

# Underleague – Game Rules

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**Players:** 2-5

**Game Time:** Approx. 45 minutes (+15 minutes per extra player above 2)

*Helgarten, a once quiet port town, has become the industrial hub of a vast empire. Ramshackle towers and factories blight the skyline, and a thick canopy of pipes and chains hangs over the cobbled streets. With the growth and expansion of the city has come a seedy underbelly – every day, pirates and smugglers import vicious creatures and fantastical beasts from across the globe, hidden among barrels of grain and sugarcane. These creatures are destined for the Helgarten Pits: in abandoned sewers and overcrowded slums, the local degenerates breed these creatures and pit them against each other in gladiatorial combat. Huge amounts of money changes hands daily on the outcome of these bouts. You are one of these breeders, and through hard-work and unscrupulous tactics, you hope to find your fortune.*

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## GAME CONTENTS

The game includes the following components:

- 250 strategy cards
- 150 creature cards, divided into 5 identical decks of 30 cards
- 25 betting tokens ('chips'), in 5 differently coloured sets of 5. Each chip says 'WIN' on one side and 'LOSE' on the other.
- 3 red 'attack' dice (a D6, a D4 and a D3) and 3 blue 'defence' dice (a D6, a D4 and a D3)

### Card Layout

Each **creature card** includes the creature's name printed at the top of the card, above the artwork. The creature's *type* is printed underneath the artwork. Underneath that is a box that describes the creature's *effect*. Each creature has three values printed on the bottom of the card. The number on the left is its '*day*' power. The number on the right is its '*night*' power. The number in the centre is its *value*.

**Strategy cards** can be either *equipment* or *scheme* cards. Both have the name of the card printed at the top. In the top right hand corner is the card's *cost*. The card's *effect* is printed below the art. Additionally, equipment cards have a *value modifier* underneath the effect.

The effects of most cards are fully explained on the cards themselves. The exception is *dominance* abilities, which appear on some creatures and can be given to creatures by some equipment. Dominance abilities take effect whenever the creature in question wins a fight where it was the attacking creature.

## SET UP

To start a game, do the following:

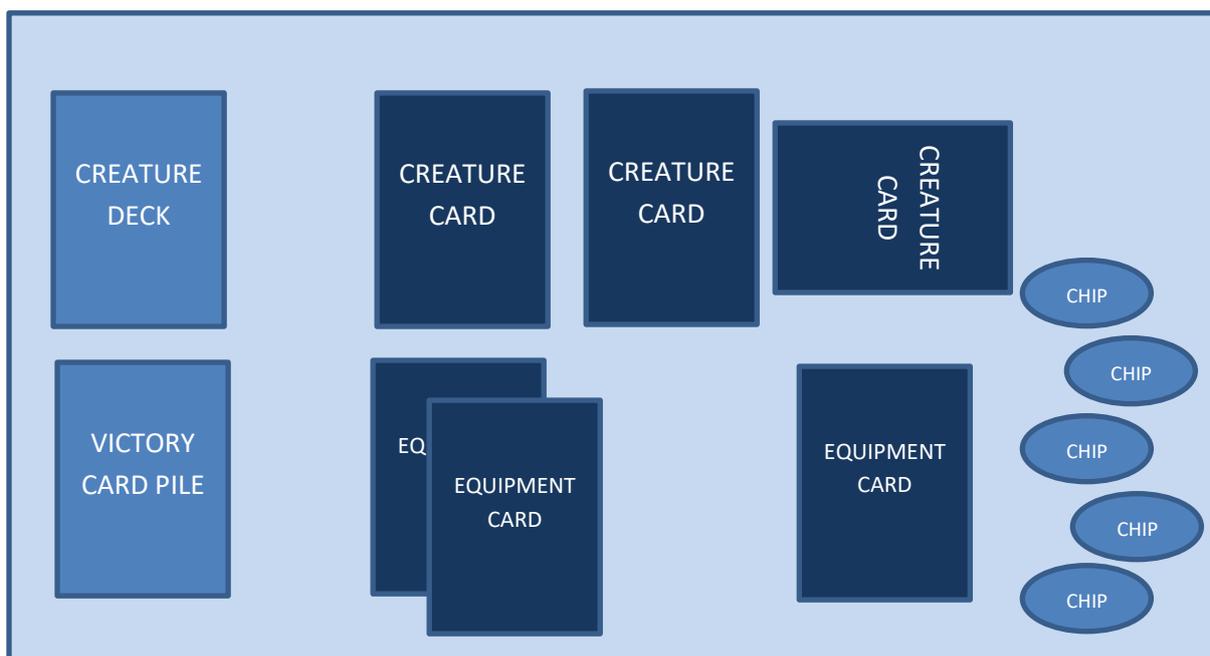
1. Shuffle the strategy deck (250 cards) and place it in the centre of the table.
2. Place the dice in the centre of the table next to the strategy deck.
3. Shuffle the creature decks (30 cards) and give one to each player.
4. Give each player a set of five betting chips.
5. Each player looks at the top three cards of his or her creature deck. They choose one of those cards and put it face-down in front of them, putting the other two on the bottom of their creature deck in any order. They repeat this process two more times, so that they have three cards face-down in front of them.
6. Each player simultaneously turns these cards face-up. These will be their starting stables of creatures.

## Game Layout

During the game, the strategy deck remains in the middle of the table. A shared discard pile will form next to the strategy deck. Each player will have a creature deck in front of them at all times, and next to their creature deck they will accumulate a pile of 'victory cards' (face-down strategy cards). They will also have at all times three face up creature cards (their 'stable' of creatures) in front of them. Creatures may have equipment attached to them – these are placed underneath the creature they are attached to. Betting chips will always either be in a player's 'pool' (in front of them) or on the win/lose spaces of creatures in play. They will also have a hand of cards, which should not be visible to other players.

Creatures can be **uncommitted** or **committed**. Uncommitted creatures are aligned vertically; committed creatures are turned horizontal. Committed creatures automatically become uncommitted at the start of each round.

This diagram shows what each player's play space might look like in the middle of a game (not including cards in hand):



## PLAYING THE GAME

### Objective

The aim of the game is to be the first to accrue 20 victory points. Your total victory points are calculated as follows:

*The total value of your stable of creatures (modified by any equipment attached to them) + the number of victory cards in your victory card pile*

Victory cards are primarily collected by winning challenges – when a player ‘takes a victory card’, they should take the top card of the strategy deck and place it facedown in their victory card pile, without looking at it. Victory points (victory cards and creature values) are counted and announced in the pre-season phase of each round. The game ends when one player starts a pre-season phase with at least 20 victory points; that player is declared the winner. If multiple players have 20 or more victory points at the start of a pre-season phase, the player with the most points wins the game. If there is a tie, then each tied player counts the cards in their hand and the player with the most cards is the winner. If no player has more cards in hand, then the game is a draw.

### Round Structure

Each game is made up of a number of rounds. Rounds are divided into phases, and in each phase players take turns taking various actions. If at any point in a phase two players are required to make a decision simultaneously or are required to take an action (for instance, if both the attacking and defending creatures may re-roll a dice during combat), then ***the player whose turn it is always makes their decision first***. If a player would have multiple choices to make simultaneously or multiple actions to perform (for example, if one of their creatures wins a challenge and they have multiple equipment attached to it that trigger effects when that creature does so) then they may choose the order in which to make those choices or perform those actions.

If at any point a player would draw a card while they have eight cards in hand, they do not draw a card; ***no player may have more than eight cards in their hand at any given moment***.

***When the last card from the strategy deck is drawn, or if you are instructed to reveal or look at a card from an empty deck, turn the discard pile face-down and shuffle it to create a new strategy deck.***

Each round has three phases:

1. Pre-Season Phase
2. Betting Phase
3. Combat Phase

### Pre-Season Phase

At the beginning of the pre-season phase, each player works out their current victory point total: they add up the value of all of their creatures, modified by any equipment attached to them, and the

number of face-down victory cards they have in front of them. If any player has 20 victory points or more, or if there are no cards in the strategy deck and the discard pile, the game immediately ends and the player with the most points is declared the winner. If two or more players are tied, then the winner is the player with the most cards in their hand. If they are still tied, the game is a draw.

If no player has 20 or more victory points, then the round proceeds as usual. The player with the lowest victory point total is declared the **first player** for the round. If two or more players are tied for lowest victory point total, the first player is the one with the fewest cards in hand. If there is still a tie, determine a first player randomly from among those tied.

If it is the first round of the game, each player, starting with the first player and moving clockwise around the table, draws five cards.

If it is not the first round of the game, then each player, starting with the first player and moving clockwise, performs the following actions:

1. They uncommit any committed creatures in their stable (by turning them from horizontally aligned to vertically aligned).
2. They draw cards from the strategy deck equal to the number of chips in their pool. These cards go into their hand.
3. **If they control three creatures of the same type** (beast, construct or spirit), they draw an extra strategy card.
4. They collect any of their chips not currently in their chip pool (i.e. chips that were placed on creatures in the previous betting phase but not collected during the round) and add them to their chip pool (so that they have five chips in their pool).
5. They choose to either **invest in strategies** or **transfer a creature**.
  - a. If they invest in strategies, they draw an additional two strategies from the strategy deck.
  - b. If they transfer a creature, they choose one of their creatures in play. Any equipment attached to that creature goes to the discard pile. Then they put that creature on the bottom of their creature deck and look at the top three cards of that deck. They choose one and put it face-up in front of them where the previous creature was. The other two cards go to the bottom of the creature deck. Any chips that were placed on the original creature are now placed on the new creature.

*Note that some strategy cards or creature cards have effects that can cause creatures to be transferred during other phases. This works in exactly the same way as transferring during the pre-season phase – betting chips attached to the original creature remain attached to its replacement, but equipment cards attached to the original creature are discarded (unless the card causing the transfer says otherwise).*

Play proceeds clockwise until every player has had a turn in the pre-season phase. Then, the game proceeds to the betting phase.

## Betting Phase

As with the pre-season phase, the first player for the round starts the betting phase. That player takes one of their betting chips and chooses any creature in play (theirs or another player's). Then, they must put that betting chip on top of that creature with either the 'WIN' or the 'LOSE' side showing – in effect, they are gambling on that creature to win or to lose a fight in the subsequent combat phase.

Once the first player has placed one chip, the player to their left does the same. Players continue taking turns placing chips, going clockwise around the table, until every player has placed all five of their chips.

The only restriction when placing chips is that you may not place a chip on a creature that you have already placed a chip on this round; your five chips must be on five different creatures.

When every player has placed all five of their chips, the game moves to the combat phase.

## Combat Phase

Starting again with the first player, each player takes a **combat turn**. During each of your combat turns you may take the following actions:

- Make a challenge
- Play a strategy card

During your combat turn, you may make up to one challenge and play up to one strategy card. You do not have to take these actions. You may do one, both or neither. Although each player may only make one challenge and play one strategy card per combat turn, ***there is no limit to the amount of combat turns they can take in a round – play passes around the table continuously until a full circuit is completed with all players electing (or being unable) to make any challenges or play any strategy cards.***

### Making a Challenge

To make a challenge, do the following:

1. Choose one of your uncommitted creatures. Commit it by turning it sideways. Your creature is the attacking creature.
2. Choose any uncommitted creature controlled by one of your opponents. This will be the defending creature.
3. The **defending player** chooses day or night.
4. Each player takes a number of dice equal to their creature's day or night power, depending on the type of fight the defending player has chosen.
  - If a player is rolling one die, they take the D6.
  - If a player is rolling two dice, they take the D6 and the D4.
  - If a player is rolling three dice, they take the D6, the D4 and the D3.
5. Each player rolls their dice. The sum of all the numbers on the dice is their creature's **combat total**.

6. Each player, starting with the active player, declares which dice they will re-roll if they are entitled to any re-rolls (*e.g. if the creature they are attacking/defending with is equipped with a card that allows them to re-roll a die*).
  - All re-rolls are taken simultaneously, and no dice may be re-rolled more than once.
7. The player with the highest combat total is declared the winner. In the event of a tie, the defending creature wins.
  - ***If the attacking player wins:***
    - i. Anyone who had bet on the attacking creature winning or the defending creature losing removes their chips from the creature in question and returns them to their chip pool.
    - ii. The defending creature is committed (both creatures involved in the challenge should now be committed).
    - iii. **The attacking player takes a victory card.** To do this, they take the top card of the strategy deck and place it face down (without looking at it) on their victory card pile.
  - ***If the defending player wins:***
    - i. Anyone who had bet on the attacking creature losing or the defending creature winning removes their chips from the creature in question and returns them to their chip pool.
    - ii. The defending creature is **not** committed (only the attacking creature should now be committed).
    - iii. **No player takes a victory card.**
8. If the attacking creature won the fight, any **dominance** abilities now resolve. If the attacking player would have multiple dominance abilities resolve, they choose the order in which to apply them.
9. Resolve any other effects that would occur due to the outcome of the fight.

*Dominance abilities appear on some creatures, and can be given to others via some equipment cards. All dominance abilities work the same way: they describe an action to be performed when and only when the creature wins a fight **where it was the attacking creature**.*

### Playing a Strategy Card

As well as making a challenge, you may also play a strategy card on your combat turn. You may only play one strategy card per combat turn. You have two opportunities to play equipment cards:

1. Before you choose whether to make a challenge.
2. After the resolution of a challenge.

You have five opportunities to play scheme cards:

1. Before you choose whether to make a challenge.
2. After the defending player chooses the type of fight, but before dice have been rolled.
3. After dice have been rolled, but **before** re-rolls have been declared.
4. After you and the defending player have re-rolled dice, but **before** a winner of the challenge has been declared.
5. After the resolution of a challenge.

Note that some scheme cards have additional timing restrictions. These are spelled out on the cards themselves.

To play a strategy card, you must pay its cost. Each strategy card has a numerical cost written on it in the top right hand corner: you must pay this cost by discarding that number of other strategies from your hand. Put cards discarded this way into the communal discard pile face up.

If your strategy is an equipment, you must choose a creature as you play it. Put it underneath that creature; it is attached to that creature, and takes effect immediately. If your strategy is a scheme, then immediately carry out the instructions on the card. Note that equipment cards have value modifiers on them. This affects the value of the creature they are attached to, and needs to be taken into account when calculating victory point totals at the start of the pre-season phase.

When you have both made a challenge and played a strategy card (or have decided not to take either of these actions) you have finished your combat turn. Then the player to your left takes their combat turn.

Players continue taking combat turns, again going clockwise around the table, until an entire loop of the table is completed with no-one playing any strategies or making any challenges. At that point, the combat phase ends and with it the entire round. Then the pre-season phase of the next round begins immediately.

## ALTERNATIVE COMPETITIVE RULES

Instead of using the pre-constructed creature and strategy card decks, players may build their own decks. The game works in exactly the same way, except that each player has an individual strategy card deck and an individual discard pile. If a card that started in Player A’s deck ever goes to Player B (either by being attached to one of Player B’s creatures or by being added to Player B’s hand by a card effect) and would be discarded, it is discarded back to Player A’s discard pile.

The base game set contains all the cards needed to construct one copy of any possible competitive deck.

### Deck Construction Rules

#### Creature Deck

Your creature deck must contain 30 cards exactly. You may include no more than 2 copies of any one creature.

#### Strategy Deck

Your strategy deck must contain 70 cards exactly. The number of copies of a card you can include is determined by its cost, as illustrated by the following table:

Cost	Limit
0, 1 or 2	5 copies
3	3 copies
4	1 copy

## ALTERNATIVE DRAFT LEAGUE RULES

*Underleague* may also be played in draft mode. In this version of the game, players begin by drafting decks of cards and then play against each other over several games to determine a league champion. As with the competitive rules, these games will use separate strategy decks for each player.

### The Draft

#### Setting up the Draft

The base game set contains all the cards necessary to support a draft of up to 5 players. During the draft, players will assemble a pool of cards such that by the end of it, they will have a creature deck of 30 cards and a strategy deck of 50 cards. Players play with all the cards that they draft.

To set-up the draft, do the following:

- Divide the strategy deck into piles of differently costed cards, and shuffle each pile so that you have a face-down pile of cards that cost 0, a pile of cards that cost 1, a pile of cards that cost 2, etc.
- Shuffle together a number of creature decks from the base game equal to the number of players in the draft, creating a single deck. For example, in a 3 player draft you would shuffle together 3 creature decks, creating a deck of 90 cards containing exactly 3 copies of each creature in the base game.
- Randomly determine an order of players for the draft and seat the players in that order going clockwise from the first player.
- Give each player one betting chip.

Once these decks have been set-up, each player, starting with the first and moving clockwise, deals themselves a starting pool of 30 strategy cards. To do this, they deal cards from the piles of differently costed cards according to the following table:

Cost	Cards Dealt
0	10 cards
1	7 cards
2	7 cards
3	5 cards
4	1 card

After they have taken their starting cards, each player may look at their pool, but should keep these cards face down in front of them in a single pile so that other players cannot see them.

Once each player has had a chance to look at their starting pools, shuffle all of the strategy cards back into a single pile. You should now have a pile of strategy cards (250 – 30 per player) and a pile of creature cards (30 per player) in the centre of the table; each player should have a facedown pile of 30 cards in front of them; and each player should have a single betting chip.

#### Drafting Decks

The first player then deals cards out from the central creature deck to create a 3\*3 grid of face-up creature cards in the middle of the table. They should deal starting with the top left hand corner of

the grid, then finish that row moving left to right, then moving on to the leftmost card of the second row, and so on.

Then they deal out strategy cards such that each edge card at the edge of the creature deck has a face-up strategy card adjacent to it (i.e. they are expanding the square but without the corners). They should start from the top left creature card and work their way around clockwise.

Once they have finished dealing cards out, the grid in the centre of the table should look like this:

	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	
<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>
<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>
<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>CREATURE CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>
	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	<b>STRATEGY CARD</b>	

Once the cards have been laid out as above, players take turns drafting. Again, this begins with first player and then proceeds clockwise around the table. To draft cards, a player chooses any row or column of creature cards and the two strategy cards adjacent to that row or column. They then take those cards (3 creature cards and 2 strategy cards) and add them to their facedown pool. They, and only they, may look at their pool of drafted cards at any time.

Once a player has taken a row or column of cards, they then replace that row or column by dealing out creature cards and then strategy cards to replace the missing ones. Cards should always be dealt to the missing spaces from left to right and from top to bottom. (Players should only do this if the creature deck still has cards remaining in it. If there are no cards left in the creature deck, they should not replace the creature or strategy cards they have drafted).

Additionally, once (and only once) during the draft, each player may elect to ‘double pick’ after they have dealt replacement cards after their pick, but before the player to their left has made a pick. To do this, they should return their betting chip to the centre of the table, to indicate that they have used their ‘double pick’. Then they may take another row or column of cards, and replace them with new cards from the strategy and creature decks. Play then proceeds to their left as normal.

Each player must draft a total of 30 creature cards (i.e. 10 picks). Once a player has 30 creature cards in their pool, they may not take any more picks, and are skipped over if the draft round is still proceeding.

Once everyone has made 10 picks, the draft ends. Every player should now have in front of them 30 creature cards and 50 strategy cards (30 from their starting pool and 20 from the draft).

## The League

Once everyone has drafted their decks, they will then compete using those decks and the standard *Underleague* rules to determine a winner. The structure of the league is dependent on the number of players:

**For 2 players**, the players should play a series of two-player games until 1 player has 2 victories (this will ordinarily be a 'best of three', but not necessarily as games can result in a draw).

**For 3 players**, the players should play a series of three-player games until 1 player has 2 victories.

**For 4 players**, the players should randomly pair up against each other so that there are 2 two-player games. If either of those games results in a draw, they should be replayed. The winners of these two games should then play each other to determine a winner of the league, while the losers should also play to determine 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place finishers.

**For 5 players**, the players should play one five-player game, with the winner of that game being declared the winner of the league.

Alternative league structures may be used provided that all players agree.

Additional copies of *Underleague* may allow you to draft with more than 5 players; you just need to make sure that the starting creature pile contains 30 cards per player and the starting strategy pile contains 50 cards per player. When drafting with more than 5 players, it is recommended that you divide the group into two leagues as evenly sized as possible after the draft is completed – and then have the winner of each league play each other to determine an overall winner. For example, in a group of 7 you should divide into a league of 3 and a league of 4, and then have the winners of each league play each other.