

# Circle of Kings

## Global Game Jam 2014

“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are”

### Diversifiers:

Back to the 1885

Can You Come And Play?

Honor Aaron Swartz

Round and Round

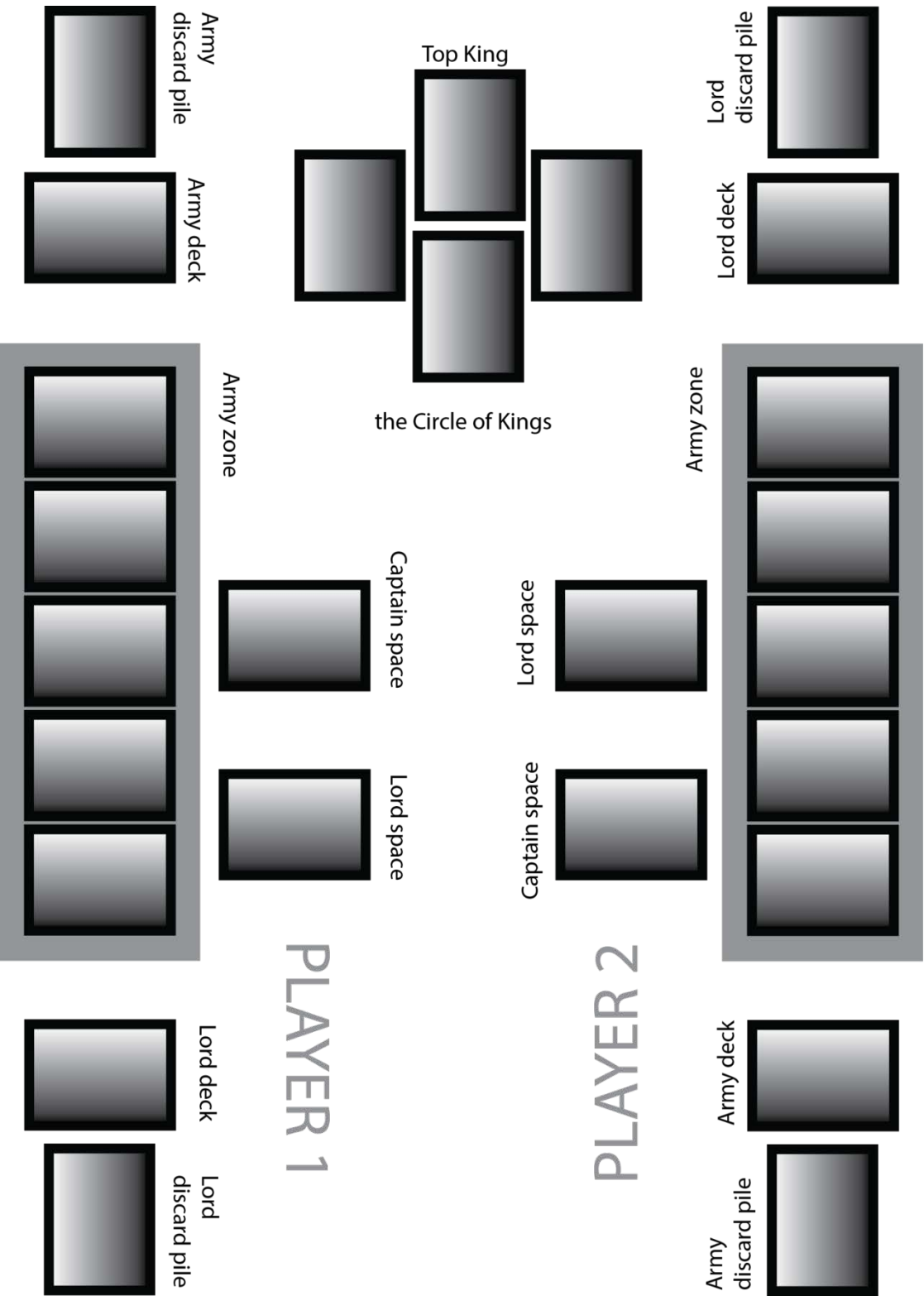




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Game Diagram



## **Overview**

A game for 2 players. Each player uses a complete tarot deck.

Circle of Kings is a game of warfare and secrecy. Each player deploys a Captain and an Army, as well as a Lord with a special effect, while using what clues are given to try to anticipate what the other player will deploy. The Armies meet and fight according to the advantages given by the Circle of Kings. The loser expends an extra Lord.

## **Objective**

Play rounds until one player's Lord deck is emptied. The other player is the winner!

### **Reading Tip**

When learning the game, read through an entire Phase before trying it out!

## Introduction to the Tarot Deck

In a standard Rider/Waite/Rider-Waite Tarot Deck, there are 56 **Minor Arcana** divided into 4 suits (Swords, Cups, Pentacles, Wands). Each suit has 10 numbered cards (the Ace with a face value of 1, to the 10) and 4 face cards (Page, Knight, Queen, King). This is similar to a regular deck of playing cards, except for the extra faces.

The Roman numerals indicate face value, and the illustration indicates the suit.  
eg. If there is a cup featured in the image, the suit is Cups!

There are also 22 **Major Arcana** cards such as The Fool, The Emperor, Death, and others. They are numbered 0 - XXI, but they have no suit. These are the dramatic characters used in divination.

Each player should have a full tarot deck of their own to play Circle of Kings.

## Setup

Each player sets up their decks. Refer to the game diagram for layout.

1. Remove all Pages, Knights, Queens and Kings (but not Aces!) from both decks. The Kings of one of the decks will be used as the Circle of Kings. The rest are not used.
2. Each player separates all of their own **Major Arcana** into a deck. Shuffle it. Pile the cards face-down as your Lord deck. (Refer to the Table of Lords for a full list of Major Arcana!)
  - Next to the Lord deck will be the Lord discard pile.  
Lords are always discarded **face-down**.
3. Each player separates all of their own remaining **Minor Arcana** (including Aces!) into a deck. Shuffle it. Pile the cards face-down as your Army deck.
  - Next to the Army deck will be the Army discard pile.  
Army cards are always discarded **face-up**.

The *Circle of Kings* (the “Circle”) has a Top King, Right King, Bottom King, and Left King (see game diagram). Build the circle with the Kings of one deck as follows:

1. Pile the four kings together.
2. Randomly draw one at a time and place it face-up on the Circle, going around clockwise.

We are ready to play rounds! A round consists of a Draw phase, a Deployment phase, a Combat phase, and a Circle phase. Cleanup is then performed before the start of a new round.

## Draw Phase

This phase is for drawing cards into your hand. You will draw Army cards, whose face values total to your Army value. And will you draw Lords, who have special effects that provide exceptions to the regular rules (ie. in the event of a rules conflict, the effect of the Lord takes precedence). Refer to the *Table of Lords* for effects.

On the first draw of the game, each player draws 2 Lords and 4 Army cards.

The hand limit is 9 cards. At the beginning of rounds after the first round, each player draws 1 Lord and 2 Army Cards using the following steps:

1. Draw 1 Lord card.
2. If drawing 2 Army Cards wouldn't put you over the hand limit, simply draw 2 Cards.  
If it would, use the following steps for each of the 2 cards:
  - a. If you are not at the hand limit, draw an Army card.
  - b. If you are at the hand limit, either discard an Army card from your hand and draw a new one, or burn an Army card (pass top card from deck directly to discard pile).
3. **Recruit!** If you wish, you may burn a Lord in order to draw exactly 2 more Army cards. Follow the same rules on hand limit as above.

**[Strategy Tip: Hand Size]** There are few disadvantages to carrying the maximum hand size.

Now each player has 2 lords to choose from, and some Army cards. Proceed to Deployment Phase.

## Deployment Phase

In this phase, players deploy their cards to battle. Each player deploys a Captain, a number of Army cards determined by the Captain, and a Lord.

**Note:** No player may conceal the number of cards in their hand.

1. Each player chooses an Army card to be the Captain, and deploys it face-down onto the Captain space.
2. Each player turns their Captain card face-up simultaneously, revealing it.
3. **Army Size:** Each player's Army Size is half of their Captain's face value, rounded up. Each player deploys that number of Army cards face-down into their Army zone. They **must** deploy as many as possible to reach their Army Size, but not more. If they do not have enough Army cards to deploy that number, they simply play all of their Army cards.

**[Strategy Tip: Big Captain, or Small?]** Know your Lord effects before you deploy your Captain! The size of your army may affect which Lord you wish to deploy.

4. Each player places a Lord face-down into their Lord space.

**[Strategy Tip: Who's On First?]** Keep Lord Initiative in mind. Some Lords completely override others!

5. Each player turns their deployed Army and Lord cards face-up, revealing them.
6. **Lord Effect!** If the effect of your Lord occurs immediately when revealed, resolve it now. (Refer to the table of Lords for info.)
  - If both Lords' effects occur now, use Lord Initiative.
  - If both Lords are the same, use Lord Cancellation.

**Lord Initiative:** Generally, if the two Lords would come into effect at the same time, the higher-numbered Lord resolves first.

**Lord Cancellation:** If both players reveal the same Lord, both Lords are immediately discarded. This combat is now resolved just with Army Cards!

**[Example: Army Size]** I select the V (5) of Swords as my Captain. My Army Size is  $5 / 2$  rounded up. That's 2.5 rounded up, or 3, which means I must attempt to play 3 Army cards. As it happens, I only have 2 other Army cards in my hand, so I must play both of them to get as close as possible to 3.

Proceed to Combat Phase.



## Combat Phase

In this phase, the armies meet, a winner is determined, and the loser burns a Lord.

1. **Lord Effect!** If the effect of your Lord occurs at the beginning of the Combat Phase, resolve it now. (Refer to the table of Lords for info.)
  - If both Lords' effects occur now, use Lord Initiative.
  - If both Lords are the same, use Lord Cancellation.
2. Simultaneously determine and compare each player's Army Value to determine the winner. The player with the bigger Army Value wins the Combat Phase!

**Army Value:** The value of your army is the sum of the face value of your Army Cards

- The Lord is not considered part of the army.
  - The Captain is considered part of the army.
3. **Casualty!** The loser immediately burns a Lord (pass the top card from deck directly to discard pile, without revealing to anyone, including themselves).
    - In the event of a draw, both players burn a Lord.

The winner of the Combat Phase will also act first in Circle Phase. Proceed to Circle Phase.

## Circle Phase

In this phase, casualties of the battle are determined by proceeding around the Circle of Kings, and taking Circle Actions.

Proceed around the Circle of Kings, taking Circle Actions.

1. **Lord Effect!** If the effect of your Lord occurs at the beginning of the Circle Phase, resolve it now. (Refer to the table of Lords for info.)
  - If both Lords' effects occur now, use Lord Initiative.
  - If both Lords are the same, use Lord Cancellation.
2. Circle Phase begins in the suit of the Top King. Each player takes a single Circle Action in current suit. The winner of the **Combat Phase** goes first.

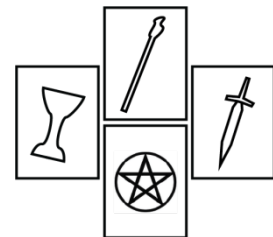
### **How to take a Circle Action:**

Choose one of your untapped (right-side up) deployed Army cards of the current suit. Tap it (rotate it sideways) to eliminate (move to the Army discard pile) an opponent's Army Card of the **next** suit in the Circle, clockwise. If more than one of the opponent's cards is applicable, the opponent chooses which one is eliminated.

- The Captain is considered part of the army, and can be tapped or eliminated.
- Tapped cards can still be eliminated.
- A player may not be able to take a Circle Action if the opponent has no deployed Army cards of the next suit.
- If you are able to take a Circle Action, you must.
- If no more actions for a card are possible, tap that card.
- When no more Circle Actions are possible, remaining cards have survived the phase.

### **[Example: How the Circle of Kings informs Circle Actions]**

In this example, Circle Phase begins in the suit of Wands (the Top King) and proceeds clockwise. The arrangement of the Kings means that Army cards of the Wand suit can eliminate those of the Sword suit. Swords eliminate Pentacles, Pentacles eliminate Cups, and Cups eliminate Wands.



3. The phase proceeds to the suit of the next King in the circle, clockwise. Each player attempts a single Circle Action of that suit, and the phase proceeds to the next suit. This repeats around the circle.
4. Continue around the entire circle (possibly multiple times) until all remaining deployed Army cards are tapped.

5. **Purge!** If an entire deployed army is wiped out due to Circle Actions, its owner burns a Lord (pass the top card from deck directly to discard pile, without revealing to anyone, including themselves).
6. **Lord Effect!** If the effect of your Lord occurs at the end of Circle Phase, resolve it now. (Refer to the table of Lords for info.)
  - If both Lords' effects occur now, use Lord Initiative.
  - If both Lords are the same, use Lord Cancellation.

**[Strategy Tip: Diversify, or Fortify]** An army with many suits will be able to attack often, unless the opponent's army has few suits. Consider this when deploying!

## Cleanup

The round is now over. Now we'll get ready for the next one.

1. Put deployed Lords into the Lord discard pile.
2. Deployed Army cards that have survived the Circle Phase return to their owner's hand.
3. Rotate the Circle of Kings by one position, clockwise.

The next round begins at the Draw Phase!

## Endgame

At the moment a player's Lord deck is reduced to zero remaining cards (for any reason, including burning, purging and drawing), the other player is declared the winner of the game.

In the event of a tie (where each player's Lord decks are reduced to zero remaining cards simultaneously), the winner is the player with the largest hand at the end of the game.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Draw Phase

*How many cards can I have in my hand?*

Up to 7 Army Cards and up to 2 Lords, for a total of 9.

*What happens if I run out of cards in my Army deck?*

The way the math works out, this will never happen. Don't worry about it.

### Deployment Phase

*How many Army Cards can I deploy after I've revealed my Captain?*

It's your Army Size: the captain's face value divided by 2, rounded up. (eg. A Captain with a face value of 5 will let you deploy 3 Army cards, because 5 divided by 2 is 2.5, which is rounded up to 3). You **must** deploy that many Army Cards if you are able to. If you have less than that number, you must deploy all of your Army Cards.

*Are the face values or suits of the Army Cards related to my Army Size?*

No. Army Size is the number of Army Cards you must deploy based on your Captain. The face values and suits of the Army cards being deployed are not a concern for Army size.

*Can we ever refrain from deploying a Lord?*

No. Never. Follow the instructions as given.

### Combat Phase

*Does Lord Initiative (which Lord goes first) affect who goes first in combat?*

No. Each player is meant to total up their Army Values simultaneously.

*If the effect of one player's High Priestess causes the other player to deploy another High Priestess, what happens?*

Both High Priestesses are then discarded, as per the rules of Lord Cancellation.

*How does The Hermit affect Army Size? Does the stolen Army Card count as part of your Army?*

For any effects pertaining to the Army, the card stolen by The Hermit is considered part of its new owner's Army until the stolen card is either eliminated or returned to its original owner's hand at the end of the round.

## Circle Phase

*How do we use my Army cards?*

The way the suits of the Army cards interact is determined by the Circle of Kings. The Kings affect each other's suits in a clockwise order. eg. If the King of Swords comes before the King of Cups in a clockwise order, then Sword cards can eliminate Cup cards, but not the other way around.

*How many Circle Actions do I get during the Circle Phase?*

One per King per cycle. The Circle Phase starts at the Top King, at which point each player will get one Circle Action using that King's suit. The Phase then proceeds to the next King in clockwise order, and keeps going around the Circle of Kings until all of the deployed Army Cards have been tapped.

*Do I have to eliminate an Army Card during a Circle Action if I can?*

Yes. Even if the only card you can eliminate is one that was stolen from you by The Hermit, you **must** eliminate an Army Card during a Circle Action if you are able to.

*Do the face values of the cards affect the Circle Actions?*

No. The face values are purely used for determining the outcome of the Combat Phase.

*At the end of the Circle Phase, what do I do with cards that have been tapped?*

They have survived the Circle Phase. They are returned to your hand, as any cards that were eliminated have already been discarded.

*If a player's card was stolen by The Hermit, and his remaining deployed Army Cards are eliminated during the Circle Phase, does a Purge happen?*

Yes. The Hermit only returns its stolen card at the end of the entire round, so for all intents and purposes, the stolen card's player has been Purged if they end the Circle Phase with no Army Cards deployed in front of them.

*If both The Hanged Man and Temperance are played and someone loses a Captain, what happens during the Combat Phase (since it's fought with Captains only?)*

In this case, the player whose Captain was eliminated has an effective Army Value of zero.

*If a Lord was played that affected the layout of the Circle, or if the Circle Phase was skipped, does the Circle still rotate during Cleanup?*

Yes. The rotation of the Circle is independent of the round, and thus always happens.

*If a player is forced by Justice to reduce their army to zero cards, are they Purged?*

No, a Purge may only result from Circle Actions, not from Lord effects.

## Glossary of Terms

*Army Card:* A card from the Minor Arcana (Ace - 10). Their face values are used to calculate your Army Value.

*Army Size:* How many Army Cards you can deploy during the Deployment Phase. It is the face value of your Captain divided by 2, rounded up.

*Army Value:* The total added sum of the face values of your Army Cards and your Captain (but not your Lord).

*Burn:* Pass the top card from deck directly to discard pile. If it's a Lord, do not reveal it to the opponent or yourself.

*Captain:* A card chosen to lead your army at the start of the Deployment Phase. Their face values determine the Size of your Army.

*Circle Action:* Choose one of your untapped (right-side up) deployed Army cards of the current suit. Tap it (rotate it sideways) to eliminate (move to the Army discard pile) an opponent's Army Card of the **next** suit in the Circle, clockwise.

*Circle of Kings:* The formation of the four King cards that determines the strengths and weaknesses of their corresponding suits.

*Lord:* A card from the Major Arcana (The Fool, The Emperor, Death etc.) These grant special conditions to the battle.

*Lord Cancellation:* If both players reveal the same Lord, both Lords are immediately discarded. This combat is now resolved just with Army Cards!

*Lord Initiative:* The face value of each Lord card. If two Lord cards are meant to activate their effects at the same moment, this determines which will go first. The Lord with the highest face value goes first.

*Purge:* If an entire deployed army is wiped out due to Circle Actions, its owner burns a Lord (pass directly from Lord deck to Lord discard pile, without revealing to anyone, including themselves).

*Round:* A round consists of a Draw phase, a Deployment phase, a Combat phase, and a Circle phase. Cleanup is then performed before the start of a new round.

*Top King:* The King at the topmost position of the Circle.

## Table of Lords

Lord	When	Effect
0. The Fool	At the beginning of the Combat Phase.	The army with the lower value wins, instead of the army with the higher value. (The Circle Phase proceeds as normal).
I. The Magician	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	Switch a King of your choice with one that is immediately adjacent to him (but not opposite).
II. The High Priestess	Immediately when revealed	The other player must take the Lord they've revealed back into their hand and play their other Lord instead. <b>Treat this card as if it has a Lord Initiative of XXII (22).</b>
III. The Empress	Immediately when revealed	Negate the opponent's Lord's effect. <b>Treat this card as if it has a Lord Initiative of XXIII (23).</b>
IV. The Emperor	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	Cards in the suit of the topmost King can now be used to eliminate cards in the suit of the <b>two</b> Kings that follow him (clockwise), as opposed to just the one immediately following him (clockwise). The attacker chooses the suit, but as normal, if there is more than one applicable card, the defender chooses which is eliminated.
V. The Hierophant	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	The Circle begins at the position of your choice.
VI. The Lovers	Immediately when revealed	The round is now over, with no winner or loser, nor a draw (neither player burns a Lord). Return all armies to their owner's hands. Skip the Circle Phase. The two Lords deployed are discarded as usual.
VII. The Chariot	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	The Chariot can be used once as an army card for the purpose of eliminating another player's army card. It is suitless, and can therefore target any card of its owner's choosing. It cannot be targeted by an opponent's attack.
VIII. Strength	At the beginning of the Combat Phase.	Double the value of one of your deployed Army cards of your choice. That unit is immediately destroyed once the Combat Phase has been resolved, before proceeding to the Circle Phase.

IX. The Hermit	At the beginning of the Combat Phase.	Steal one of your opponent's deployed Army cards and add it to your army. Its value is added to your total during the Combat Phase. During the Circle Phase, it can be used to eliminate a card from your opponent's army as normal and may be eliminated. If the stolen card survives, return it to your opponent's hand during Cleanup. If it is eliminated it is added to your opponent's discard pile.
X. The Wheel of Fortune	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	Rotate the Circle of Kings by one position either clockwise or counter-clockwise.
XI. Justice	At the end of the Circle Phase	The Army with the highest number of survivors must eliminate deployed Army cards (put into the discard pile) until it is of equal size as the army with the lowest number of survivors. (The face value of the cards is not a consideration.)
XII. The Hanged Man	Immediately when revealed	The Circle Phase is performed before the Combat phase. The Combat Phase proceeds using the deployed Army cards that have survived the Circle Phase. The player who deployed The Hanged Man acts first during the Circle Phase.
XIII. Death	Immediately when revealed	The round is now over. This Combat Phase ends in a draw. As usual in draws, each player burns a Lord (pass directly from deck to discard pile, without revealing to anyone). The deployed Army cards of both players are completely eliminated.
XIV. Temperance	At the beginning of the Combat Phase.	The Combat Phase is resolved only using the values of the deployed Captains. Neither players use the rest of their army. Circle Phase will proceed as normal, using all deployed Army cards.
XV. The Devil	Immediately when revealed	The round is now over. The player who deployed the Devil automatically wins the Combat Phase. All of their deployed Army cards are eliminated. Circle Phase is skipped.
XVI. The Tower	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	Remove from the Circle any King of your choice except the top King. The deployed Army cards of the removed King's suit cannot be used or eliminated in this Circle Phase. Each remaining King's suit affects the suit of the next King clockwise. The removed King returns to his original position during Cleanup.
XVII. The Star	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	During this Circle Phase, a Circle Action can eliminate two cards of the applicable suit, instead of just one. This applies to both players.
XVIII. The Moon	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	The top King and the bottom King swap positions and remain there.



XIX. The Sun	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	The Kings at the right and left of the Circle swap positions and remain there.
XX. The Last Judgement	At the beginning of the Circle Phase.	Remove the Four Kings from the table. Shuffle them together, and lay them out in a new, random order (as was done at the start of the game).
XXI. The World	At the beginning of the Combat Phase.	Eliminate all deployed Army Cards (The Captain is part of the Army). Players then deploy a number of Army cards from their Army deck equal to the number of Army cards that have just been eliminated from their Army Zone.