



Overview

You are entrusted with protecting the world from the surges of chaotic elemental energy that emerge from The Rift. It has been a century since the last surge, and most people no longer believe it even happened. Your numbers have dwindled, with only a few of you true believers occupying the region between the worlds, between matter and magic, strengthening your skills. You were caught unaware when four terrifying beings, commanding the different elements bending to their destructive whims, tore through The Rift ready to lay waste to your world. Before they do, you hastily construct concentrated spires of pure magical aether, blended with elemental energy, tuned toward order and balance, designed to offset the destruction hurled your way. Can you work together to keep the world safe, or will chaos spread through your magical land between worlds, infecting the world with unbounded destruction?

Components

Game board	1 bag of 40 invader/shard tokens (10 each
10 large floor tiles	red, blue, silver, and green)
16 medium floor tiles	5 aether core discs
16 small floor tiles	1 invader track marker (red)
16 elemental boss cards	4 spire toppers
15 hero cards (5 starter, 5 advanced, 5 solo)	4 spire gems
8 dice	4 spire completion bonus tokens
60 pillars	9 spire adaptation tiles
4 walls (one per element)	1 active player token

Goal

Work together to mold the elemental power into four spires, one of each of the four elements: fire, air, water and earth. A spire is a set of four floor tiles, one directly on top of the next, all of the same element. Each time you build a spire, that element's Boss is defeated. Once all four Bosses are defeated, the Heroes (and therefore the players, who are controlling them) all share a victory for saving their realm!

The Heroes are being protected by an aether core, shielding them from the full force of the attacks. If the aether core is fully depleted, or the Heroes take too long to defeat the Bosses, then the Heroes (and the players) are defeated, and chaos will overtake their world!



Brooke says:

Aetherspire is a co-operative game, which means all players will win or lose together. You can talk, strategize, and suggest ideas to each other all you want. But please respect each other and let the active Hero make their own decisions!

Setup

1. Place the board on the table.
2. Every floor tile has two sides, a standard side (which has a single element) and a multi side (short for multi-element) on the back. Shuffle each of the floor tile stacks face down (multi side up) and keep them within reach.
3. Place two aether core discs in the middle of the board, and the four walls around it.
4. Set up the invader/boss track:
 - a. Select one boss of each element. For your first game, we recommend the bosses marked with a "I" in the top left corner: Mesa (earth), Terrorwing (air), Soke (water), and Ferno (fire). For later games, you can use a recommended setup from the **"Difficulty II: Spire on Infinite Planes"** level of the Difficulty Modes section, or randomly pick one of each element.

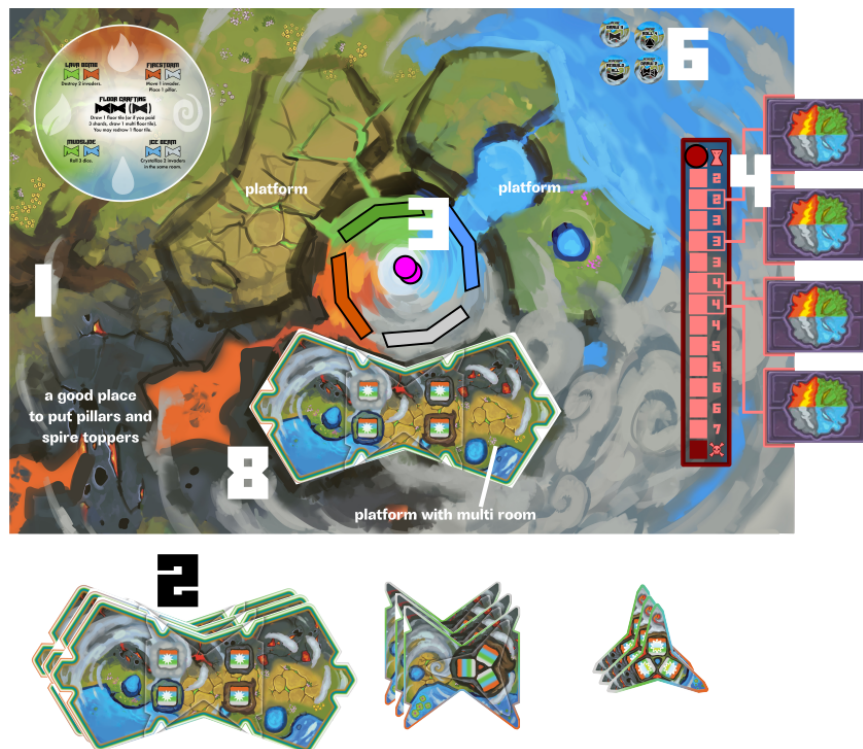
- b. Shuffle these four selected boss cards and place them face-down in the slots by the invader track.
 - c. Put the red invader token on the "Start" space on the track.
5. Each player will control one Hero. For your first game, we suggest using one of the starting Heroes marked with a diamond symbol. In later games, you can combine the starting Heroes with the advanced Heroes (no diamond), or just use one or the other.



Amber says:

I work alone! Five of the Heroes, including me, have a different card back, and are only for use in solo mode. Don't use the starting or advanced Heroes when playing by yourself, and don't use the solo Heroes when playing with 2 or more players!

6. Put the spire completion bonus tokens in their proper location.
7. Keep the other components in a supply within easy reach: dice, 50 pillars, the bag with all 40 invader tokens, the spire toppers and stones, and the spare aether core discs. (You only need the spire adaptation tiles and other 10 pillars if playing at Difficulty III or higher. Otherwise, you can keep those with the unused Boss and Hero cards in the box.)
8. If this is your first game (Difficulty I), draw one large floor tile multi side up and put it on one of the three platforms on the board. Then, draw two random tokens from the bag as invaders and put them on any two of the spaces of that floor (it doesn't matter which spaces).



Game Flow

Select a start player (perhaps the player who's most recently built something, or just choose randomly). Give that player the active player token with the "Reroll Any" side showing. That player will perform these three steps, in this order:

Supply - Build - Invasion

After they are done, they pass the active player token to the player to their left, with the "Reroll Any" side showing, who will perform these three steps, and then to their left, and so on.

(In the solo game, the same player keeps performing these steps, since there's no one else to play! Otherwise, the flow of the solo game is identical to the multiplayer game.)

Supply Step

In the Supply step of your turn, perform these three actions in order:

1. **Draw the top floor tile**, face-up (standard side showing) from any of the three stacks into the Reserve. (The Reserve is the area near the board where to keep floor tiles that are available but that aren't yet built.) **Then, you may perform a redraw**, if you choose to: Discard any tile from the Reserve, and then draw the top tile of that same size into the Reserve. Whenever you discard a tile, it goes to the bottom of its stack.
2. **Draw 3 elemental tokens** from the bag as shards onto the Elemental Wheel, on their matching elemental symbol. Shards are the materials you'll use later to cast spells. (These use the same tokens as invaders, and in fact, during the game, you will turn invaders into shards by crystallizing them, and certain bosses will turn shards into invaders.)
3. **Roll 5 dice**. You will get to spend and alter these in the Build step, mostly for building pillars.

Build Step

The Build step of your turn is where most of your actions and decisions lie. You will get to perform **as many actions as you want to, in whatever order you want to**, in whatever amount you want to. (So a hero can build a floor, then cast a spell, then build another floor, then place 4 pillars on that newly built floor, and so on.) It only ends once you've determined you can't or don't want to perform any more actions.



Summer says:

It can seem like a good idea to burn up all the resources you can, but sometimes you've got to let things smolder for later turns. It's often a good idea to save some shards for your teammates to use for bigger explosions later!

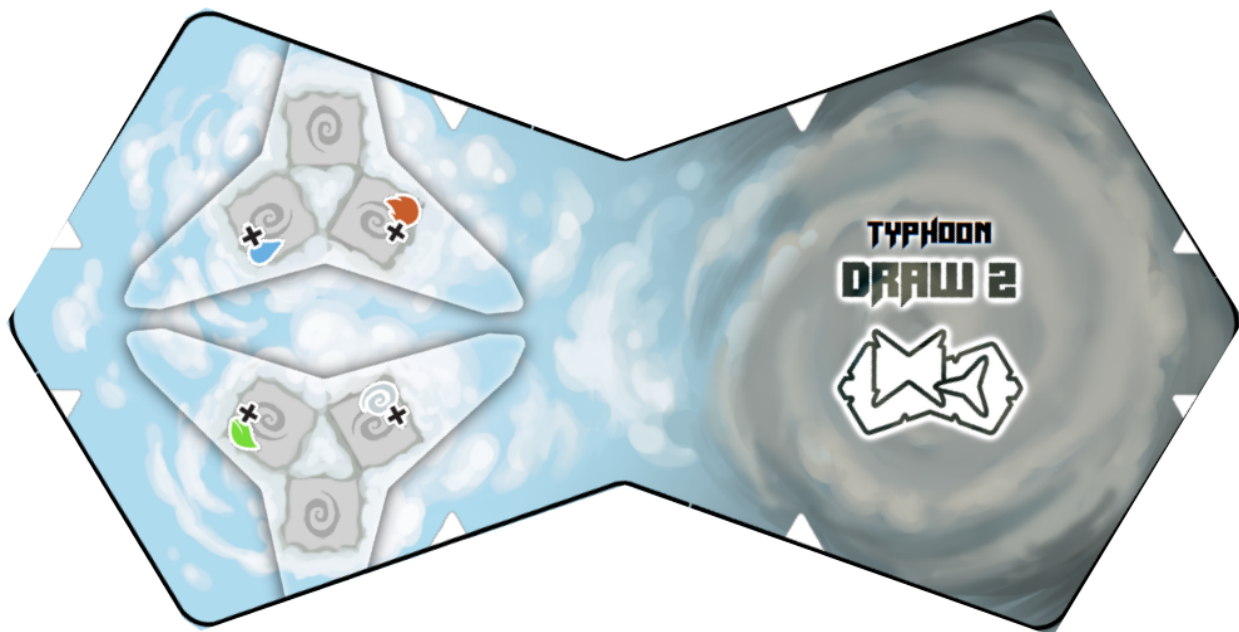
There are many basic actions that all Heroes have access to. Each Hero card also has a few special actions that only that Hero can use on their turn.

Basic Actions

Build a floor

Place a floor tile from the Reserve into the fortress. A large floor tile can be placed directly on an empty platform space on the board, if there are any. Later, floor tiles can be placed on completed rooms (rooms with a pillar on every space) that match their size and have no invaders on them.

Some floor tiles have a special ability. These happen immediately when the tile is placed in the fortress, and then do not happen again unless a Hero ability says otherwise. If a floor with one of these is later destroyed, you don't have to undo the ability in any way - it's a one-time bonus.



Example: This large air floor tile has three rooms. Each of the two rooms on the left can hold a small floor once there are pillars on all three spaces. The room on the right, which has a special ability, cannot hold any pillars, floor tiles, spire toppers, or invaders. When this floor tile is placed in the fortress, the special ability happens immediately, and the active player draws 2 rooms, one at a time, of any sizes.



Lilly says:

Be careful about placing too many multi floor tiles or floor tiles with special abilities. They're really helpful at first, but you'll see in time that these have less room for building and for containing invaders. A couple of these, you're probably safe. Too many, you'll get overrun. Don't be afraid of redrawing floor tiles until you get just what you want.

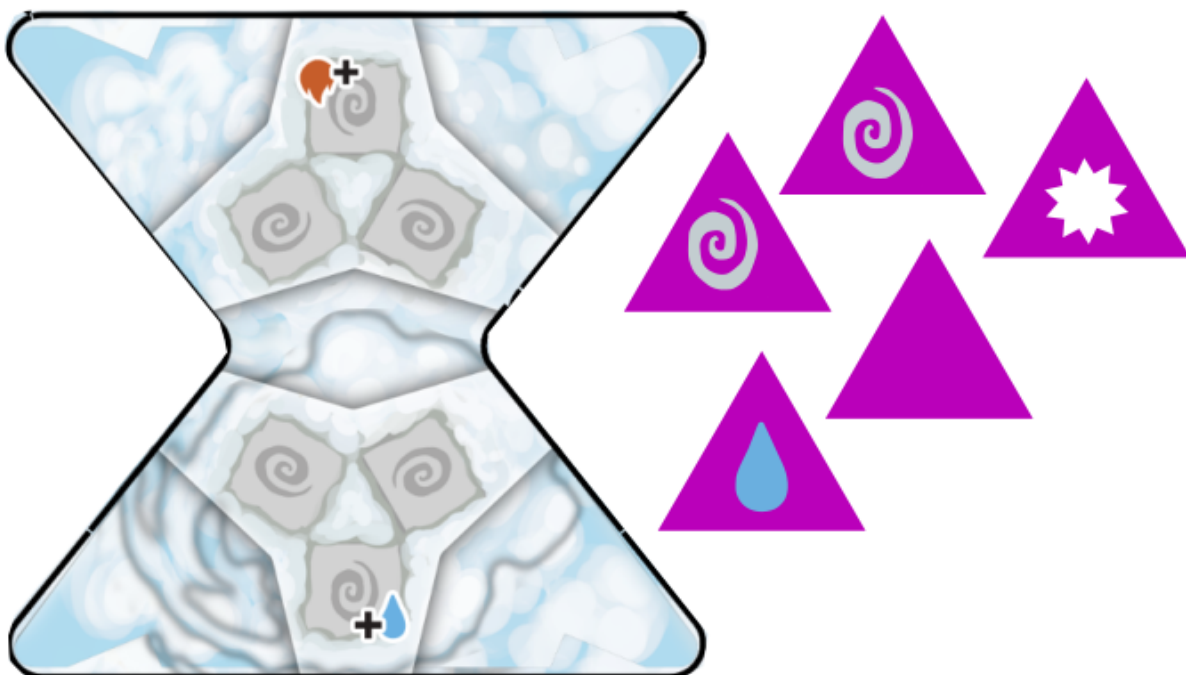
Place a pillar

Most floor tiles have spaces on them to hold a pillar. You can place a pillar from your supply on one of these by discarding the appropriate die or dice from what you've rolled this turn.

Each space requires a die matching the element of the floor tile. (So a fire floor requires discarding a fire die to place each pillar.) A multi floor tile requires star dice only - you cannot use dice showing other elements for spaces on multi floor tiles.

The dice have four sides showing the four basic elements, two sides showing a star, and two sides showing nothing (blank). You can spend a die showing the star as any one element. You cannot spend a blank die to build a pillar. (Various special abilities require you to discard any dice; these abilities can use blanks unless otherwise noted.)

Some spaces, marked with symbols such as , require an extra die as well, one of the floor's element and one of the additional element. Both dice must be discarded at the same time. A star die can be used in place of either one of these, or two star dice can be used to fulfill both requirements.



Example: On this medium air floor tile in the fortress, Scarlett has a few options to spend her 5 dice. She can fill the bottom air+water space using an air die and a water die, or with a star die (as air) and a water die, or with an air die and a star die (as water). She can fill the top air+fire space using an air die and the star die (as fire). She could fill any of the other spaces using one air or star die each. (The blank die cannot be used for placing pillars at all.) She decides on filling the bottom three spaces: discarding an air die and a water die for the air+water space, an air die for one of the air spaces, and a star die for the other air space.

You cannot place a pillar on a space that already contains a pillar or an invader.



Eve says:

As the fortress grows higher, there's a chance that players accidentally knock some structures down. This isn't a dexterity game - if anything falls over, just put it back to the best of your ability. We all make mistakes, don't worry!

Complete a spire

If your fortress has **4 floors of the same element, one on top of another**, then you have a spire ready to complete! To complete an element's spire, place the spire topper piece on top of the top floor, in a small room. (It does not go on top of any pillars, and in fact that small room *cannot* contain any pillars.) Then, place the element's gem on top of the spire topper.

You are not forced to complete a spire immediately once 4 floors of the same element are stacked. While it's usually a good idea to complete the spire, you may want to wait for various reasons (such as activating Summer's Grand Finale or having a higher likelihood of holding certain invaders) or you may be prevented from doing so until another condition is met (such as by the boss Cirrus or various spire adaptations in Difficulty III).

Note that multi floor tiles count as all elements; any number of the floors of a spire can be multi rooms. No matter how you count them, though, each floor tile can only be part of one spire. (This mostly matters for the spire adaptations in Difficulty III.)

Your spire topper must be placed on a small room, although it can be a room that's part of a larger floor. If you've built such large rooms that your fourth floor does not contain a small room, then you cannot place the spire topper yet, and you must build further rooms above it until you can place that topper in a small room.

You may place the spire topper on a small floor that contains only a special ability.



Rose says:

The small floors with special abilities are usually dead-ends for building. They're great for the tops of spires, or for fueling Hero abilities like mine and a few others. If you don't have a good use for them, then just hide them away and get something better!



Example: A water spire can be built on the top small water floor with the “Iceberg” ability - there are four stacked water floors. A fire spire can be built on the top small fire floor seen in the top-right once the fire invader is removed - the base floor of the fire spire is at level 2, above an earth floor; then a multi room, then two more fire rooms above.

After completing the spire, perform the steps detailed below in order: Defeat the boss, check for victory, use a spire completion bonus, and diminish the element.

Defeat the Boss

Remove the element's boss from the board, even if it never awakened. That boss will no longer have any effect.

Victory

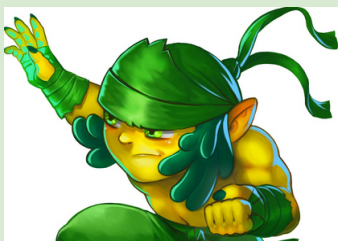
After you've built your fourth spire, and therefore defeated all four bosses, you have won the game! You can focus the power of the spires onto the rift, sealing it for good... you hope.

Spire Completion Bonuses

After you've placed a spire, you can take one of the four bonuses marked on the board: Rebuild all destroyed walls, draw 2 floor tiles (of any sizes), draw 3 random shards, or roll 4 extra dice. Each of these abilities can only be used once during the game. Use the bonus markers to indicate the already-used ones.

Diminish the Element

Finally, remove 5 tokens of the completed spire's element from the bag and set them aside on the defeated boss card. There are now only half as many potential invaders of that element that could invade. So you're not entirely safe from it, but it's less likely than the others to hurt you. (Note that it's also less likely than the others to get pulled as a shard.) If fewer than 5 tokens were in the bag, remove invaders from the fortress and/or shards from the Elemental Wheel until 5 tokens are set aside.



Glenn says:

We've got to build four spires, but we only have three platforms. That means at least one of our spires won't start on the ground floor. It will start above some other floor that's sliced up into multiple rooms. A spire's base floor can be at any elevation, as long as it contains four contiguous floors, such as levels 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Cast a spell

The shards, which you've acquired at the start of every turn as well as through crystallizing invaders, are primarily used for casting the five spells found on the Elemental Wheel. The four outer spells cost 2 shards of certain elements; discard the used shards into the bag and then

perform the listed effect. The fifth, Floor Crafting, costs any 2 shards of the same or different elements, and you can optionally use a third shard of any element for a different effect. Check the Glossary of this rulebook for clarifications on what the spells do.

Clarification on Floor Crafting - When you cast Floor Crafting, decide whether you're paying 2 or 3 shards. If you're paying 2 shards, draw the top floor tile of any stack face-up (standard side up) into the Reserve, and then optionally redraw any tile. If you're paying 3 shards, draw the top floor tile of any stack face-down (multi side up) into the Reserve, and then optionally redraw any tile. If any effect lets you cast Floor Crafting for free (such as Laurel's *Alternate Universes*), draw the floor tile face-up as in the 2-shard version.

Reroll any dice

Flip the Active Player token to the "Reroll Used" side. Then, reroll any of your unused dice - from one to all of them. This can include dice you rolled after the start of your turn, such as ones rolled from casting Mudslide.

Because this requires you to flip the Active Player token, this action can only be used once per turn.

Special Actions

Each Hero has 3 or more unique abilities that only they can use.

Most of these abilities have an arrow; these can be used any number of times per turn as long as you pay the cost on the left of the arrow each time.

Some abilities are "Passive effects", which are triggered by some other event. Check the Glossary of this rulebook for clarifications on what the actions do.

Some abilities are "Spell upgrades", which give the listed spell an extra option or ability.



Dawn says:

For example, my passive ability Split Timelines says, "After drawing invaders, crystallize one before it invades." This will only happen once on each of my turns, directly after pulling the invaders that are about to enter the fortress, letting me change the timeline to one where that invader is a useful shard instead of a harmful invader.

The Invasion

After you've done all you want to in the Build step, it's time for the Invasion. There are two steps: Advance the invasion token, and pull the invaders.

Advance the invasion token

Move the invasion token down the board one step. If this causes the token to reach a space connected to a dormant (face-down) Boss that hasn't been defeated, flip the card over to awaken the Boss. From that point on, the Boss has some extra effect to make the game harder on the Heroes. The effect lasts until the Boss is defeated, or some other effect makes the Boss dormant.

If your token moves to the lowest spot on the board (the space marked with a skull), *you lose the game*. You have taken too long and the invasion is at full force.

Pull the invaders

The number next to the invasion token shows how many invaders to take from the bag. Pull that many, and then determine where in the fortress they can go. (For cases where it matters, generally involving multi rooms, the current player chooses the order in which invaders enter the fortress after seeing all the invaders.)

Each invader will go onto a pillar space, if any is available. Each space can only hold one invader.

An invader will only go onto a room of its element, and will prefer a single-element room over a multi room.

An invader's next preference is to go as high as possible - as elevated from the base platforms as possible. A floor 4 levels off the ground will be invaded before a floor 3 levels off the ground. Within a level, an invader prefers to go on top of a pillar (since it's higher).

If there is no suitable space to hold an invader, it attempts to attack the Heroes. Its first target is the wall of its element: if that wall is still present, the invader will destroy the wall (move it off the board) and itself (put it back in the bag). If the wall is not present, then the invader will damage the shield (move an aether core disc off the board) and itself (put it back in the bag).



Example: Crystal pulls three earth invaders, two water invader, and an air invader. The small multi floor is higher than the partially exposed large earth floor, but earth invaders prefer earth, so the earth invaders go in the earth room; two of them go on the pillars (since they're higher than the tile itself) and one on another square. The remaining three water and air invaders have to go into the two spaces of the multi room. Crystal chooses which goes onto the pillar, which goes onto the empty square, and which one hits a wall.

Some Heroes' abilities mention a special action regarding the "first invader." (For instance, Laurel's Danger Sense says, "You may choose to re-draw the first invader pulled during the Invasion.") In these cases, draw one invader from the bag, perform whatever action is specified (in Laurel's case, put it back in the bag and draw a different one), and then draw the remainder of the required number of invaders.

Defeat

If the last aether core disc is removed from the board (even if some walls remain), then the Heroes are defeated. The last line of defense against the planar chaos now destroyed, your plane of existence is overrun with raw elemental energy and sent to ruin.

End of Turn

Any unused dice are discarded. The floor tiles in the Reserve and the shards on the Elemental Wheel stay where they are for future turns, as does everything in the fortress.

Glossary & Clarifications

Move an invader - Take an invader from any space and put it on another space that doesn't contain an invader, regardless of element. (So a water invader can be moved to a space in an air room, for instance.)

Destroy an invader - Put an invader from the fortress into the bag.

Crystallize an invader - Put an invader from the fortress onto the Elemental Wheel as a shard.

Multi floor tile - A multi-element floor tile, one that counts as all 4 elements. They are on the back of every floor tile. They can hold any element of invader, can count toward any spire, and match any other element for the purposes of abilities like Zephyr's *Ensnare* ("Discard a floor tile from the Reserve -> Crystallize an invader of the same element as the discarded floor tile.")

Standard floor tile - The single-element side of a floor tile, one that counts as a single element.

+X aether core - Add X aether core discs from the supply to the board. You cannot add an aether core if there are no more discs in the supply.

+X shards - Draw X random shards from the bag and place them on the Elemental Wheel.

Roll X dice - Take X available dice (those which are not yet rolled this turn or were already discarded) and roll them. If there are not enough available dice, you may choose to discard any of your unused dice first.

Set a die - Change one of your available dice so that the specified face is showing on top.

Discard a floor tile - Put the tile on the bottom of the appropriately sized stack, destroying any pillars or invaders that are on it.

Destroy a floor tile in the fortress - Discard a floor tile, destroying all pillars on it. Unless otherwise stated, you cannot destroy a floor that has any invaders or other floors above it.

Destroy a pillar - Move the pillar from the floor tile to the supply, keeping the invader in that space, if any. Pillars underneath a floor tile cannot be destroyed.

Discard a shard - Put a shard back in the bag.

Take a shard from the Elemental Wheel - This follows the rules of moving an invader.

Enters the fortress - An invader “enters the fortress” if it is pulled from the bag and placed in a room during an Invasion, for the purposes of triggering abilities like those of the Bosses Vlanche and Blaise. Thus, the following actions do not count as “entering the fortress”:

- Going from a shard the Elemental Wheel into being an invader (see Vlanche)
- Already being on a floor tile that was on the Reserve when the floor is placed (see Dawn)
- Being crystallized, destroyed, or re-drawn before being placed (see Dawn, Lilly, Laurel)

Draw a floor tile - Pick a stack and add the top floor tile face-up into the Reserve. If the draw action also has a redraw (like Room Crafting), then select any floor tile in the Reserve, including the new one, discard it underneath its stack, and draw a floor of the discarded tile’s size.

Search for a floor tile - Look through the stack, put a tile of your choice into the Reserve, and then shuffle the stack.

Place a pillar - Put a pillar from the supply on any space that does not currently have an invader or pillar. (Note: These abilities are great on spaces with tougher requirements, like multi rooms or spaces that would require two dice.) If ever you are supposed to place a pillar but there are not any more in the supply, you can destroy a pillar with nothing on it first.

Matching elements - Floor tiles, shards, and/or dice share elements as long as at least one of the elements matches. A star die matches any floor tile, any shard, or any non-blank die. A multi floor tile matches any non-blank die, any shard, and any other floor tile. (If an action specifies an exact “die face”, though, like Laurel’s Change Your Fate, that requires an exact match.) A blank die does not match any elements.

Opposite elements - Fire and water are opposite elements. Air and earth are opposite elements.

Platform - One of the three areas on the board that allows building, and all floor tiles on top of it.

Rooms & Floor Tiles - A floor tile is a tile, either large, medium or small. A floor tile will have one or more rooms in it, delineated by the shapes shown on the tile. Most rooms contain spaces that hold pillars, but a few rooms only have a special ability. This is still a room but cannot hold invaders or pillars. Small tiles with special ability rooms can hold spires.

Rebuild a wall - Return a wall from off the board back to its starting location around the aether core.

Spire - The four (or more) floor tiles of the same element, stacked on each other, that can be completed with a spire topper to defeat a boss.

Level - The height of a floor tile from the base. The floor tile laying directly on a platform is at level 1. The tile above that is level 2, the one above that is level 3, and so on.

Base floor - The lowest-level floor of the four floor tiles of a spire.

Symbols

You will see the following symbols in heroes' abilities:



Any die



Die showing earth/air/fire/water/star



Any shard



Earth/air/fire/water shard



Floor tile in the Reserve



Invader



Wall

Difficulty Modes

The rulebook above describes Difficulty I, the basic way to play. After you've beaten that, try progressing through the following steps. Every Difficulty level includes the challenges of the levels before them.

Difficulty II: Crisis on Infinite Planes

You've thwarted the attack on your known plane, but similar fights are happening in parallel worlds as well!

Rather than restricting yourself to the starter Heroes, during setup you now have access to advanced Heroes (without the diamond symbol) as well. These Heroes have more unusual or situational abilities.

Additionally, you won't just use the starter set of Bosses. Either shuffle all Bosses together and pick one of each element randomly, or use one of these suggested sets:

- I. The First Wave (the introductory experience): **Mesa**, **Terrorwing**, **Tideflow**, **Ferno**
- II. End of the Rainbow (diminishes the power of star dice and multi rooms): **Muck**, **Phoon**, **Soke**, **Cindi**
- III. Wrecking Crew (they want to break through your walls): **Quake**, **Cirrus**, **Seepe**, **Blaise**
- IV. Legion of Destruction (more invaders that hit harder): **Vlanche**, **Nado**, **Wavecrash**, **Scorch**

As noted in **Setup**, you should no longer start with a multi room and invaders in Difficulty II and beyond.

Difficulty III: What? Chaos is Evolving!

The Bosses are getting smarter, tougher, trickier. The spires you've been building thus far aren't going to cut it anymore.

Play with all the changes from Difficulty II. During setup, use all 50 pillars in the box, not just 40. After dealing the bosses, shuffle the spire adaptation tiles and deal one face-up next to each Boss. These add extra requirements that the spire of the Boss's element must meet. So for instance, if you've dealt the adaptation Stable ("The spire's base floor contains at least 18 pillars above it") next to a Fire Boss, you cannot complete the fire spire until the combined number of pillars on the base floor and every floor above it (including those not part of the spire) is 18 or more. You can still have all four floors built without the required change, but you cannot place the spire topper on until then.

After you've built an adapted spire, you will get some bonus either immediately or persistent throughout the game. If multiple abilities should ever trigger at the same time (for instance, two adaptations that both give a benefit at the start of each turn), the active player decides the order.

Unless otherwise indicated, you may have spires consisting of *more* than 4 floors. This may help certain building configurations such as those required by Stable.

As with the Difficulty I rules, each floor can only be part of one spire. However, requirements about a different tile being elsewhere (such as with Turbulent or Sprawling) do not count that different tile as being part of the spire.

If this proves too challenging, but you still want something more than Difficulty II, you can decide to only deal adaptations to the first 1, 2, or 3 Bosses instead.

Difficulty IV: Jump Start

You've taken some time to fortify your defenses. They've taken some time to fortify their attack.

Play with all the changes from Difficulty III. Start with 1 extra aether core, and start with the invader token down 1 space from the top of the invader track.

You may further increase the challenge, adding an extra aether core per additional space from the top of the invader track. If your token starts at or below any boss awakening spaces, awaken those bosses at the start of the game.

Credits / Special Thanks

Game Design: Tim Mierzejewski

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Art Direction: Darrin Horbal

Thank you to the many people who've tried out so many iterations of this game over the years.

Special thanks to Kayleigh Mierzejewski, Jake Bean, Mike Anton, and Matt Plourde for helping shape the game, in addition to the Phase Shift crew.