

## STARTER RULES TURN SEQUENCE

Remove all tokens from the twilight pool  
Perform any “at the start of each of your turns” actions

### 1. Fellowship Phase

Perform **fellowship** actions  
Move to the next site

### 2. Shadow Phase(s) – one for each Shadow player

Perform **Shadow** actions

### 3. Maneuver Phase

Perform **maneuver** actions

### 4. Archery Phase

Perform **archery** actions  
Conduct archery fire

### 5. Assignment Phase

Assign defenders

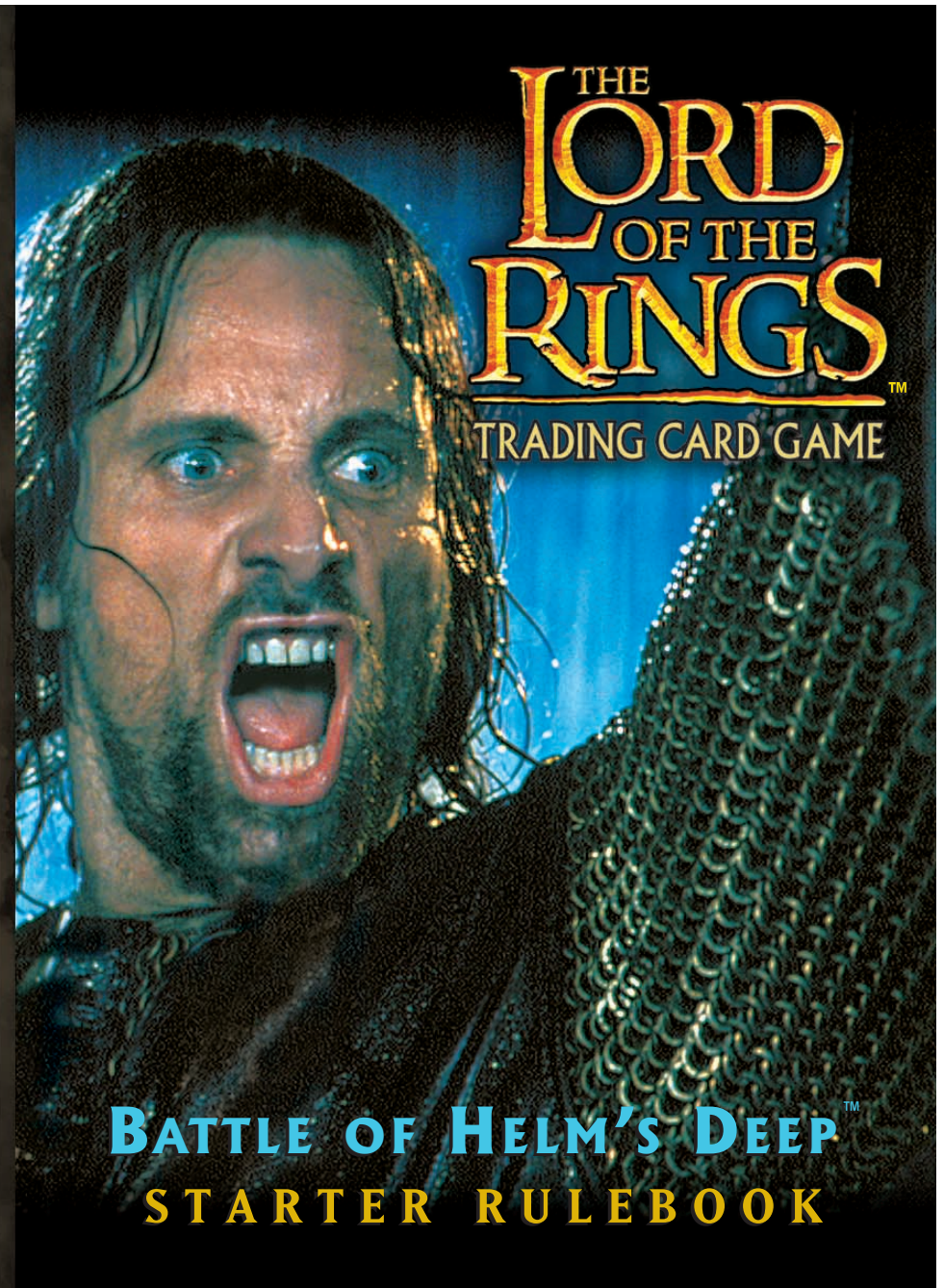
### 6. Skirmish Phase(s) – one for each skirmish

Perform **skirmish** actions  
Resolve that skirmish

### 7. Regroup Phase

Reconcile Shadow players’ hands  
Either the Free Peoples player moves to the next site  
(*return to Shadow phase*) — or the Free Peoples player  
reconciles and Shadow players discard all minions in play

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## STARTER RULEBOOK TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b> .....	1
Starter Rulebook .....	2
Deluxe Rulebook .....	2
Introduction .....	3
<b>Important Concepts</b> .....	4
Kinds of Cards .....	4
Signet .....	9
Vitality .....	9
Twilight Pool .....	12
Phase Actions .....	13
Events .....	14
Special Abilities .....	14
When, Each Time, and While .....	14
<b>Setting Up the Game</b> .....	15
<b>Playing the Game</b> .....	17
Fellowship Phase .....	18
Table Layout .....	20-21
Shadow Phase(s) .....	23
Maneuver Phase .....	25
Action Procedure .....	25
Archery Phase .....	25
Assignment Phase .....	27
Skirmish Phase(s) .....	29
Fierce .....	31
Regroup Phase .....	31
<b>Winning the Game</b> .....	33
<b>Other Important Rules</b> .....	34
<b>Index</b> .....	40
<b>Contacting Decipher</b> .....	inside back cover

## THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ TRADING CARD GAME

### BATTLE OF HELM'S DEEP™ STARTER RULEBOOK

#### **If you have never played a trading card game...**

The best way to learn is from a friend who already knows how to play. If your friends aren't players yet, we've designed this rulebook to get you started... then you can show them how to play!

This **Starter Rulebook** and its 60-card fixed pack are designed for new players just like you. We've added more examples and explanations of basic rules to help players new to TCGs learn how to play.

#### **If you have played another trading card game...**

Play a game or two with just the **Starter Rulebook** and the cards in your 60-card fixed pack, as if you were new to TCGs. Then get the **Deluxe Rulebook** and some booster packs to find all the depth and strategy of the full game.

#### **If you have played this game before...**

This **Starter Rulebook** describes a simplified game for new players. Don't panic if you don't see a rule or two in here... they're still in the game! There's nothing new for you here if you already know how to play, although this is a great rulebook to get a friend started with the game. Check out the **Deluxe Rulebook** to see what's new for experienced players in *The Two Towers*™ set.

## STARTER RULEBOOK

The Starter Rulebook is in every *Battle of Helm's Deep* starter deck. The 60 cards in your starter deck are designed to work with this rulebook.

The Starter Rulebook describes how to play a game between two or more players who each have a *Two Towers* or *Battle of Helm's Deep* starter deck. (Other *Lord of the Rings* TCG starter decks might have game text that is not explained in this rulebook.)

## DELUXE RULEBOOK

Many additional concepts are explained in the Deluxe Rulebook. If you've played *The Lord of the Rings* Trading Card Game before, you should be familiar with most of them.

These include: *allies*, *artifacts*, *deckbuilding rules*, *bidding to go first*, *the Rule of 4*, *the Rule of 9*, *assignment actions*, *regroup actions*, and *transfer*.

However, there are new rules introduced for *The Two Towers* that can be found only in the Deluxe Rulebook. These include changes to *the adventure deck*, *the adventure path*, *keywords*, and new rules for *site control*.

You can find the Deluxe Rulebook in any *Two Towers* Deluxe Starter Set, available from your local retail store.

If this is not an option for you, both rulebooks may be downloaded for free, in electronic format from [decipher.com](http://decipher.com) (printable on letter- or A4-sized paper). Alternately, you can obtain an already-printed copy for a small charge by visiting the Trading Card Games section on <http://shop.decipher.com> (while supplies last).



A Deluxe Starter Set contains

- exclusive 60-card deck,
- 3 random rare cards,
- Starter Rulebook,
- Deluxe Rulebook,
- sample booster pack,
- glass tokens, and
- a collectible storage box (one of 3 types).

## INTRODUCTION

Most card games have just one deck of cards that never changes, but a trading card game (or TCG) works differently. In a TCG, you personalize your playing deck using cards from your collection.

*The Lord of the Rings* Trading Card Game provides two or more players with the same challenges that Frodo Baggins, bearer of the One Ring, faced on his fateful journey from Hobbiton to Mount Doom to destroy the Ring.

Each player's cards include his own fellowship — a group of companions, each represented by a different card. Other cards represent allies, possessions, artifacts, events, and conditions that support and defend the fellowship.

On each player's turn, a marker representing that player's fellowship advances along the adventure path — a sequence

of site cards, each representing the scene of an episode in the adventure. All players share the same adventure path, even though it is made up of cards from all the players.

Each time a fellowship moves, minions played by one or more opponents may attack it; these minions may be supported by possessions, artifacts, events, and conditions of their own. The attacks will succeed or fail depending on the relative strengths of the companions and minions.

The minions of evil become more numerous as the fellowship moves farther into Middle-earth, resulting in greater risks to the fellowship and the Ring-bearer. In great need, the Ring-bearer can save himself by putting on the Ring — but this puts him in greater peril of succumbing to the burden of the Ring, and losing the game.

If your fellowship survives its adventures to reach the final site first, you are the winner!

## IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

### KINDS OF CARDS

*The Lord of the Rings* TCG has three basic kinds of cards: site, Free Peoples, and Shadow. There is also The One Ring, which is different from all other cards.

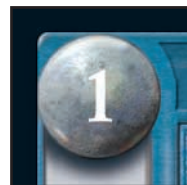
#### Site cards

Each player has an adventure deck that consists of only nine site cards. These cards are used to chart the progress of the game.

The adventure deck is separate from the cards drawn and played during the game, which are placed in the draw deck.

The site numbers on your site cards have a special site identifier called the tower symbol (♨) to differentiate them from the sites in previous sets.

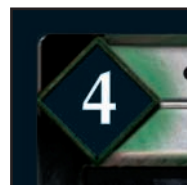
*Rivendell is site 3, from an earlier set. Streets of Edoras is site 3♨ from The Two Towers set.*



#### Free Peoples cards

Free Peoples cards represent the forces of good. Each player has his own fellowship, made up of a Ring-bearer and other companions. When you take your turn, you play and use your Free Peoples cards.

**Free Peoples cards have a light colored circular field in the upper left corner.**



#### Shadow cards

Shadow cards represent the forces of evil and corruption. When another player takes his turn, you play and use your Shadow cards to hinder that player.

**Shadow cards have a dark colored diamond-shaped field in the upper left corner.**

#### The One Ring

This card represents the uniquely powerful item that is the focus of the story of *The Lord of the Rings*. In the middle of the card, The One Ring has its subtitle. It has no twilight cost, and its card type is “The One Ring.”

**The One Ring is not a Free Peoples card and it is not a Shadow card.**

## CHARACTER (COMPANION, MINION, ALLY)



All characters use the same basic card layout.

A **companion** is a Free Peoples character in your fellowship. (Some companions have a signet where the site number is shown above.)

A **minion** is a Shadow character that attacks other players' fellowships.

An **ally** is a Free Peoples character helping your fellowship (you may find an ally in your starter deck rare cards).

## POSSESSION, EVENT, CONDITION, ARTIFACT



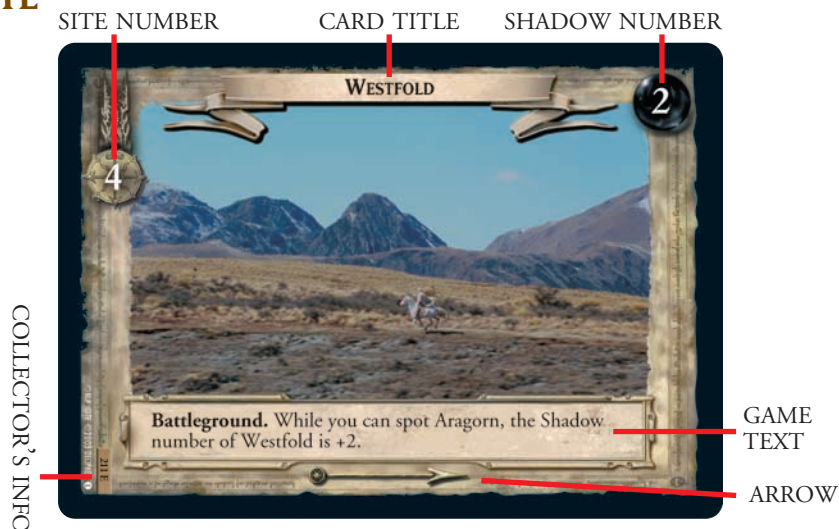
A **possession** is a weapon, suit of armor, or other kind of object used by a character.

An **event** is a card played from your hand representing an important occurrence, which you discard after you play it.

A **condition** is a card representing a significant change in the world, which stays in play until something discards it. Some conditions are played on characters or sites.

An **artifact** is a card representing a special, powerful object (you may find an artifact in your starter deck rare cards).

## SITE



You bring a set of nine sites in your adventure deck. Each of those must have a different site number, with one for each number from 1 to 9. Sanctuary sites, numbered 3 or 6, have a different colored template from other sites.

## CULTURE

Most cards are part of a specific culture. A card's color, its background texture, and an icon in its upper right corner indicate its culture.

*You'll find that cards from the same culture work well together. Sorting your cards by culture can make building your own deck easier. However, your deck may contain cards from several different cultures if you like.*

Site cards and The One Ring are not part of any culture.

## Culture names and symbols

### Free Peoples cards

	Dwarven
	Elven
	Gandalf
	Gollum
	Gondor
	Rohan
	Shire

### Shadow cards

	Dunland
	Gollum
	Isengard
	Moria
	Raider
	Ringwraith
	Sauron

*You don't have to memorize these names, since cultures are always referred to with icons in game text.*

## SIGNET



Some of the Free Peoples character cards have a signet, found in the lower left corner of the card. Cards with the same signet generally give bonuses to each other and work well in the same deck.

Each signet is based around an important character in the story. The available signets are Aragorn, Frodo, Gandalf, and Théoden.

## VITALITY

All characters in the game have vitality. This number represents a character's life force, stamina, sturdiness, and will to live.

## Wounds

When a character is wounded by an enemy attack, his vitality is depleted. Place a wound token on the character to illustrate this. Glass beads (preferably blood red) make

good tokens for this purpose. Wounds are always placed on a character one at a time. When you “wound a character,” you place only one wound.

*If a card tells you to “Wound 2 companions,” you must choose two different companions to wound one time each (you may not wound one companion twice).*

Each wound a character has reduces its vitality by 1. When a character’s vitality is reduced to zero, that character is immediately killed. (Reducing a character’s strength to zero does not kill that character.)

### Healing

When a wound is removed from a character, this represents resting or healing. If game text says you should heal a character, the default meaning for that phrase is to remove one wound.

You may not heal a character who is not wounded (a wounded character is a character who has at least one wound token).

*If a card tells you to “Heal 2 companions,” you must choose two different companions to heal one time each (you may not heal one companion twice).*

Generally, your fellowship only heals (removes wounds) at a site with the keyword **sanctuary**. At the start of your turn when your fellowship is at a sanctuary, you may heal up to 5 wounds from your companions (not allies).

*When the rules say “you may heal up to 5 wounds from your companions,” you may choose to heal 5 different companions once, or one companion twice and another three times, or any*

*other combination. You don’t have to heal any wounds at all since it says “up to 5,” which means you may choose any number from zero to 5.*

### Killed

When the number of wounds on a character equals his vitality, that character is immediately killed. Place killed Free Peoples characters (companions and allies) in your dead pile. The **dead pile** is separate from and next to your discard pile. Place all killed minions in your discard pile.

When you have a unique companion or ally in your dead pile, you may not play another copy of that card, or any other card with the same title. (You may play another copy of a non-unique card that is in your dead pile.)

*A unique card has a dot (•) in its card title.*

When you discard a companion or ally to use its game text or as a result of some other effect, place that card in your discard pile (not your dead pile).

### Exert

Sometimes you may **exert** a character by placing a wound on that card to show that the character takes an action that depletes his vitality.

Exerting a character is different from wounding a character, even though both require placement of a wound token. Cards that prevent wounds may not prevent a wound token placed by exerting.

*Conceptually, wearing armor protects you from a sword strike (taking a wound token), but it won’t help you lift a heavy weight (placing an exertion token).*

Once a wound token is placed, whether from exerting or wounding, it can be healed by any effect that heals a wound.

No player may exert a character who is **exhausted** (who has only 1 vitality remaining). Such a character cannot be chosen as a character who must exert. To exhaust a character means to exert that character as many times as you can.

*If a card tells you to exhaust a character with a vitality of 4 who has 1 wound, then you must exert that character 2 times by placing 2 wound tokens. A character with a vitality of 2 is exhausted with a single wound. A character with a vitality of 1 is always exhausted.*

## TWILIGHT POOL

The twilight pool is an area on the table where twilight tokens are placed. The tokens in the twilight pool represent how dangerous the world is for the fellowship. Glass beads (preferably black) make good twilight tokens, but any convenient tokens will do. Keep a large reserve of twilight tokens handy.

### Twilight Cost

In the upper left corner of each Free Peoples and Shadow card is that card's twilight cost. This is the number of twilight tokens that must be added to or removed from the twilight pool to play that card.

When you play a Free Peoples card, you must **add** a number of twilight tokens (from the reserve) to the twilight pool equal to that card's twilight cost.

When your opponent plays a Shadow card, he must **remove** a number of twilight tokens from the twilight pool

equal to that card's twilight cost. A Shadow card may not be played if its twilight cost cannot be met by the tokens available in the twilight pool.

In game text, you will find phrases like “Add ●” which means, “Add 1 twilight token to the twilight pool.”

You must meet any requirements to play a card (or perform an action) before paying its costs.

*If a Free Peoples event requires you to spot twilight tokens, they must be there before you add tokens to pay for that card's cost.*

## PHASE ACTIONS

Before you learn more about the phases of a turn, you need to know how certain game actions link to those phases.

During each phase of a turn, one or more players are allowed to perform phase actions that use a word matching the name of that phase. These words are printed in boldface and followed by a colon.

Each phase action lasts for the duration of the phase named in the boldface word (unless otherwise specified).

*The effects of a phase action with the keyword **Skirmish**: last only for the skirmish phase in which it is played.*

Each phase action must be completely performed before another phase action can be performed. Phase actions cannot be combined.

*If one card says, “**Fellowship**: Play an Elf from your draw deck” and another card says, “**Fellowship**: Play an Elf to draw a card,” you may not play one Elf from your draw deck to draw a card. You must choose one phase action or the other.*



An action labeled with the word “**Response:**” is not a phase action. Responses are explained later in this rulebook.

## EVENTS

Every event card has a phase action that defines when you may play that card from your hand. The game text on that event may be performed only once for each copy of that event played. You may not play an event during a phase that does not match its phase action.

Discard an event after you play it, and before the next action is taken. Even after being discarded, an event often has an ongoing or delayed effect until the end of the phase, or until a specified phase or condition is met.

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

Besides events, other types of cards may have a phase action as a part of their game text called a **special ability**, which may be used only while the card is in play. (The boldfaced word defines when you may do so.)

Each special ability is optional; you don’t have to use it if you don’t want to. You may use each special ability as many times as you like (even repeatedly during the same phase), as long as you meet the requirements for it and pay its costs. You may not combine special abilities.

## WHEN, EACH TIME, AND WHILE

A few special words or phrases you’ll see in game text govern the timing of an action, just like the names of phases that are in phase actions. These include *when*, *each time*, and *while*; each is described below with an example.

- **When** is used if an effect can happen only once. *When you play this possession, you may draw a card.* This game text activates only once, when this card is played.
- **Each time** is used if an effect can happen more than once. *Each time you play a possession or artifact on your companion, draw a card.* If you play one possession, this game text activates once; if you play a second possession, it activates again, and so on.
- **While** is used if an effect is continuous. For example, *While Merry bears a weapon, he is strength +2.* When you play a weapon on Merry, this game text is activated; if that weapon is discarded, then this game text “turns off.”

Each of these effects has a *trigger* describing what makes it happen. The trigger is always described first, and followed by a comma.

## SETTING UP THE GAME

Players need a supply of wound tokens (preferably red) and twilight tokens (preferably black). Each player will also need a player marker (a differently-colored token) that shows where his fellowship is on the adventure path.

### Adventure Deck

Take all 9 of your site cards and place them face down in a pile on the table. This is your adventure deck.

No other player may look through your adventure deck during the game.

You don’t have to keep your adventure deck in any order. Just look through it to get a card when you need to.

If a site is replaced, take the old site from the adventure path and put it back in its owner's adventure deck.

Since only one card with each site number is played to the adventure path, a site belongs to the adventure deck that's missing a site card with that number.

### Who goes first?

Determine randomly who goes first. The first player places his copy of site 1 (from his adventure deck) on the table to begin the adventure path. Each player places his player marker onto that site card.

Place the adventure path off to the side, opposite from the twilight pool (see table layout on pages 20-21). That leaves room in the middle of the table for minions.

### Starting Fellowship

Take one copy of each of the cards indicated below (depending on which starter product you have). Place them face up on the table, with Frodo bearing The One Ring (place it under Frodo with its title showing).

*Éowyn Starter:* Éowyn, an Elite Rider, Frodo, The One Ring  
*Legolas Starter:* Legolas, Gimli, Sméagol, Frodo, The One Ring

Don't place any tokens into the twilight pool for the cards in your starting fellowship.

### Draw deck

The rest of your cards form your draw deck. Shuffle your draw deck, give the opponent on your right the opportunity to cut it, and draw eight cards to form your starting hand.

*Note:* If at any time you have no cards in your draw deck, you may reshuffle your discard pile to make a new draw deck. You may only do this once per game. **When you play using the rules from the Deluxe Rulebook, you won't be able to reshuffle your draw deck.**

### Game Setup Summary

- Each player places his adventure deck on the table.
- Determine randomly who goes first.
- First player plays site 1.
- Each player puts his player marker on site 1.
- Each player places his starting fellowship on the table.
- Each player shuffles his draw deck and draws 8 cards.

## PLAYING THE GAME

Each player, going clockwise around the table, takes a turn according to the following **turn sequence**.

1. Fellowship Phase
2. Shadow Phase
3. Maneuver Phase
4. Archery Phase
5. Assignment Phase
6. Skirmish Phase(s)
7. Regroup Phase

When one player finishes his turn, the next player in clockwise rotation (to his left) takes a turn and so on.

Although the turn order rotates to the left (clockwise), note that many other procedures in the game actually rotate to the right (counter-clockwise).

## TURN SEQUENCE

When your turn begins, remove all tokens from the twilight pool. (The pool begins the game empty, so this is not necessary on the first turn of the game.)

Then you complete any “at the start of each of your turns” actions. Each of these actions may be performed only once per turn.

### 1. FELLOWSHIP PHASE

During your fellowship phase, you may perform fellowship actions including playing most Free Peoples cards. Finally, move your fellowship forward along the adventure path.

#### Perform fellowship actions

If you are the Free Peoples player, you may perform fellowship actions during this phase, in any order.

Two fellowship actions are always available:

- Play a Free Peoples companion, ally, possession, artifact, or condition from your hand to the table.
- Spot a unique companion or unique ally with at least one wound and discard a card from your hand with the same card title (it may have a different subtitle) to heal that character.

*A unique card has a dot (•) in its card title.*

You may find other fellowship actions on events in your hand, or as special abilities on cards you already have in play.

#### Paying costs

To play a Free Peoples card, add a number of twilight tokens to the twilight pool equal to the card’s twilight cost.

#### Playing companions

Play companion cards in a row, near the other members of your fellowship already in play.

You may not play a card from your hand to replace another card in play, even if those cards have the same card title or represent the same personality.

#### Playing possessions

Play Free Peoples possessions under a character, with the left edge of the card visible for its card title and **attribute bonuses** (modifiers for the character’s strength and/or vitality, written with a plus sign like “+2”). Some possessions play to your support area (a row of cards behind your fellowship, see table layout on pages 20-21).

#### Class

Each character may bear one possession or artifact of each class at one time. For example, a character may bear only one hand weapon, only one ranged weapon, only one armor, only one cloak, and only one staff.

Some artifacts and possessions do not have a class. There is no limit to the number of artifacts and possessions without a class that a character may bear.

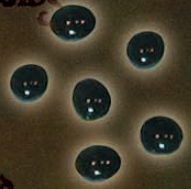
#### Playing conditions

Play Free Peoples conditions either under a character (like a possession, if the card says, “Bearer must be...”) or to your support area, as indicated in the game text of the condition card.

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ TRADING CARD GAME



## OPPONENT'S MINIONS



## TWILIGHT POOL



## ADVENTURE DECK

## ADVENTURE PATH

## YOUR FELLOWSHIP



## SUPPORT AREA



## DISCARD PILE

## DEAD PILE

## Moving your fellowship

During each of your fellowship phases, when you are finished performing fellowship actions, your fellowship must move forward to the next site on the adventure path.



All players use the same adventure path for their player markers. The cards that make up that path are taken from the adventure decks of the players. There is only one site 1 in play (on the adventure path), one site 2, and so on.

A new site is added to the path only when a player's fellowship is ready to move to the next site and there is no site card available on the adventure path for that move.

### How to move

Place your player marker on the next site on the adventure path. If there is no site there yet (as is the case for the first player in the first turn), then a new site must be played from one of the Shadow players' adventure decks.

Place new sites in order by their site number. When the first player moves for the first time, place a site with the site number of 2.

To determine which player places the new site on the adventure path, look at the site you are moving from. Each site has an arrow at the bottom center of the card. This indicates who is to play the new site, with  meaning the Shadow player to your right and  meaning the Shadow player to your left. (In a two-player game, there is only one Shadow player at a time, so that player always plays the new site.)

When you move your player marker to the next site first perform any actions triggered by leaving the old site. Then

perform actions that say, "When the fellowship moves..." Finally, perform actions that occur when moving to the new site. This includes adding tokens to the twilight pool equal to the Shadow number on the site you moved to.

**In addition, for each companion in your fellowship, you must add one token to the twilight pool each time your fellowship moves.**

### Movement Summary

- Shadow player places the next site card if needed.
- Move your player marker to the next site.
- Perform "When you move from..." actions.
- Perform "When the fellowship moves..." actions.
- Perform "When you move to..." actions.
- Add twilight tokens equal to the new site's Shadow number.
- Add one twilight token for each companion.

## 2. SHADOW PHASE(S)

Each other player in the game, starting with the player immediately to your right, has one Shadow phase.

During each player's Shadow phase, that player may perform Shadow actions, including playing most Shadow cards. Each Shadow player may perform Shadow actions in any order desired during his or her Shadow phase.

### Perform Shadow actions

There is one Shadow action that is always available:

- Play a Shadow minion, possession, artifact, or condition from your hand to the table.

Each Shadow player may perform any Shadow actions during his Shadow phase. When he has completed all of the Shadow actions he wishes to perform, the next Shadow player to his right (if any) then performs a Shadow phase.

### Playing Shadow cards

A minion is played to the center of the table, across from the active fellowship. Artifacts, possessions, and conditions state in their game text where they play. The Shadow player must remove twilight tokens from the twilight pool as required when playing Shadow cards.

A Shadow player may not play a Shadow condition or possession on another Shadow player's minion or to another player's support area. However, Shadow cards may give bonuses or other game effects to other players' Shadow cards, and Shadow players may play events for other players' Shadow cards as appropriate.

*A Shadow player's minion may receive a strength bonus from another Shadow player's condition.*

Each minion is normally played to a certain range of sites beginning with the minion's site number. Thus, if the minion is played to (or currently at) a site that has a lower site number, that minion is **roaming**. The player must pay a roaming penalty by removing an additional two twilight tokens when playing that minion.

*A minion with a site number of 4 must remove 2 more twilight tokens to play at site 3 (or site 3 ♣). If that same minion plays to site 4 (or site 4 ♣), there is no roaming penalty. If he survives the fellowship's first move to 3, he would no longer be roaming when the fellowship moves to site 4.*

When the first Shadow player completes his Shadow phase, the next Shadow player does so. All Shadow players pay for cards by using the same twilight pool. The second Shadow player uses twilight tokens left over from the first Shadow player, and so on.

When all Shadow players have each completed a Shadow phase, it is time for the maneuver phase. (If there are no minions in play at the end of the final Shadow phase, then skip directly to the regroup phase.)

## 3. MANEUVER PHASE

### Perform maneuver actions

Players may perform maneuver actions (special abilities on cards in play with "**Maneuver:**" and events with that keyword) using the action procedure.

#### ACTION PROCEDURE

As the Free Peoples player, you get the first opportunity to perform an action, and then the player on your right gets an opportunity, and so on counter-clockwise around the table.

If a player does not wish to perform an action, he may simply pass. Passing does not prevent a player from performing an action later in the same phase.

When all players consecutively pass, proceed to the next phase.

## 4. ARCHERY PHASE

During your archery phase, you and your opponents may perform archery actions (special abilities on cards in play

with “**Archery:**” and events with that keyword) and then conduct archery fire.

### Perform archery actions

Players may perform archery actions using the action procedure described in the maneuver phase. When all players consecutively pass, proceed to archery fire.

### Archery fire

All Shadow players count the number of all their minions with the keyword **archer** to determine the “minion archery total.” No matter how many Shadow players there are, there is only one minion archery total.

As the Free Peoples player, you also count the number of your Free Peoples archer companions to determine the “fellowship archery total.”

There is always a “default” archery total of zero for each side. A card may add to your archery total even though you have no archers in play at that time.

You must then assign a number of wounds equal to the minion archery total to your companions (and participating allies) in any way you wish.

After you have assigned archery wounds, you choose one Shadow player who must then assign a number of wounds equal to the fellowship archery total to his minions in any way he wishes.

Since these tokens are assigned as wounds and not from exertion, any player may assign enough wounds to kill his own minion or companion.

Wounds are assigned one at a time, so a character may not have more wounds assigned than that character’s vitality. Ignore any leftover wounds that cannot be assigned.

If there are no minions left after the archery phase, then skip directly to the regroup phase.

### Archery Phase Summary

- Determine archery totals for each side.
- Free Peoples player assigns archery wounds to his companions (and participating allies).
- Free Peoples player chooses one Shadow player.
- That Shadow player assigns archery wounds to his minions.

## 5. ASSIGNMENT PHASE

During your assignment phase, you may assign companions to defend against attacking minions. When the assignment phase is complete, each companion being attacked will lead to a separate skirmish phase.

### Assign defenders

You may now assign companions to defend against attacking minions in any order (without needing events or special abilities). A player may not assign more than one companion to the same minion.

*Frodo and Aragorn face a single Uruk-hai. The Free Peoples player assigns Aragorn to the Uruk-hai, protecting Frodo from harm. He may not assign both companions to the Uruk-hai.*

When the Free Peoples player assigns one of his characters to skirmish a minion with the keyword **ambush** ●, the Shadow player who owns that minion may add ●.

*If your Southron with **ambush** ● is assigned by the Free Peoples player, you may add two tokens to the twilight pool.*

All assignments of characters are on a one-to-one basis, with the following two exceptions:

- If your assigned companion has the keyword **defender +1**, you may assign that character at this time to one additional unassigned minion. Defender +2 allows that companion to defend against two additional unassigned minions, and so on. A character with defender +2 (or greater) satisfies any requirement for defender +1.

*Frodo and Aragorn face two Uruk-hai. The Free Peoples player could assign Aragorn to one and Frodo to the other. However, Aragorn has defender +1, so he may be assigned to defend against both minions, leaving Frodo again unharmed.*

- When you complete the assignment of companions, the Shadow players may assign any unassigned minions to any companions (even if those companions are already assigned). The first Shadow player on your right may assign any of his unassigned minions, and so on, counter-clockwise around the table.

*Frodo and Aragorn face four Uruk-hai. The Free Peoples player uses Aragorn's defender +1 and assigns him to defend against two minions. He assigns Frodo to another. This leaves one unassigned Uruk-hai, so the Shadow player assigns the last minion to Frodo, trying to kill the Ring-bearer.*

### Assignment Phase Summary

- Free Peoples player may assign defending companions to minions.
- Shadow players may assign leftover unassigned minions to any defending companions.

## 6. SKIRMISH PHASE(S)

When the assignment phase is complete, each defending companion will fight in a separate skirmish phase. In an order decided by the Free Peoples player, skirmishes are resolved one at a time by conducting a skirmish phase for each.

During each skirmish phase, players may perform skirmish actions, and then that skirmish must be resolved. All skirmish actions must be complete before proceeding to resolve the skirmish.

Once a skirmish phase has finished, the Free Peoples player must select another skirmish, if any, and perform another skirmish phase.

### Perform skirmish actions

Players may perform skirmish actions (special abilities on cards in play with “**Skirmish:**” and events with that keyword) using the action procedure described in the maneuver phase.

Each skirmish action lasts only for a single skirmish. When all players consecutively pass, proceed to resolve that skirmish.

### Resolve that skirmish

If the total strength of one side is more than the strength of the other side, the side with the most strength wins that skirmish. (If there is a tie, the Shadow side wins.) Place one wound on each character on the losing side.

*If Aragorn, with strength of 8, faces two Orcs, each with strength of 3 (total strength of 6), then Aragorn wins that skirmish and each losing Orc takes one wound.*

When the winning side has one or more characters with the keyword **damage +1**, then each losing character takes



one additional wound for each damage +1. (Damage +2 adds two wounds, and so on.) This is called a **damage bonus**, which may be added to or removed by various effects.

*To continue the above example, if Aragorn has damage +1, then each Orc takes two wounds.*

*But if both Orcs have damage +1 and strength of 4 (thus winning the skirmish with combined strength of 8), then Aragorn takes three wounds instead.*

If the total strength of one side is at least double the total strength of the other side, all the characters on the losing side are killed (regardless of how many wounds or how much vitality each has). This is also called being **overwhelmed**. When a character is overwhelmed, that character does not take any more wounds — he simply dies.

When the Ring-bearer is overwhelmed, he is killed, regardless of whether he wears the Ring. The One Ring's ability to convert wounds into burdens does not protect him from being overwhelmed, since no wounds are placed.

A skirmish phase ends after all actions triggered by winning or losing that skirmish have resolved.

A surviving minion or companion may skirmish again this turn if the fellowship makes another move (or if the minion has the keyword **fierce**).

### Skirmish Phase Summary

- Free Peoples player chooses a skirmish.
- Players perform skirmish actions.
- Resolve that skirmish and assign wounds.
- If any skirmishes are unresolved, repeat this procedure.

## FIERCE

After all the normal skirmishes are resolved, surviving minions with the keyword **fierce** must be defended against a second time.

Players perform another assignment phase and then complete a separate skirmish phase for each fierce skirmish.

### Assignment Phase (Fierce)

The Free Peoples player assigns defenders using the same procedure as before, and then Shadow players assign any fierce minions that remain unassigned.

### Skirmish Phase(s) (Fierce)

When the assignment phase for fierce minions is complete, each defending companion will fight in a separate skirmish phase. The procedure for each of these skirmish phases is the same as for a normal skirmish phase.

*Aragorn is assigned to defend against a fierce Uruk-hai. In the normal skirmish phase, Aragorn wins and the Uruk-hai takes one wound. During the following fierce skirmish phase, the Free Peoples player may once more assign a companion to defend against the Uruk-hai. This companion may be Aragorn or may be a different companion.*

Only when all skirmishes (both normal and fierce) have been resolved do the players move on to the regroup phase.

## 7. REGROUP PHASE

During the regroup phase, each Shadow player reconciles his hand. Then, the Free Peoples player decides whether to end his turn now or move again this turn.

### Shadow players reconcile

Each Shadow player must **reconcile** his hand to eight cards, as follows:

- He may first discard one card from his hand.
- If he then has less than eight cards in his hand, he must draw cards until he has eight.
- Otherwise (when he has more than eight cards in his hand), he must discard from his hand until he has only eight.

### Free Peoples player chooses

At the end of the regroup phase, if you are the Free Peoples player, you must select one of the following two choices:

- Move the fellowship to the next site (allowing the proper Shadow player to place a new site if needed), add tokens to the twilight pool (both for the Shadow number of the new site and for the number of companions in the fellowship), and return to the Shadow phase(s).
- Or, reconcile your hand (just as the Shadow players did above). Then the Shadow players discard all minions in play (and cards borne by them), and your turn ends.

### Move limit

During each of your turns, your fellowship must move once, and may move a number of times up to your move limit.

In a two- or three-player game, your move limit is two. In a game with four or more players, your move limit is equal to the number of your opponents when the game begins. During your regroup phase, you may decide to make another move, subject to the limit above.

## WINNING THE GAME

A player wins the game when his fellowship is at site 9 and his Ring-bearer survives all skirmish phases. The game ends, and there is no regroup phase on the last turn.

A player wins the game when he becomes the last player left in the game (see below).

### Losing the Game

A player loses the game if his Frodo is killed and Sam is not part of his fellowship to carry on as Ring-bearer. (Alternately, if Sam has become your Ring-bearer, you lose the game when Sam is killed.)

A player also loses the game if his Ring-bearer becomes corrupted. If the Ring-bearer has a number of burdens on his card equal to his resistance, he is corrupted.

A burden is a black token (like a twilight token) that is placed on your Ring-bearer (usually Frodo). There are many cards that add or remove burdens. Burdens are only placed on your Ring-bearer.

There are also card effects that can corrupt the Ring-bearer, regardless of how many burdens he might have.

If a player loses a game and there are at least two other players remaining, remove his player marker and all of his cards from play (and discard any opponent's cards that were on them).

Remove his sites on the adventure path in numerical order, and replace each one with an opponent's corresponding site, in counter-clockwise order starting with the player on his right.

The other players complete the losing player's turn.

## OTHER IMPORTANT RULES

### ACTIVE CARDS

During your turn, only these cards are active:

- the sites on the adventure path,
- your Free Peoples cards, and
- your opponents' Shadow cards.

All other cards are inactive. Inactive cards are not affected by the game and do not affect the game.

*Your companions and your opponent's minions are active. Your opponents' companions are not.*

*Exception:* Cards borne by active cards are active and cards borne by inactive cards are inactive.

*An opponent's Shadow condition on another opponent's companion is not active because that companion is not.*

You may not play another copy of a unique card that is already in play and currently active.

Sites are always active. A site's game text may not be used unless the fellowship is there, although some cards may copy and use that game text.

*If the game text of a site has a Shadow special ability, you may use that special ability only when the active fellowship is at that site and you are a Shadow player.*

*Exception:* Site text is not active when the starting fellowships are played.

## UNIQUENESS

### Unique cards

Many character, possession, and artifact cards represent a thing that there is only one of. Such a card has a dot (•) before the card title, to tell you that only one of that card may be active and in play at a time.

*You may have only one card with the card title of •Gandalf in play at one time. Other players may also have a card with the title of •Gandalf in play, but only one is allowed per player.*

Two cards represent the same thing if they have the same card title (even if their subtitles or collector's info are different) or they have the same collector's info (even if their titles and subtitles are different).

For Shadow cards, if a copy of a unique card is already in play and active, you may not play another card that has the same title (regardless of subtitles).

You may not play a card from your hand to replace another card in play, even if those cards have the same card title or represent the same personality.

### Non-unique cards

All cards that do not have a dot (•) before their card title are non-unique. This means that all players may have many copies of those cards in play at one time.

Most conditions are non-unique, and you may have multiple copies of these conditions in play at one time. The effects of these cards are cumulative.

## RESPONSES

A special ability or event labeled with the word “**Response:**” indicates that you may perform that action whenever the trigger described in its game text happens.

A response action is not a phase action (because there is no “response phase”).

## THE ONE RING

Frodo always begins the game as your Ring-bearer. He bears The One Ring for you, much as when he carried the Ring in his pocket or on a chain around his neck.

### When can he put on the Ring?

The Ruling Ring, the version of The One Ring in your starter deck, has a “**Response:**” special ability. It can be used during any skirmish phase, even one that doesn’t involve your Ring-bearer. Before you place a wound token on your Ring-bearer, you may tell your opponent that your Ring-bearer is putting on The Ruling Ring instead.

When you use the special ability on The One Ring, your Ring-bearer “wears” the Ring. Using this special ability on The One Ring is optional.

Remember, wounds are always placed on a character one at a time. Once activated, this special ability continues to be in effect as long as your Ring-bearer wears The Ruling Ring.

Your Ring-bearer cannot put on the Ring to save himself from being overwhelmed. When he is overwhelmed, no wounds are taken and he is killed.

### What happens while he wears the Ring?

While your Ring-bearer wears The Ruling Ring, each time he is about to take a wound, a burden is added instead.

While wearing the Ring, your Ring-bearer can perform all normal actions such as moving and skirmishing. He may defend against attacking minions as usual.

There are special Shadow cards with powerful effects that can only be played while your Ring-bearer wears the Ring.

### How does he become corrupted?

If your Ring-bearer ever has as many burdens as his resistance (usually 10), he becomes corrupted and you lose the game.

Your Ring-bearer may also become corrupted by a card effect. This takes effect immediately, regardless of how many burdens are currently on your Ring-bearer.

### How does he take the Ring off?

At the start of the regroup phase, your Ring-bearer takes off the Ring and simply carries it again.

### What happens when he is killed?

If your Ring-bearer is killed (even if he is overwhelmed), you lose the game.

*Exception:* Sam has a special ability on his card that is a response action you may use when Frodo is killed (not corrupted). If Sam is in play at that moment, this allows you to transfer the Ring to Sam, and then he becomes your Ring-bearer.



## KEYWORDS

Each card has one or more keywords that identify it. Most keywords are *unloaded* keywords, with no special rules (although they may be referenced by other cards).

Keywords with rules are called *loaded* keywords. Find the explanation for each loaded keyword with the index.

### Unloaded keywords

*Race* (such as Man, Elf, Ent, Orc, Uruk-hai, or Wizard) is an unloaded keyword.

The race of “Man” includes women of the appropriate culture. A possession that requires a  Man bearer may be borne by a  female character who has the race of “Man.”

**Note that in *The Lord of the Rings* TCG, Uruk-hai is a different race from Orc.**

Sites have unloaded keywords like battleground, forest, mountain, plains, river, and underground. Other unloaded keywords include Easterling, fortification, knight, machine, ranger, search, Southron, spell, stealth, tale, tracker, valiant, villager, and warg-rider.

### Loaded keywords

*Card type* (such as minion or event) and *class* (such as staff or hand weapon) are loaded keywords. Other loaded keywords include ambush, archer, damage +1, defender +1, fierce, Ring-bearer, and sanctuary. (Unhasty is another loaded keyword explained in the Deluxe Rulebook.)

**Ring-bound and unbound.** Only companions can be unbound or Ring-bound (not allies or minions). Any companion without the Ring-bound keyword is an unbound companion.

*Exception:* All versions of Frodo and Sam are Ring-bound.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Discard

The default meaning of the word “discard” is “discard from play.” Discarding from other locations (such as from your hand or from the top of your draw deck) is always specified.

### Playing cards from your draw deck

Some cards allow you to play a card directly from your draw deck or discard pile. You must still pay any costs and meet requirements necessary for playing that card.

When you finish looking through your draw deck, reshuffle it and give the player to your right the opportunity to cut it.

### Spot

The word *spot* sets up a requirement for playing a card or using a special ability in conjunction with a noun such as, “To play, spot an Elf.” This is equivalent to, “An Elf must be in play and active for you to play this card.”

*Cards in your dead pile are active during your turn, but they're not in play. You can't spot a card in your dead pile.*

Normally, you don't have to spot all the cards in play that meet the requirement if you don't want to.

*If a card says, “for each Elf you spot” and there are 2 Elves in play (and active), you may choose to spot 2 Elves, 1 Elf, or none.*

However, if a card says, “you can spot,” that means you don't have a choice and you have to spot anything and everything that meets the requirement.

*“While you can spot The Balrog, skip the archery phase” means you can't make a choice (it either works or it doesn't).*

## INDEX

action procedure . . . . .	25	move limit . . . . .	32
active cards. . . . .	34	non-unique . . . . .	35
adventure deck. . . . .	4, 15	overwhelmed . . . . .	30
ally. . . . .	6	phase action. . . . .	13
ambush . . . . .	27	possession . . . . .	7, 19, 24
archer. . . . .	26	race . . . . .	38
archery phase . . . . .	25	reconcile . . . . .	32
artifact . . . . .	7	regroup phase. . . . .	31
assignment phase . . . . .	27	replacing cards . . . . .	35
attribute bonuses . . . . .	19	reset the twilight pool . . . . .	18
burden . . . . .	33	resistance . . . . .	33
character . . . . .	6	response . . . . .	36
class . . . . .	19	roaming . . . . .	24
companion. . . . .	6, 19	sanctuary . . . . .	10
condition . . . . .	7, 19, 24	setting up the game . . . . .	15
corrupted. . . . .	33	Shadow cards . . . . .	5
culture . . . . .	8	Shadow number. . . . .	23
damage +1 . . . . .	29	Shadow phase . . . . .	23
dead pile . . . . .	11	signet . . . . .	9
defender +1 . . . . .	28	site . . . . .	4, 8, 22
discard . . . . .	39	site number . . . . .	8, 22
discard to heal . . . . .	18	skirmish phase . . . . .	29
draw deck . . . . .	16	special ability . . . . .	14
event . . . . .	7, 14	spot . . . . .	39
exert. . . . .	11	start of turn actions . . . . .	18
exhausted. . . . .	12	starting fellowship . . . . .	16
fellowship phase. . . . .	18	support area . . . . .	19, 24
fierce . . . . .	31	The One Ring . . . . .	5, 36
Free Peoples cards . . . . .	5	tokens . . . . .	9, 12
healing. . . . .	10	turn sequence. . . . .	17
how to move . . . . .	22	twilight pool . . . . .	12
keywords . . . . .	38	uniqueness . . . . .	35
killed . . . . .	11	vitality . . . . .	9
kinds of cards. . . . .	4	when, each time, and while . . . . .	14
losing the game . . . . .	33	who goes first. . . . .	16
maneuver phase . . . . .	25	winning the game . . . . .	33
minion. . . . .	6, 24	wounds . . . . .	9

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