

Sylvan Tactics

A Card-Battling Chess Game

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Overview

Sylvan Tactics is a strategic board game that blends the tactical depth of chess with the dynamic interactions of a card game. Two armies of woodland creatures battle for dominance and try to defeat their opponent's King.

Objective

The primary objective in Sylvan Tactics is to **defeat your opponent's King by reducing their Health to zero**. This is achieved by strategically positioning units, playing cards, triggering actions, and engaging in combat to eliminate opposing units or directly attack the King.

Components

Included:

- **Draw Deck** - Shared deck containing 86 cards
- **Kings & Queens** - 1 King and 1 Queen card for each player (*black and white*)
- **Sigils** - 6 two-sided Sigil cards for each player

Not Included:

- **Chess Board** - Standard 8x8 grid.
- **Chess Pieces** - Standard 32 piece chess set (8 Pawns, 2 Rooks, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 1 Queen, and 1 King in both white and black)

Play Area



Setup

- Randomly determine who will play White. That player will go first.
 - Players place their King piece and all 8 Pawns pieces in the configuration shown above.
 - Players place their King card face up and Queen card face down in their play area.
 - Players place their 6 Sigil cards face down (inactive) in their play area.
 - Shuffle all cards to form the draw deck and place it face down.
 - Each player draws 5 cards from the draw deck for their hand.
 - In turn order, players may Mulligan by placing any number of cards from their hand on the bottom of the draw deck and drawing back up to six cards in hand again. You may repeat this Mulligan process by reducing your starting hand size by 1 each time you decide to Mulligan (4 in hand, 3 in hand, etc).
 - After all Mulligans are finished, reshuffle the draw deck.
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Turn Structure

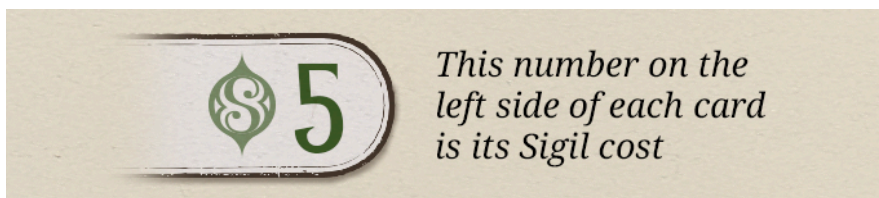
Each player's turn consists of the following phases and possible actions:

1. **Refresh Phase:**
 - **Reset:** Reset your available [Sigils](#) and any other cards that have been invoked (*Turn them upright*).
 - **Awaken** one [Sigil](#) (*Flip it face up, Max of 6*).
 - **Draw:** Draw one card from the top of the draw deck.
2. **Main Phase** (*Do any number of the following actions in any order*):
 - Play an [Action, Battlefield, or Equipment card](#) from your hand (*Pay card's Sigil cost*).
 - Deploy a [Mercenary](#) (*Pay card's Sigil cost*).
 - Deploy the [Queen](#) (*Once per game, Pay up to 6 Sigils*).
 - Activate a unit's [ability](#) (*Pay ability cost, if any*).
 - [Move](#) a unit (*Once per unit, pay movement Sigil cost*).
 - Declare an [attack](#) (*Invoke attacker's card and pay attack Sigil cost*).
 - Retire a [Mercenary](#) (*Deal 2 morale damage to your King*).
3. **End Phase:**
 - Promote any [Pawns](#) (*If they are on a space in your opponent's back row*).
 - Discard down to a maximum hand size of six cards.

Resource System: Sigils

Players start the game with 6 inactive, face-down Sigil cards in their play area. Each turn players will activate one additional Sigil by flipping it to its active side.

Each card in your hand has a Sigil cost. In order to play a card you will invoke active Sigils (*turn them sideways*) to pay the Sigil cost and play the card for its effects. Inactive Sigils cannot be used to pay Sigil costs. For example, 6-cost cards cannot be played until you activate your 6th Sigil on your 6th turn.



- **Sigil Management:**
 - **Create a Sigil:** Take one of the inactive, face-down Sigils in your play area and flip it face-up. It is now an active Sigil under your control. You may only do this once per turn and you may have a maximum of 6 Sigils in play (*[Living Sigils](#) do not count towards this maximum*).
 - **Invoke:** Rotate Sigils sideways to pay for other card's Sigil costs.
 - **Refresh:** Sigils reset (*turn back upright*) at the beginning of their controlling player's next turn (*Refresh Phase*).
-

Units

Units are any pieces that are played/deployed on the chess board. Allied units are any units that share your color. Enemy units are any units of your opponent's color.

Unit Movement

Units move on the board according to their chess piece's movement rules. Each unit on the board may move only **once per turn** unless a card states otherwise. Units **cannot move through other units** (*except for Knights or if the unit has the [Infiltrator](#) keyword ability*).

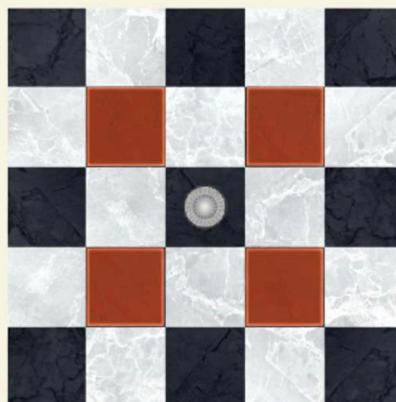
Units cannot move directly onto the same space as another unit.

On each turn, your first move action costs 1 Sigil. Each additional unit moved costs +1 Sigil (*i.e., 2nd move = 2 Sigils, 3rd = 3 Sigils, etc*). Each unit may only move once per turn. Units cannot take a move action on the same turn they are deployed, but they can move if it occurs as an effect of a card or special ability.

Tip: Unlike chess, moving onto another piece's space is not required to attack them. Your piece just needs to be occupying any space adjacent to them (See [Combat](#)).



Mercs, Kings, & Queens
can attack any adjacent
space, including diagonals



Pawns
can only attack adjacent
diagonal spaces

Chess Movement Reference

The pieces in Sylvan Tactics follow the same movement rules as the equivalent pieces in chess.



Pawn: 1 space forward (or 2 spaces forward on their first move)



Knight: In an “L” shape (can move over or around other pieces)



Rook: Any number of spaces in a row or column



Bishop: Any number of spaces in any diagonal direction



Queen: Any number of spaces in a row, column, or diagonal



King: One space in any direction

Unit Types

Pawns

- **Deploy:** Players start the game with all 8 Pawns deployed. Killed Pawns cannot be redeployed unless it is an effect of a card or ability.
- **Status:** Pawns do not have Health and they cannot become Wounded like Mercenaries. Any attack against a Pawn will kill it (See [Combat](#)). However, If a defending Pawn's Strength was greater than its attacker when it was killed, it will **not** cause morale damage for the defending player's King.
- **Promote:** If a Pawn ends your turn in the opponent's back row, you may promote it to a Mercenary. Choose a Mercenary card from your hand OR from the discard pile. Replace the Pawn with a matching unused Mercenary piece and assign it the chosen Mercenary card without paying its Sigil cost. Promote only as the final action on your turn.
- **Strength:** All Pawns have a base Strength of 1.
- **Diagonal Attacks:** Pawns are the only unit that can only attack adjacent diagonal spaces.

Mercenaries

- **Deploy:** Invoke the required Sigils to meet the Sigil cost of a Mercenary card from your hand and take either the Rook, Bishop, or Knight pieces from your pool (*both pieces of the chosen type*). Place one within the first two rows on your side, then place the matching chess piece on the Mercenary card's cost circle. This indicator piece allows you to track the unit's Ability, Strength, and Wounds. You can have a maximum of 3 Mercenaries on the board (*one each of Rook, Bishop, or Knight*).
- **Status:** A Mercenary's status is tracked through one of three possible states, Healed, Wounded, or Killed. The Wounded state is indicated by laying down the chess piece on the tracked Mercenary's card (See [Combat](#)).
- **Retire:** To retire a Mercenary, during your turn deal 2 morale damage to your King, discard the Mercenary card, and return the chess pieces to your pool. Any attached Partners or Equipment cards are returned to your hand.
- **Strength:** Mercenary Strength values range from 1–5, seen at the top left of the card.

The Queen

- **Deploy:** Invoke a maximum of 6 Sigils as a cost to deploy your Queen. You may place the Queen's piece within the first two rows on your side.
- **Status:** The Queen enters with Health equal to the number of Sigils invoked to deploy her and her Health cannot exceed 6. She cannot be Wounded and cards or abilities that heal Wounds do not apply to the Queen's Health.
- **Combat Damage:** Attacks targeting the Queen reduce her Health by the attacker's Strength value. (See [Combat](#)).
- **Strength:** The Queen's base Strength is always equal to her current Health. For example, if she was at 6 Health and took 2 damage from a 2 Strength enemy, her Health *and* base Strength would now be 4. Other cards or abilities may still add or subtract from her base Strength.
- **Defeat:** If her Health is reduced to zero she is removed from the board and cannot be deployed again during this game.

Tip: In addition to her mobility high potential Strength, the Queen has protection from many cards in the game. Most cards specifically target only Pawns and Mercenaries.

The King

- **Deploy:** Your King is placed as part of the game setup.
- **Status:** The King's health starts at 10 and cannot go above 10. He cannot be Wounded and cards or abilities that heal Wounds do not apply to the King's Health.
- **Combat Damage:** Attacks targeting the King reduce his Health by the attacker's Strength value. (See [Combat](#)).
- **Morale Damage:** The death of any allied unit reduces your King's health by 1. Other cards or abilities may also inflict morale damage. The King cannot be killed by morale damage. If morale damage would reduce the King's health to less than 1 it is instead set to 1.
- **Strength:** The King has a base Strength of 3.
- **Defeat:** If your King's health is reduced to zero you lose the game immediately.

Keyword Abilities

There are some keywords that can appear in a divided box at the bottom of some Mercenary cards. These are abilities that are shared among multiple Mercenaries. Each keyword has specific effects that change movement or actions.

- **Partner:** Partners may be deployed as a standalone Mercenary **OR** a single Partner can be paired to an existing Mercenary similar to an Equipment (See [Equipment Cards](#)). The Strength values for the Partnered Mercenaries are combined. If the original Mercenary is killed, then the Partner Mercenary card is returned to your hand. Partners can only be paired with Mercenaries.
- **Infiltrator:** Mercenaries with this ability can move over/through other units.
- **Apex Predator:** When you play an Apex Predator you may sacrifice a Pawn (remove it from the board) and deal 2 morale damage to your King. If you do, the Sigil cost of the Alpha Predator is reduced by 2.

Tip: Knights can already move over other units, so it's probably best to assign Mercenaries with the [Infiltrator](#) keyword to Rooks or Bishops.

Special Abilities

Most Mercenaries also have unique named special abilities on the lower half of their cards and text that explains the ability. These are often very powerful and help turn the tide of battle. Some Mercenaries can have a special ability in addition to a keyword ability.



Some special abilities are passive and are always in effect. Some require you to invoke Sigils. And others require you to invoke the Mercenary itself (*meaning you will have to decide between attacking or activating that Mercenary's ability on your turn*). Unless otherwise stated in the ability, special abilities can only be activated on your turn.

Some examples of different special ability types can be seen in the image to the left.

Tip: Pay attention to the special abilities on your opponent's cards, because they can override other basic rules of the game. Also note that even though Mercenaries cannot attack on the same turn they are deployed but they *can* use special abilities that require them to invoke their card.

Combat

Mercenaries, Kings, and Queens can attack as long as they are not currently invoked (*they must invoke to attack*). Pawns can attack only once per turn, but they do not invoke since they do not have an associated card. You can make multiple attacks on the same turn. Your first attack each turn costs 1 Sigil. Each attack thereafter costs one additional Sigil (*second attack = 2 Sigils, third attack = 3 Sigils, etc*). Units cannot attack (*or move*) on the same turn they are deployed.

Tip: Units can still move even if they have been invoked (*as long as they have not moved yet during their turn*). This means that if a unit is adjacent to an enemy at the beginning of their turn they can attack it (*invoking to do so*) and then use a move action after to escape to a safer position.

Declaring an Attack:

- Invoke a number of Sigils required for your attack. (*First attack per turn = 1 Sigil, second attack = 2 Sigils, etc*)
- Invoke your attacker's card (*turn it sideways like you would a Sigil*). Pawns don't invoke to attack, but each may only attack once per turn. (*Units that have already been invoked from an ability or another card cannot attack*)
- Declare which enemy unit you are attacking. (*They must be adjacent to your attacker unless a card or ability says otherwise*)

Resolving an Attack:

Start by comparing unit Strength values. If the attacker's Strength is **greater than or equal to** the defender's Strength:

- The **defender is killed** and removed from the board.



If the attacker's Strength is **less than** the defender's Strength:

- Defender **becomes Wounded** (*indicated by laying down the chess piece on that unit's card*).



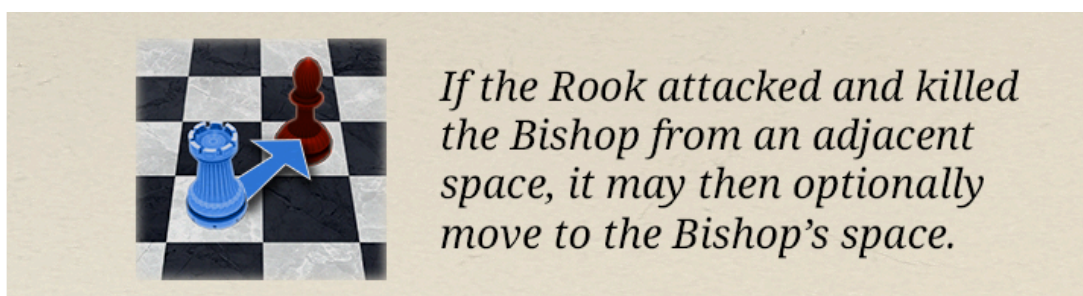
- If the defender is **already Wounded**, it is **killed** and removed from the board.

When a Unit is Killed:

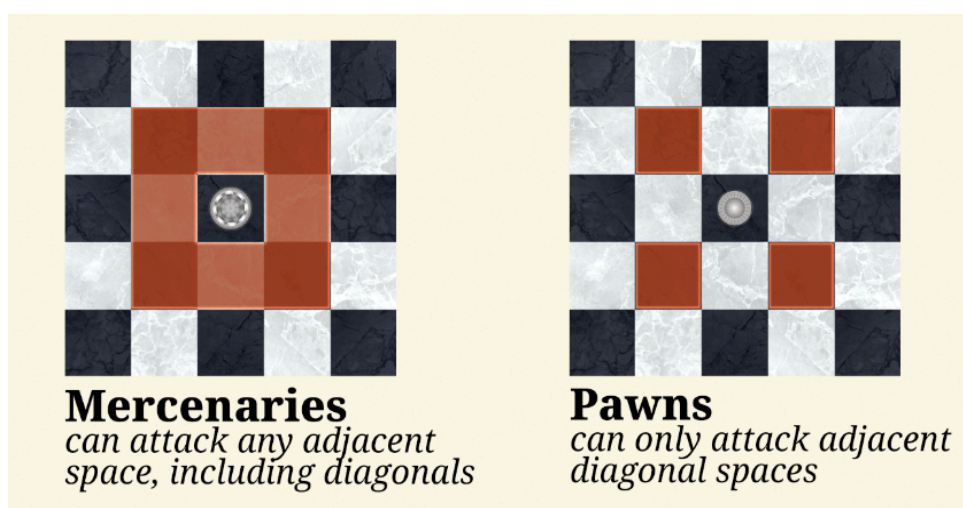
- **Morale Damage:** The killed unit's controller deals **1 damage to their King**, but only if their King's Health is greater than 1. They cannot be killed by morale damage. If their King is already at 1 Health, they are Disgraced and they can no longer deploy Pawns to the board.



- If the killing attack was from an adjacent space, the attacking unit's controller **may choose** to move the attacking unit onto the space previously occupied by the killed unit. This movement does not have a Sigil and it does not count as a basic move action.



Tip: Pawns cannot be Wounded. So, if a defending Pawn is granted an effect from a card that would cause it to have a higher Strength value than its attacker, it is still killed, but it does not cause any morale damage.



Other Cards



There are three other card types besides Mercenaries that can have temporary or permanent effects on the game. They are played for Sigil costs like Mercenaries, but no associated pieces are deployed to the board when played.

Cards with the **Riposte** keyword will have special conditions which allow them to be played during your opponent's turn. **All other cards can only be played during your turn.**

Types



1. Action Cards

- i. Action cards have immediate effects when played and then go to the discard pile after they have resolved.

2. Battlefield Cards

- i. Battlefield cards have ongoing effects and stay on the board under control of the player that played them. You may have any number of active Battlefield cards.

3. Equipment Cards

- i. Equipment cards can be equipped onto an active Mercenary (*place it below their Mercenary card*) to change their Strength or Abilities.
- ii. They cannot be equipped to Pawns, Kings, or Queens.
- iii. A Mercenary may have any number of Equipment cards attached.
- iv. When a Mercenary is killed, any Equipment cards attached to them are put in the discard pile.