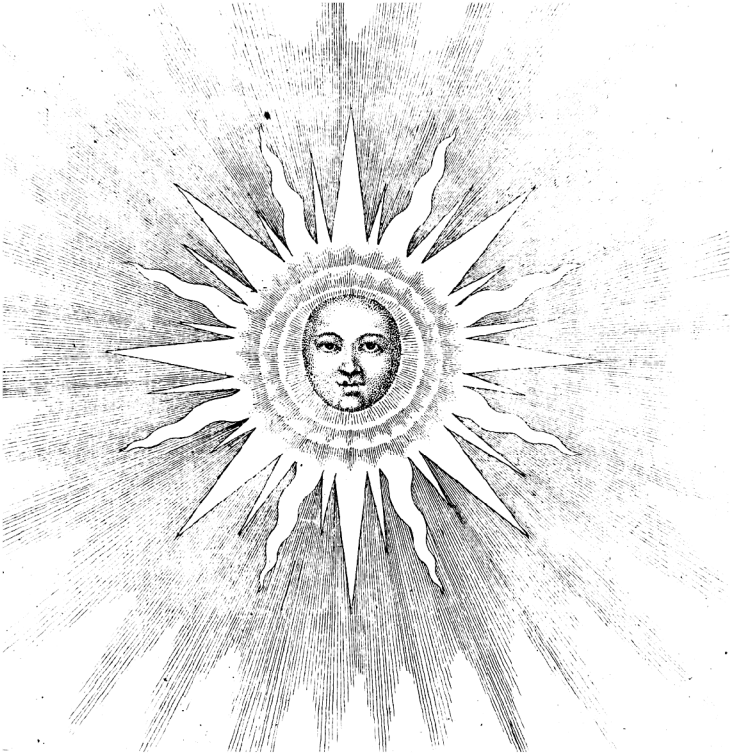
Babylon Dialectic

OFFICIAL RULES



The Rulebook

HOW TO PLAY



A HOUDINI MAGAZINE GAME

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WELCOME

Two armies, one war

Babylon Dialectic is a card game of history. You lead a famous army, set your cards, and bring the enemy's DP to zero.

This booklet holds the complete rules, the card anatomy, and a glossary of every icon and keyword. The one-sheet quick reference zine covers turns at a glance.

In the box: a deck of 25, a Leader, a Soldier card, and the enemy across the table.



AT A GLANCE

RULE	LIMIT
Starting DP	15
Hand size	4 cards
Front line	5 units
Tokens	3, outside the front line
Command row	4 cards
Support row	5 cards, up to 3 face-up supplies
Musters on turn one	2 Soldiers
Deck (Campaign)	40 to 46 cards, up to 3 copies
Valhalla march back	2 Soldiers a turn

The goal

Each side starts with **15 DP**. Bring the enemy's DP to zero to win. You lose if yours reaches zero first.

Setting up

- Each army is led by its **Leader**, who starts the battle already in play in your command row.
- You draw a hand of **4 cards** from your deck.
- The Soldiers in your deck start in your **barracks**, not in the pile you draw from.
- Each player musters **two Soldiers** on their first turn. The first player skips the first draw.

The battlefield

- **Front line:** soldiers and troops share it, up to 5. This is the wall the enemy has to break.
- **Tokens:** some cards create tokens. A token takes no front line place, you can have 3, any attack destroys it, and it never goes to Valhalla. You cannot spend a token as a cost, whether the cost asks for Soldiers or for cards from your field. In every other way a token counts as a Soldier, so cards and boosts that affect Soldiers affect it.
- **Command row:** your Leader and generals, up to 4.
- **Support row:** face-down cards, supplies and Standing tactics, up to 5. At most 3 of them can be face-up supplies.
- Each player's Deck, Valhalla and Erased piles sit beside their front line: yours on the right, the enemy's on the left. Look through a pile to look through it.

Your turn

You draw one card as your turn begins. The player who goes first skips this draw on the first turn. Your hand holds at most **4 cards**. A card drawn while your hand is full is lost to Valhalla, so requisitioning into a full hand throws the card away. Your turn then runs through three phases, shown on the bar above your front line.

- **Command:** muster soldiers, play cards, set cards face down and use abilities. **Requisition:** any muster can be spent drawing a card instead.
- **Musters each turn:** 1 (2 on your first turn), plus 1 for each supply you have in play, plus any card effects. The Muster button shows how many you have left this turn. Your front line holds 5 units, Soldiers included, so a full line stops mustering.
- **War:** your units attack. Abilities and Quick tactics can still be used, but no other cards are played and no soldiers are mustered.
- **Aftermath:** play cards, set cards, use abilities and muster or requisition with anything you have left, but no more attacks.
- **Closing:** happens on its own when you end your turn. First, any effect that says "During your Closing" takes place. Then, if your hand holds more than 4 cards, you choose cards to discard to Valhalla until it holds 4. Last, effects that last "until the end of this turn" end. Your hand can hold more than 4 during your turn. The limit counts only at Closing.

The turn button moves you to the next phase. It ends your turn once nothing is left to do in the phases ahead.

If your deck is empty when you should draw, you lose 2 DP instead.

Paying for cards

- Most cards cost **soldiers**. You pay by spending soldiers from your front line. You choose which ones to spend when they differ (one is buffed, equipped, hurt or ready to attack). The game spends them for you when they are all alike.
- If you have a **supply** in play, its counters are spent first, one counter for each soldier the cost asks for. The supply is gone with its last counter. A supply set face down holds no counters until you turn it up.
- Some cards cost **DP** instead. You can never pay DP that would bring you to zero.
- **Conscript:** once per turn, after you have used all of that turn's musters, you may discard a card you can't use to muster one more soldier.

Card types

Every card belongs to one of four categories, and each category has its own frame color.

- **Unit** (orange frame, gold for Leaders): a person, beast or war machine that fights. Every unit has exactly one **role**, such as Cavalry, Gunner or Spy, and an **era**, from Antiquity to Modern. Its rank decides where it goes:
  - **Leader:** starts in play. Its effects are always on. Leaders never attack and deal no damage back when attacked. You lose DP equal to the number in its gold seal if your Leader is destroyed.
  - **General:** goes to your command row. Can attack. A destroyed General costs you its DP value too.
  - **Troop:** fights on the front line. Troops never pay for cards and cannot carry Equipment.
- **Soldier** (khaki frame): the basic resource unit. Every army's Soldiers work the same way; only the name and the art change. They come from your barracks, hold the front line and are the only cards that pay Soldier costs. Soldiers have no role. Each has an era, which has no effect on play.
- **Tactic** (green frame): every card you play on your own turn. There are five kinds:
  - **Tactic:** happens once, then goes to Valhalla.
  - **Standing tactic:** stays face up in your support row.
  - **Quick tactic:** a small combat trick. Play it from your hand on your own turn, even during War. Or set it face down, and from your next turn on use it on either turn: on your own, or when an enemy attacks.
  - **Supply:** enters with counters, and its counters are always spent before your Soldiers. While it is in play you muster 1 more Soldier each turn. The supply is gone with its last counter.
  - **Equipment:** goes on one of your Soldiers, two at most, and is lost when that Soldier leaves play.
- **Trap** (crimson frame): always set face down first, never played straight from your hand. Setting a trap is free; any cost on it is paid when it springs. You can't spring a trap the turn you set it. A trap that starts with **When** springs only when that happens on your opponent's turn. A trap that starts with **Target** can be sprung during your own Command or Aftermath phase, or when an enemy attacks, aimed at the attacker.

Card emblems

Every card carries a medallion on the lower edge of its picture. The one on the left shows what kind of card it is. A unit also carries its role on the right. On the battlefield, where cards are small, the role (or the kind, for cards without one) is the medallion you see.

Leader	General	Troop
Soldier	Tactic	Quick tactic
Standing tactic	Supply	Equipment
Trap		

The roles:

Infantry	Cavalry	Archer
Gunner	Artillery	Sailor
Raider	Champion	Bodyguard
Strategist	Rebel	Outlaw
Spy	Saboteur	Engineer
Medic	Laborer	Mystic
Beast		

The small diamond in the lower right corner of a card's text shows its rarity: grey for Common, blue for Uncommon, gold for Rare and red for Legendary.

Setting cards

- Any card that is not a unit can be set face down in your support row during your Command or Aftermath phase. Your opponent sees only a face-down card.
- A set Tactic, Supply, Equipment or Standing tactic can be turned face up and used on any of your later turns, and its cost is paid then. Setting one hides what you hold and keeps it safe from the hand limit.
- Only traps and Quick tactics can be used on your opponent's turn, and only when they are set. Cards in your hand never answer an attack.
- A set card glows when you can use it. Tap it to read it and use it.



Attacking

- Tap a ready unit, then choose its target. Each unit attacks once per turn.
- A unit can't attack on the turn it arrives, unless it has Charge.
- While the enemy has anyone on the front line, your attacks must hit the front line. You may attack the command row or strike the enemy's DP directly once the front line is empty. A pinned unit

cannot attack on its controller's next turn, even if you never destroy it, and the pin ends after that turn. A front line made only of pinned units leaves the command row open to attack, and the DP stays out of reach until the line is empty. Ranged units can never attack DP.

- The **red seal** is War, the damage a unit deals. The **blue seal** is Fortification, the damage it can take.
- A unit you attack takes your War in damage and hits back with its own War, unless it is a Leader or your attacker is Ranged.
- Damage stays from turn to turn. A unit falls when its damage reaches its Fortification.
- An attack on DP takes DP equal to the attacker's War.

Answering attacks

When a unit attacks, the fight waits for two answers.

- **The defender answers first** with set traps whose condition fits the attack, and with set Quick tactics. They answer one card at a time and may keep answering until they let the attack through. There is no fight if an answer cancels the attack or destroys the attacker.
- **Then the attacker can answer back once** with a Quick tactic, from the hand or from a set. Then the fight happens.

Many traps name the kind of attacker they catch: a **Soldier**, a **Troop**, a **General**, or any unit.

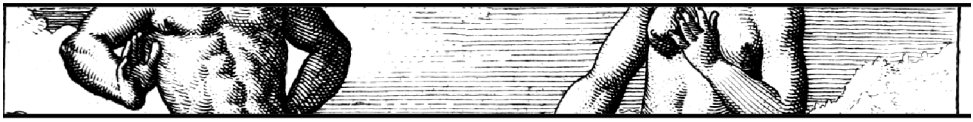
Abilities

Units marked with a gold diamond have an ability they can use once per turn, such as Black Hawk's Raid. Tap the unit and press the ability's button, then choose a target.



Valhalla and the Erased

- **Valhalla** is where every used card goes: units that fall, Soldiers that fall or are spent, tactics after they resolve, traps after they spring, broken Equipment and used-up supplies. Each player has their own, and anyone can look through either one at any time.
- Up to **2 Soldiers** march back from your Valhalla into an empty barracks at the start of your turn. Spend Soldiers faster than that and the barracks runs dry. Soldiers on the field and Soldiers that were erased do not come back this way.
- **Send** puts a card straight into Valhalla without destroying it. Nothing that happens when a unit is destroyed takes place: no Last Stand, no DP value lost, and no trap or effect that waits for a unit to be destroyed.
- **Erase** strikes a card from the record. An erased card leaves the battle for good: it does not fall, it sets off no Last Stand, it costs no DP value, and it never goes to Valhalla. Erased cards sit in a separate pile.
- Some cards ask you to erase cards from your own Valhalla to play them. Damnatio Memoriae costs 3 Soldiers erased from your Valhalla. That leaves 3 fewer Soldiers who can ever march back.



Building a deck

- In the Campaign you play your own deck: **40 to 46 cards**, Soldiers included, built from the cards you own. Up to **3 copies** of any card other than a Soldier. Cards from any army and any set can share a deck.
- Your **Leader** is chosen separately and starts in play. It does not count toward the 40 to 46.
- Choose your Soldiers in the **Barracks** window of the deck builder. You can take any number of each Soldier you hold and mix them as you like: the Soldiers of every Leader you hold, and any Soldier you pull from a pack. Every Soldier is a 1/1 with no text.
- Every card has a four-digit **passcode**, shown on its card sheet. The Deck Code button in the deck builder turns your deck into a short code you can send, and loads a code from a friend.

How card text reads

Every effect follows one plan. Read it from left to right.

When a unit your opponent controls attacks**:** Target the attacking unit**;** cancel the attack, deal 2 damage to it, and pin it.

- Before the colon is when the card can be used. This trap, Pitfall, springs when an enemy unit attacks.
- Before the semicolon is what you choose as you use it. That is nearly always a target. A cost that is not Soldiers or DP goes here too, such as "Spend 1 Soldier;". Soldier and DP costs print in the cost seal, never in the text.
- After the semicolon is what happens. All three things in this line happen.

A line can leave parts out. A line with nothing to choose has no semicolon: "When a unit your opponent controls attacks: Cancel the attack." A line with no condition starts at the choice: "Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War, until the end of this turn." A line that describes a state holds for as long as the card is in play. A Leader's "Soldiers you control gain 1 Fortification." is one.

The words that do the work

- **When** names an event. **While** names a state that holds. **If** adds a condition checked as you use the card: "if you control no front-line units".
- Only the word **Target** targets. Targets are chosen when the card is used. Effects that say "each" or name a group, such as "Soldiers you control", choose nothing. Nothing happens to a target that is gone when the result happens.
- **And** means both happen together. **Then** means in order, and the second part happens only if the first did. **Also** means the second part happens either way.
- A duration such as "until the end of this turn" always comes last. With no duration, the change lasts.
- A line that starts **Once per turn** is an ability. You use it with its button.
- **Last Stand:** happens when the unit is destroyed.
- **This card** is the card the text is printed on. "That unit" and "it" point back to the unit just named or targeted.
- Keywords print their reminder in parentheses. Unique effects are written out in full. Some units have neither, only a line of history.

If you play Yu-Gi-Oh!

This is the plan of Problem-Solving Card Text: condition, colon, cost or target, semicolon, effect. Anyone who can read that can read this. Five things differ.

- **There is no chain.** A card resolves in full the moment it is used. Only then can the next answer come. No card waits on a stack, and there are no Spell Speeds. Traps and Quick tactics are the only cards that answer an attack.
- **Unit effects are not optional.** A "When" or Last Stand effect on a unit or an Equipment happens by itself as its moment comes. There is no "you can" and no missing the timing. You choose only when to spring a trap, play a tactic or press an ability's button.
- **Costs sit in the seal.** Soldier and DP costs print in the cost seal, so the text often starts at the target. A few cards add a cost in the text, such as "Spend 1 Soldier;".
- **Damage stays.** War and Fortification stand in for ATK and DEF, but units never compare numbers. A hit puts damage on a unit, and the damage stays until the unit falls. "Deal 2 damage" adds some. "Remove 1 damage" takes some back. "Gain 1 War" raises the damage a unit deals.
- **The words move.** Valhalla is the Graveyard. To erase a card is to banish it. To send a card is to send it to the Graveyard without destroying it. DP is your life total, as Life Points are. The support row holds set cards, as the Spell and Trap Zone does. To muster is to move a Soldier from the barracks to the front line.

Terms on cards

- **Unit:** any card that fights: Soldiers, Troops, Generals and Leaders.
- **You control / your opponent controls:** cards on that player's side of the field.
- **Destroyed:** a unit whose damage reaches its Fortification, or that an effect destroys. It goes to Valhalla.
- **Spend:** pay with Soldiers. Supply counters are spent first.
- **Cancel the attack:** the attack ends with no fight. The attacker has still used its attack this turn.
- **Muster:** move a Soldier from your barracks to your front line.
- **Role:** the word under a unit's name, such as Cavalry, Outlaw or Rebel. Cards like "Cavalry you control gain 1 War" count roles.
- **Return to hand:** the unit leaves play and goes back to its owner's hand, and any Equipment on it drops. A Soldier goes back to the barracks instead.
- **Fortification and Armor:** Fortification is how much damage a unit can take. Armor is a keyword: a unit with Armor 2 takes 2 less damage from each hit.



Keywords

KEYWORD	WHAT IT DOES
Charge	This unit can attack the turn it is played.
Guard	Attacks on units you control must target a Guard unit first. Attacks on your DP are not stopped.
Ranged	This unit can attack any unit your opponent controls, past the front line. It cannot attack DP and takes no counter-damage.
Volley	When this unit attacks, it also deals N damage to each Soldier your opponent controls.
Armor	This unit takes N less damage each time it is hit.
Rally	When this unit is played, muster N Soldiers. This does not use your musters.
Veteran	When this unit survives a fight in which it dealt damage, it gains 1 War.
Plunder	When this unit damages your opponent's DP, you gain N DP.
Fear	Soldiers your opponent controls deal 1 less counter-damage to this unit.
Boarding	This unit can attack your opponent's support row, past the front line. A card it hits is destroyed.
Last Stand	This happens when this unit is destroyed.
Stratagem	This keyword does nothing by itself. Some cards make Stratagems cheaper.
Traitor	This unit changes sides when its condition is met.
Outflank	This unit can attack any unit your opponent controls or their DP, ignoring the front line and Guard.
Pierce	Damage this unit deals ignores Armor.
Sabotage	destroy a card in your opponent's support row. A face-down card is destroyed without being used.
Pin	a pinned unit cannot attack on its controller's next turn, even if you never destroy it. The pin ends after that turn. A front line made only of pinned units leaves its command row open to attack.
Erase	the card leaves the battle for good. It never goes to Valhalla, and a unit erased this way does not count as destroyed.
Send	the card goes straight to Valhalla without being destroyed. Effects that happen when a unit is destroyed, such as Last Stand, do not happen, and no DP value is lost.

Set	any card that is not a unit can be placed face down in your support row. Traps are always set first.

CARD ANATOMY

Reading a card



1. **Name.** The name of the person, place or thing.
2. **Picture.** A real engraving, painting or photograph.
3. **Kind badge.** Troop, tactic, trap and more. See Card emblems.
4. **Role badge.** Cavalry, Rebel, Outlaw. Cards can count roles.
5. **Type line.** Type, role and era.
6. **Effect text.** Keywords in bold, with their rules in italics.
7. **Rarity.** A diamond marks the rarity.
8. **Cost.** Soldiers or DP you pay to play it, top left.
9. **War and Fortification.** Bottom left and right: damage dealt and damage taken.



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FREE TO PLAY, FREE TO PRINT, FREE TO SHARE.



A HOUDINI MAGAZINE GAME

Play, build decks and print more at babylon-dialectic.neocities.org
Version 1.10 · Printed cards are 59 x 86 mm