move the top card of the word you just played to the fatigue pile. Cards in this pile stay there, unusable, until the end of the battle.
  - Move the rest of the cards in your word or your hand to the discard pile.
  - Advance the enemy intent indicator, moving from top to bottom. If there are no more actions, return the indicator to the top action.
  - Draw 4 cards from your deck for your hand next turn. If you ever need to draw a card when your deck is empty, shuffle your discard pile and it becomes your new deck. Remember that cards in your fatigue pile aren't shuffled back into your deck until after the battle.

## HITS, BLOCKS, AND MANA

Your actions and the enemy action will happen in a specific order, and—luckily for you—the enemy's action will happen last. Ideally, you'll want to create enough **blocks** to prevent taking damage, generate some **hits** to start damaging the enemy, and make a bit of **mana** as well to prepare for future turns.

**Blocks** usually come from the letter cards in your hand. Every block you make during the turn will  prevent you from taking damage from an enemy attack that turn. Blocks only last for the turn they are created, you can't save them for next turn!

Enemies will sometimes have a block value listed in their action. If they do, they will only block damage from your hits in the Clash phase (see pg. 3) and not HP loss from your items or McGuffins.



**Hits** generally come from the letter cards in your hand, but some items might make hits too. Every hit made created during your turn will damage the enemy in the Clash phase.

**Mana** allows you to activate most items (see Items section below). Unlike blocks and hits, mana sticks around from turn to turn. Whenever you gain or lose mana, adjust the mana counter on your player track accordingly.



## HEX COUNTERS, BOON COUNTERS, AND SPECIAL RULES

Every character and every enemy play a little differently, and hex and boon counters are a big reason why. **Hex counters are purple, and boon counters are orange.**

When you're instructed to add hex counters to a character, move the purple token for that character up that character's token track accordingly. When a character gains boon counters, move the orange token for that character up the token track accordingly.

**Hex counters** affect the character—player or enemy—they are on negatively. Some card abilities, items, and McGuffins will ask you to add hex counters to the enemy. And some enemy actions will add hex counters to you. Hex counters stay on a character from turn to turn.



**Boon counters** affect the character they are on positively. Like hex counters, some card abilities, items and McGuffins will tell you to gain boon counters. Occasionally, enemy actions will have them gain boon counters for themselves. Boon counters stay on a character from turn to turn.



Almost every enemy will have some **Special Rules**, listed in the bottom left corner of the enemy card. These rules might explain new rules for when you set up the enemy, how the enemy interacts with hex and boon counters, or just unique rules that change the way that enemy plays.

## ITEMS

All items can only be used once per turn, and must be used *before* the Clash phase (see pg. 4). In order to use an item, you must first spend the mana cost indicated in the top-right corner of the item card. If an item cost says zero, you do not spend any mana. Make sure to move the mana counter down on your player track when you spend mana.

You must already have the mana to activate an item during the Prep Phase—if your letter cards are going to make mana, you'll have to wait until the next turn to use it.

We suggest tilting the card slightly to one side to help you remember if you used an item that turn—just remember to tilt them back at the end of the turn.

Note that some cards might ask you to **rotate** them. If instructed to rotate the card, rotate it 180° so it is upside down—make sure you don't mix it up with any tilted cards. Rotated cards will have an ongoing effect after they're rotated, and you won't rotate them back until instructed or after defeating an enemy.



## Core Items

**Core** items are the 3 double-sided item cards that define your character’s basic rules. Like other items, they still can only be used once per turn.

One core item will be your **Wild Card**. This allows you to generate another letter to help complete your word. If you don’t use it to make another letter, you can instead use it to gain 1 mana.

One of your core items will use **hex counters**, and the remaining core item will utilize **boon counters**.

Core items can be upgraded after defeating a boss—you will be reminded of this in Character Development after a boss fight (see pg. 8). When you upgrade a core item, flip it over and it stays flipped over for the rest of the game. You can look at the other side of your core items before deciding which one to upgrade.

Because the Wild Card flips for a different reason (see pg. 7), when you upgrade your Wild Card core item, you will need to instead find the “Wild Card Upgraded” card and switch out your old Wild Card with the new one.

## Other Items

Non-core items will also be useful for defeating enemies. Your character starts with two specific non-core items, but you will collect more as you defeat enemies and collect rewards. If you ever draw an



item with an icon from a different character, discard it and draw a new one.

There is no limit to the amount of items you have.

Some items break some of the rules in this section. They have specific subtypes listed at the bottom of the card.

- **Reactive** items aren’t limited to the Clash phase like other items. Instead, you use them (spending any mana if indicated) when the specific requirements in the card’s text are met. If you don’t have the necessary mana, you can’t use a reactive item.
- **Single Use** items can only be used once per battle. You flip the card after you use it to remind you it’s no longer available. At the end of the battle, flip any single use items face up once again.

## PLAYING WORDS

During every turn of a battle, you will look at the cards in your hand and try to spell a word from the letters on those cards.

Every letter card has icons on the left edge and right edge of the card. Those icons show how many blocks, hits, and mana you’ll make in your word.

But there’s a catch! Every word you play must be **splayed** so that only one edge of the card is showing. Splaying left means that only the left edges of your cards will be showing under the top card, and splaying right means that only the right edges of your cards will be showing under the top card.

When you splay left, that also means that:

- The top card of your word will be the **last** letter in your word.
- Only the symbols on the **left** edges of each card will make hits, blocks, and mana—including the top card.

When you splay right:

- The top card of your word will be the **first** letter in your word.
- Only the symbols on the **right** edges of each card will make hits, blocks, and mana—including the top card.

The top card of your word will be the only card in your word that activates its ability—the text in the middle of the card. You might want to choose certain words and/or splay a certain direction to make sure a specific card ends up on top.

Additionally, the top card will also be fatigued during the Cleanup phase (see pg. 4). That means that most card abilities will only be used once per battle.



You have 4 letter cards in your hand, and you find a word you could spell: "H-E-A-R."  
But now you need to choose which direction to **SPLAY**. Left or right?



**TOP CARD**

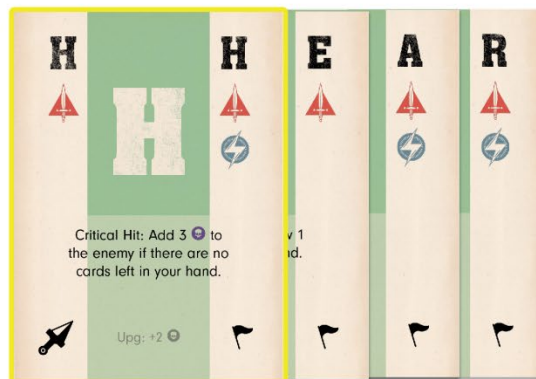
This word is **SPLAYED LEFT**. All icons on the left edge of each card are counted, and you will perform the action listed on the top card "R."

Including the 3 blocks from your top card ability, you will generate 6 blocks, 1 hit, and 1 mana.

**TOP CARD**

This word is **SPLAYED RIGHT**. All icons on the right edge of each card are counted, and you will perform the action listed on the top card "H."

Your icons generate 4 hits and 3 mana. Since you used all 4 cards in your hand, your top card ability will add 3 hex counters to the enemy as well.



## Wilds and Vowels

Every turn, your “Wild Card” core item allows you to gain one letter of your choice to help you spell a word, and some other items will also grant you the same bonus. You can use a “?” letter card to help you plan your word when a card tells you to “gain a letter of your choice”. The Wild Card item has a “?” letter card printed on the back, but there are also extra “?” cards if you ever need more.

The upgraded Wild Card instead allows you to gain up to 2 letters of your choice. You can choose to gain 1 or 2 letters, but if you choose 2 letters, those letters must be adjacent in your word. The upgraded Wild Card has a special “??” double letter card on the back.

Each enemy also has a weak spot, which will make a certain vowel card available for you to add to your word each turn. Like a “?” card, you can use the appropriate enemy vowel card to help you plan your word. The enemy’s weak spot is indicated in two ways: it’s an oddly-colored letter in the enemy’s name, and it’s also listed in a small teal circle near the top-right portion of the enemy card.

“?” cards don’t have any abilities, nor do they provide hits, blocks, or mana (unless a card says otherwise).

If a “?” card is the top card of your word, instead treat the card directly under that card as the top card, using the ability of the card underneath and fatiguing the card underneath as well.

Enemy vowel cards do not provide hits, blocks, or mana (unless a card says otherwise). They all have the same top card ability, which moves the enemy intent indicator to the next action.

Enemy vowel cards can go to the fatigue pile, just like normal letter cards. During Character Development, the enemy vowel card does not go back into your deck, return it to the pile of enemy vowel cards instead. If the enemy vowel card is fatigued, you can no longer take advantage of that enemy’s weak spot.

(Note: If a penalty card is your top card, see section below.)

Vowel cards and wild cards never enter your deck or discard pile.

## PENALTY CARDS

Some enemies and Character Development cards might add penalty cards to your deck. When you’re told to add a penalty card, draw a random card from the penalty deck and add it to your deck or discard pile as indicated.

If you ever run out of cards to draw in the penalty deck, shuffle your discard pile and it becomes your new penalty deck. If your discard pile and deck are *both* empty, then ignore any effects that tell you to add penalty cards.

Most penalty cards tell you to return that card to the penalty deck when you play the card. This happens regardless of whether the penalty card is the top card in your word or not. If a penalty card doesn’t

specifically say that it is returned to the penalty deck when played, then it stays in your deck permanently.

Penalty cards do not provide hits, blocks, or mana (unless a card says otherwise). Penalty cards do not have an ability if they're the top card, although they do count as the card that gets fatigued for that word. If the penalty card says to return the card to the penalty deck when played, return it and no card will end up in the fatigue pile for that turn.

Most penalty cards have a negative effect if you don't use them in your word. If that card remained in your hand and wasn't played, then the negative effect triggers. That card still goes to the discard pile like any other letter card.

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

After you defeat an enemy, it's time for some **character development!** After defeating any boss or enemy, always do the following:

- Reset the hex counter, boon counter, and mana counter on your Character Board back to zero.
  - Note that your **health counter** stays where it was at upon defeating an enemy.
- Remove the enemy from play and reset all counters on the enemy Token Track to zero.
- If any Single Use items were flipped, flip them back over. Any rotated items return to their original state.
- Shuffle all cards in your deck, hand, discard pile, and fatigue pile back into a single deck.

Next, you'll need your reward. After **defeating a normal enemy** in any Book:

- Shuffle the pile of normal enemy rewards and draw a card at random.
- Each reward has a different option on either side of the card (each option has multiple effects).
  - Choose one of the two options and perform ALL of the effects listed.
  - Note that normal enemies will always have you *replace* cards in your deck instead of simply adding a card.

If you just **defeated a boss** instead, do the following:

- Shuffle the pile of boss rewards and draw a card at random.
- Once again, each reward presents you with 2 options, and you need to choose one and perform ALL of the effects listed.
  - As opposed to normal enemy rewards, these rewards will allow you to add cards to your deck instead of replacing them.

## McGuffins

Some cards will have you gain a random **McGuffin**. All McGuffins are double-sided, and when you gain a McGuffin you need to choose in that moment which side you prefer. Both items and McGuffins give you new abilities, but unlike items, McGuffins do not have mana costs—instead they trigger automatically according to what the card says.

Rare McGuffins require you to add 2 penalty cards to your deck as an extra cost when you take that McGuffin. These McGuffins will have a gem icon to indicate they are rare, as well as reminder text about taking the penalty cards.

## Upgrading a Card

Sometimes you will be prompted to **upgrade a letter card**. All letter cards for your character are double-sided, and the upgraded side is clearly marked at the bottom of the card. You can see a preview of what the upgrade will be in the same location on the un-upgraded side, but you are also allowed to flip the card over and see what the upgrade would be.

Upgraded cards stay upgraded for the rest of that game. When prompted to replace a card, you can choose to replace an upgraded card, but the replacement card won't be upgraded automatically.

## GAME STRUCTURE AND WINNING THE GAME

**After Character Development**, you will start a new battle against a new enemy (draw enemies from the pile indicated in parentheses). Make sure the pile of enemies is shuffled—you should not know which enemy you will battle next until the battle begins.

1. Book 1
  - a. Normal enemy (Book 1 Enemies)
  - b. Character Development
  - c. Normal enemy (Book 1 Enemies)
  - d. Character Development
  - e. Boss (Book 1 Bosses)
  - f. Character Development
2. Book 2
  - a. Normal enemy (Book 2 Enemies)
  - b. Character Development
  - c. Normal enemy (Book 2 enemies)
  - d. Character Development
  - e. Boss (Book 2 Bosses)
  - f. Character Development
3. Book 3
  - a. Normal enemy (Book 3 Enemies)
  - b. Character Development
  - c. Normal enemy (Book 3 Enemies)
  - d. Character Development
  - e. Boss (Book 3 Bosses)

If you defeat the Final Boss in Book 3, you win the game—congratulations! If you are defeated before that moment, you will need to set up a new game to try again. Win or lose, make sure that any upgraded cards are returned to normal and that the starting deck cards and growth deck cards are

separated into separate decks once again. Any items or McGuffins gained in the game go back to their respective decks.

It's quite the achievement to make it through all three Books of the game, and the game can be quite long. We suggest taking a break after beating any single book. If you want to take a break after any battle, just save the game.

## **PROTOTYPE VERSION NOTES**

As stated above, the final game will have a save game feature that keeps your current deck, items, and McGuffins together after any battle. For this prototype we suggest saving after a battle by: writing down your current health, and then putting your current deck, items, and McGuffins in a separate bag.

For this prototype we are using a few royalty-free icons through the Noun Project website. You can find their attributions here:

- Starter Card Icon – Start by the Icon Z
- Hex Counter Icon – Skull by achmad
- Rare Letter Icon – Gem by Oksana Latysheva
- Ex Machina Icon – Robotics by Minnie Pigeon
- Damsel Icon – Dagger by Monjin Friends

Additionally, the enemy attack icon for this prototype was downloaded royalty-free from the IcoMoon website's Free Pack.