

Dual Eclipse DesignDoc

Dual Eclipse Design Document v1.6



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Introduction

Scope

A short-form dungeon crawler that blends trick-taking and RPG systems. Cards replace traditional equipment - progression is handled through deckbuilding and 3 classes that optimize cards differently. Meant to be played over a weekend: expected length 5-10 hours.

Elevator Pitch

Dual Eclipse is a short-form Dungeon Crawler RPG where combat is resolved by an original trick-taking system, you can parry cards, and your cards are your equipment.



Story

Setting

A medieval fantasy world inspired by RPGs from the early 2000s. Everquest, Wizardry, and King's Field.

Overview

Ages ago, a secret union between a Fire Dragon and an Ice Dragon gave rise to a Prismatic Dragon. The ancient powers of the time, the Mountain Lords and the Dragon Council, feared the Prismatic Dragon. They imprisoned the Prismatic Dragon, Vellus, into the stars.

This drove Vellus to madness and so he attempted to consume an Eclipse. This cursed the lands below, bringing ruin to the Mountain Lords and the Dragon Council. The world grew still, the lands changed, and the world survived.

Vellus rages in his prison again and sages fear that the world may not survive another cataclysm. The hero has been set out to explore the cursed lands and find a way to defeat Vellus.

Throughout the journey, the Player will have the opportunity to find notes that reveal politics, corruption, and hubris. Vellus was unjustly imprisoned, but he has become a true villain through his hatred. He must be stopped for the greater good.



Gameplay Design

Summary

Players choose one of three classes to explore mysterious lands, delve into dangerous dungeons, discover secrets, and loot powerful upgrades. Card combat is core to Dual Eclipse and is intended to be welcoming to novice and veteran players alike. Its trick-taking nature distinguishes it from games like Slay the Spire. Instead the focus is on simulating the tension of one-on-one duels. Combat is snappy, dynamic, and tactical.

Combat

Overview

Combat is about taking advantage of a good hand and turning a bad hand into a victory. The win condition isn't static and flips between high or low cards winning. Powerful Eclipse cards change the win condition in combat so that Player decisions and the value of cards are always context-driven. The multiplicitous nature of cards is a core design pillar.

Inspirations

- Tournament of Avalon: A trick-taking game for 3-7 players. Each player is assigned a Knight of the Roundtable that has a special power and amount of HP. The riposte mechanic inspired the Parry mechanic.
 - The joy of this game is the rollercoaster of emotions shared by players as they collectively resolve all knight powers, card powers, and riposte.
- Truco: A trick-taking game for 4 players, split into teams of two. Verbal communication is not allowed between teams, so signaling your hand with your first card is crucial info. This inspired the decision for the Player/Enemy to play two cards each trick.
 - Typically the job of trick-taking games is playing a table of players. In a one-to-one scenario, playing one card per trick results in binary decisions and results.
 - Playing two cards opens up room for strategic decisions.

Trick-Taking Definitions

- Trick-Taking: Players take turns playing cards into rounds. The goal is to win tricks or have the highest-valued cards.
- Trick: A round or turn that typically results in a winner and a loser. The winner often receives a point towards a victory condition.
- Suit: A category of cards within a deck containing a range of ranks within that suit.
- Rank: The value of cards in a suit. Ranks determine which cards beat other cards in the same suit. Example: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, Ten, etc.

- Lead Suit: The only suit that can win tricks during that round or turn. Typically determined at the start of a round or turn.
- Trump Suit: A suit that beats every other suit.

Dual Eclipse Definitions

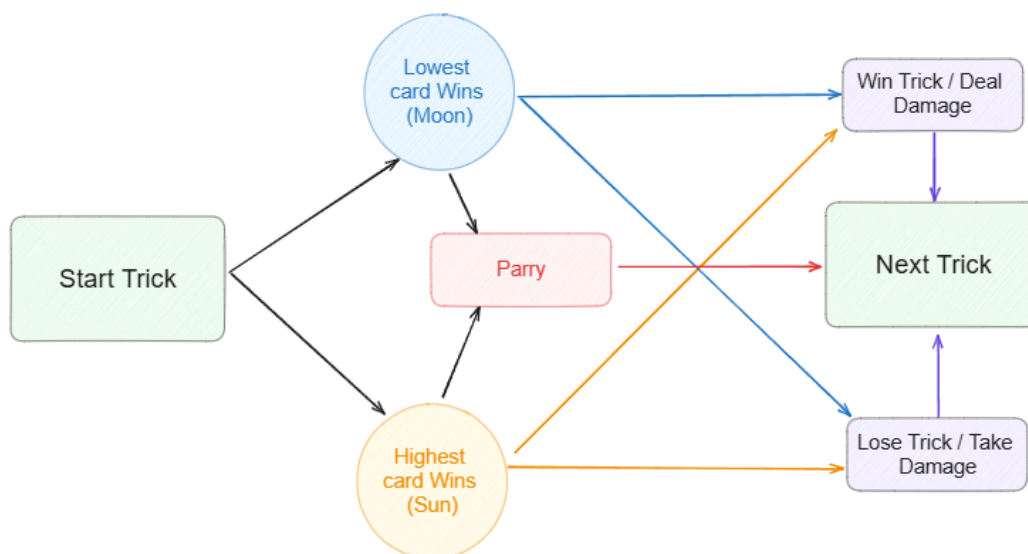
- Trick: A round where both the Player and Enemy play 4 cards. The first card played determines the Lead Suit. The winner of the round deals damage to the opponent.
- Suit: Five categories of cards that represent different magical elements. Each suit will have a range of ranks.
- Value/Rank: The value/rank of a card within a suit. The range possible in the game is 0-10.
- Lead Suit: The first card played into a Trick/Round. Only cards that match this suit will be considered when determining a winner.
- Wild Suit: There is no Trump Suit in Dual Eclipse, but there is a Wild Suit. This suit will always count towards a trick/round. Starting a trick/round with a Wild Suit allows for all suits to be considered.
- Attack: Occurs whenever a trick is won by the Player/Enemy. This results in the opponent taking damage (determined by Attack Power stat). A parry does not count as an Attack.
- Parry: When there is a tie/match between the Player and Enemy lowest or highest values/ranks. A parry delays the damage of that trick/round into the next trick/round. The loser of the next trick/round will take damage from the previous parry and the current trick/round. A parry does not count as an Attack.
- Spell: An independent action from attacks/parries. The effect is determined by the 2 suits played and is triggered before attacks/parries. Any damage from a spell is not considered an attack and is determined by the Intelligence stat.
- Initiative: At the start of combat a coin flip determines if the Player or Enemy goes first. The loser of a trick/round will always lead the next trick/round.
- Sun: The win condition where the highest card played wins the trick.
- Moon: The win condition where the lowest card played wins the trick.

Combat Structure

- A combat encounter will involve a series of tricks/rounds that will result in damage to the Player/Enemy until either the Player or Enemy has been defeated.
- 12 cards are dealt to the Player and Enemy. If both hands are empty and combat has not concluded, then a new hand is dealt. This repeats until the Player/Enemy is defeated.
- Both the Player and the Enemy will play 4 cards each trick.
- The win condition for a trick can alternate between Highest and Lowest values/ranks winning. Either the Highest or the Lowest card of the 4 cards played will win.
 - It is possible for there to be multiple cards that win a trick, but do not trigger a parry. This does not result in an extra attack or change how damage is calculated.

- The first card played will set the Lead Suit. Only cards that match that Suit or Wild Suit cards will count towards the win condition.
- In the case of a Parry, no damage will be applied to that trick. Instead, the damage of the next successful trick will increase by the number of parries that have occurred.
- Combat ends when the Player/Enemy reaches 0 HP.
- If the Player/Enemy is defeated before 4 cards are played due to spells/effects, then combat ends immediately.

Dual Eclipse: Trick Overview



Dynamic Win Condition

A core combat design feature is the dynamic win condition. This pushes the design philosophy of simulating context-driven duels. The win condition can be changed at the start of combat, outside of combat, or by cards played in combat. Once all cards are played, the win condition is locked and a winner will be determined.

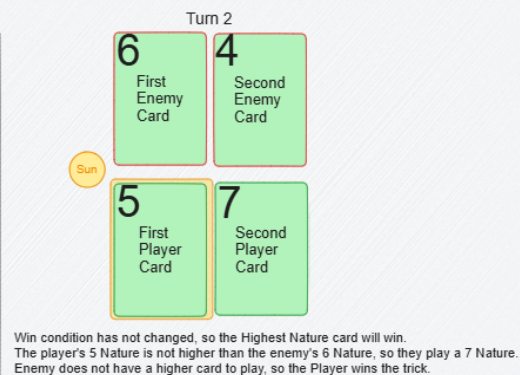
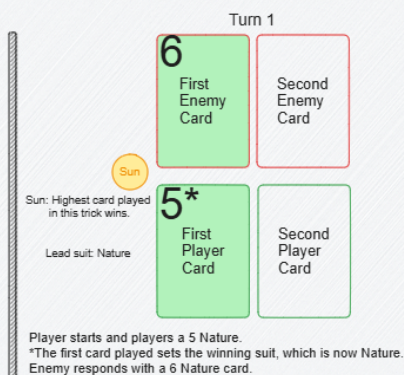
Additional Combat Components

- Temporary Status: Specific effects that only occur during combat that expire during or after combat.
 - Example: Double Damage - lasts until next attack or when combat ends.
- Permanent Status: Specific effects that occur both during and outside of combat.
 - Example: Radiant Shield - tracks shield cards played. Deals damage everytime X shield cards are played.

Combat Examples

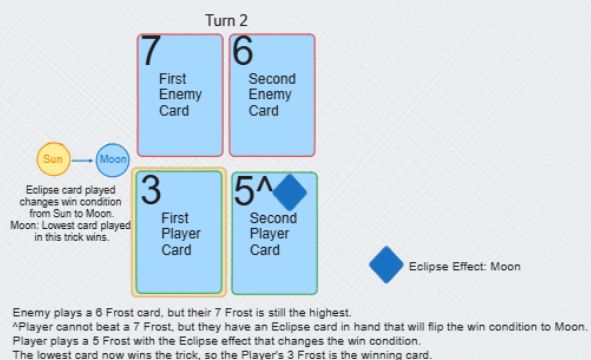
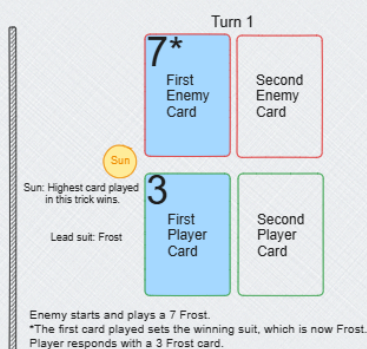
Simple Example: Static Win Condition and One Suit

Strategy:
Play highest card that
matches the lead suit.



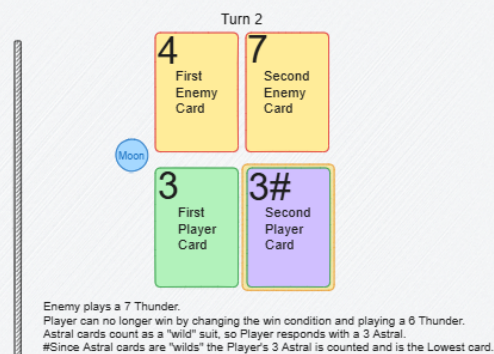
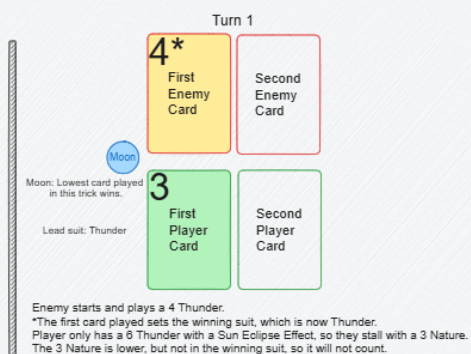
Simple Example: Dynamic Win Condition and One Suit

Strategy:
Change win condition

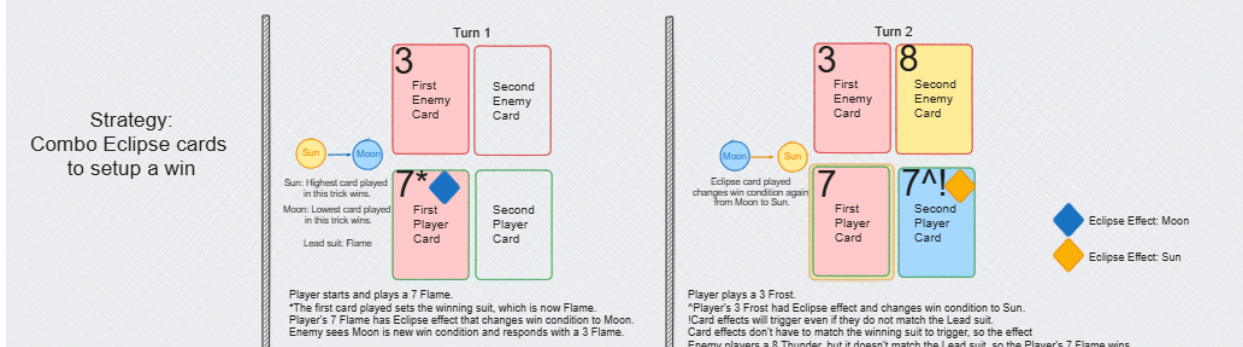


Advanced Example: Multiple Suits

Strategy:
Use Astral (Wild) Cards



Advanced Example: Win Condition Combo and Multiple Suits



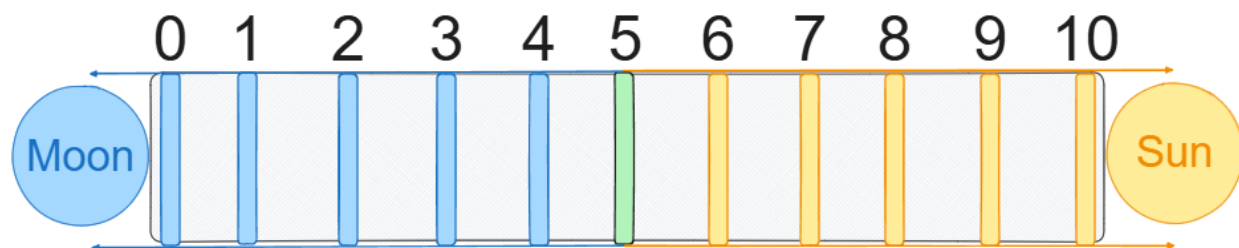
Deckbuilding

Card Value/Rank

Your cards are your equipment. Instead of a traditional inventory, the deck size is locked and the Player will upgrade each suit. Cards are replaced and not added/removed from the deck.

The strength of a card is fundamentally context-driven in combat, but card values/ranks are the simplest representation of a card's strength.

Card Value/Rank Spectrum



The value/rank of cards will range from 0-10. The lower or higher the card, the more powerful it is depending on the win condition.

The weakest value in the game is 5, because it does not have an advantage during either win condition. It is a perfect home for introducing powerful card effects. The Player will need a second card to win the trick since a 5 will likely not win.

Eclipse Cards

These cards offer the core combat mechanic of changing the win condition. The win condition is changed immediately when played. There is no effect if the win condition remains the same.

- Sun Card: Changes the win condition so that the Highest card wins the trick.

- Moon Card: Changes the win condition so that the Lowest card wins the trick.

Sword Cards

Increases the damage of a successful attack. Does not impact the damage caused by parries or spells.

Shield Cards

Provides AC before damage is calculated.

Health Potion Cards

Heals HP before damage is calculated.

Axe Cards

Reduces AC in half before damage is calculated.

Bow Cards

Deals damage if this card's value is higher than the opponent's card across from this.

Dagger Cards

Deals damage if this card's value is lower than the opponent's card across from this.

Staff Card

If the suits played match this spell's requirements, cast this spell.

Card Crafting

Introduced to improve player deckbuilding agency. Allows players to target specific cards they want and a playstyle they prefer. Intended to be supplemental and not replace looting. Can only be done at Save Points.

Crafting requires a limited resource to be spent. This resource is earned by defeating enemies and looting. Each card value/rank, suit, and card effect will have a price. The stronger the card, the more expensive it is to craft.

Classes

Three fantasy classes that offer different playstyles that synergize with different cards. After gaining experience, each class will level up. Leveling up will offer an upgrade and increase stats.

Paladin

The most straightforward class and beginner friendly. Great at surviving combat and hybrid stats allow room for decent spell casting.

Rogue

A more challenging class that rewards precise cardplay with big damage and avoiding hits. Incredible combat stats with some utility spell options.

Wizard

The most vulnerable class makes up for their weak combat abilities with a mastery of spells. Juggles spell casting and trick-taking. Awful combat stats, but incredible spell bonuses.

Stats

- **Health Points (HP):** The amount of damage the Player/Enemy can receive. Reaching 0 results in defeat.
- **Armor Class (AC):** Protects HP by taking damage before HP. If AC is zero or has reached zero when taking damage, any damage or remaining damage will be applied to HP.
- **Attack Power:** The base damage done on a successful attack.
- **Fortitude:** Improves the amount of AC gained from cards and some effects.
- **Intelligence:** Adds a bonus to spells and some effects.

Spells

Spells are obtained by classes when leveling up or by looting scrolls. Spells trigger before damage is calculated. The wizard will start with some spells.

- **Thunderbolt:** Play two Thunder cards to strike an enemy for x-y Thunder damage twice.
- **Frost Blast:** Play two Frost cards to gain x-y AC and strike an enemy for x-y Frost damage.
- **Bless:** Play one Thunder card and one Flame card to gain Bless. Bless grants x-y bonus damage to your next attack or spell. Curse will negate a Bless.

- **Curse:** Play one Thunder card and one Frost card to cast Curse on the enemy. Curse decreases the damage of the enemy's next attack or spell by 1-4. Bless will negate a Curse.
- **Transmutation:** Play one Nature card and one Frost card to gain a random elemental surge. A surge will increase the power of the next elemental spell of that type. If Transmutation is already active, the spell surge will change to another element.
- **Fireball:** Play two Flame cards to strike an enemy for x-y Flame damage.
- **Wild Growth:** Play two Nature cards to strike an enemy for x-y Nature Damage and apply z Poison to the enemy.
- **Rejuvenation:** Play one Nature card and one Flame card to gain Regen. Regen heals each trick before damage is resolved. Regen is lost after taking damage.
- **Chromatic Orb:** Play two Astral cards to strike an enemy for x-y Astral damage and then gain an elemental surge. If a surge is already active, the surge will change to another element.

Enemies

Enemy Variety

Each enemy should have a visual or mechanic that defines a personality. Earlier enemies have simple abilities that ensure a smooth onboarding for new players, while later enemies offer serious challenges and change the scope of a battle. The following are some enemy examples:

- Stronger and/or weaker with certain suits (elements).
- Buff themselves or debuff the player when playing certain suits (elements).
- Combo card types to deal damage or apply effects.
- Change the win condition at the start of each trick.
- Make the winner of a trick take damage instead.

Enemy Behavior

Enemies will try to play within suit and win tricks, but still have a chance to play a random card to prevent predictable scenarios. Avoids outlier scenarios where the card it plays only helps the player.

Levels

Each environment will have a unique theme, enemies, treasure, secrets, and challenges. All handcrafted levels will have a primary route, but optional areas and secrets will be available for the adventurous types.

Narrative

Exploration will also act as a narrative tool. Each environment will provide a piece of the larger narrative picture. A variety of different interactions in the game will provide details and lore that will piece together a lived-in world with history. The following are a few examples:

- Weathered carvings describe the politics of the Dragon Council.
- A dusty journal found on a shelf gives context for why the Mountain Lords viewed Vellus as a threat.



Art and Sound

The visual style of Dual Eclipse is deeply inspired by RPGs from the early 2000s. Games like Everquest, Wizardry, and King's Field. This era had a fascinating combo of detail and lack of detail that let you fill in the rest with your imagination. The celestial narrative allows space for cosmic visuals within the traditional high fantasy.



User Interface



- Top Left: Player Health Bar, AC Bar, and Status.
- Top Middle: Enemy health Bar, AC Bar, and Status.
- Top Right: Moon and Sun icon representing current win condition.
- Left Middle: Permanent Status references.
- Middle Center: Player View and announcements.
- Middle Right: Combat UI, Enemy cards on top and Player cards on bottom. Text stating the Lead Suit and confirming win condition.
- Bottom Center: Player cards and Parry Counter.

Accessibility and Controls

The game is intended to be controlled with keyboard and mouse, but full controller support is in development. Functionality on the Steam Deck would be a natural fit. Dual Eclipse would be a perfect adventure to play in bed or on the couch. At the moment, console support is something I would consider if the PC release does well, because I can see it having a home on the Switch.

The demo currently has a left-hand friendly scheme available, but the option to rebind keys will be in the full release. Controller support would also provide an alternative method to play.

There will be options to decrease the difficulty of the game by adjusting enemy stats to suit a more exploration focused playstyle. Alternatively, for those seeking a more strategic adventure, there is an option to increase difficulty by improving enemy stats and reducing options to heal outside of combat.