

Run the Gauntlet

Build. Advance. Contend.
Capture.

Learn the shared game, set up the table, understand the turn, and get from a starter Deck to the first decisive contests.

GAUNTLET.RUN



Gauntlet v0.7.2 · Player's Guide

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Learn the field before you command it

Gauntlet

Player's Guide

Modular Rules Publication

VERSION 0.7.2 · 2026



TACTICAL CARD-AND-TERRITORY GAME

GAUNTLET.RUN



At the table

At the Table: Digital Tools

Keep this page handy while you play. Scan the tool that matches what you are trying to do; the short address below each code works too.



Ask the Chief Justice
gauntlet.run/rules-arbiter/
Use when:
a rule, timing question, or card interaction is unclear. Ask in ordinary language and get a player-friendly ruling grounded in the current rules.



Card Reference
gauntlet.run/card-reference/
Use when:
you need the exact current text of a card, Leader, Territory, Proposal, or other game object without searching through the rulebook.



Full Rules
gauntlet.run/rulebook/
Use when:
you want to read the complete rules directly, check a definition, or see the technical rule behind a ruling.



Deckbuilder
gauntlet.run/deckbuilder
Use when:
you are choosing or changing a Deck, checking Deckbuilding Value and legality, or starting from a recommended starter Deck.



Start Playing
gauntlet.run/start/
Use when:
someone is new to Gauntlet or needs the guided path through faction choice, Leader choice, starter Decks, and getting a game onto the table.



Start a Playtest
gauntlet.run/playtest/tracked/
Use when:
this game is a playtest. Create or join a tracked session so rules questions, results, and feedback can be connected to the game.

Begin here

Contents

·	Welcome to Gauntlet	4	7	Taking and Holding Ground	15
1	The Battlefield and How You Win	5	8	Running the Gauntlet	16
2	Cards and Your Play Area	6	9	The Six Factions	17
3	Setting Up	9	10	Building a Deck	20
4	Your Turn	10	·	Where to Go From Here	21
5	Movement	12	·	At the Table: Digital Tools	22
6	Battles	13			

Reading guide. Start with the opening sections, then use chapter headings to find the procedure you need. Exact edge cases belong in the Complete Rules.

At the table

Welcome to Gauntlet

Gauntlet is a two-player tactical card-and-territory game played across a line of six Territories.

You begin at opposite ends of the battlefield. On your turn, you can play cards, move toward or away from your opponent, and fight when you meet. Winning battles pushes your opponent back. Hold enemy ground long enough and you capture it.

Keep advancing until you **run the Gauntlet**: take control of the entire battlefield by capturing all of your opponent's Territories, or push your opponent beyond the battlefield, force them to make a **Last Stand**, and win the resulting battle.

That is the shared game. Your faction adds one more layer—its own special tools, its own way of building power or progress, a different style of play, and sometimes another way to win. Learn the shared game first, then read the short guide for the faction you are playing.

You do not need to memorize every unusual interaction before your first game. Play the normal rules in this guide, read cards as they come up, and use the Rules Arbiter or Comprehensive Rules when something exceptional needs an exact ruling.

At the table

Where to Go From Here

You now know the shared game. You do not need another general rules lesson before playing.

Use the rest of Gauntlet's rules system according to what you are trying to do:

- **Your Faction Guide** — read this before your first game with that faction. It teaches the extra layer your side adds to Gauntlet in normal player language.
- **Reference Cards** — keep these at the table. They summarize the turn, battle, and recurring faction procedures you need during play.
- **Rules Arbiter** — ask it when a card interaction or timing question actually comes up. It resolves from the complete technical rules but explains the answer in player-friendly language.
- **Comprehensive Gauntlet Rules** — use this when you want the exact technical rule, timing, definition, or interaction. It is the complete rules reference for both the shared game and all six factions.

For a first game, the recommended path is simple:

Player's Guide → your Faction Guide → Reference Cards at the table → Rules Arbiter only when needed.

Then start playing.

10 Building a Deck

Recommended starter Decks are the easiest way to learn Gauntlet. Once you are comfortable with the game, you can build your own.

Choose your faction and Leader

A game package uses exactly **one faction** and **one Leader** from that faction.

Your Leader is not part of your Deck. It is a separate component that changes how your faction plays.

Build your Deck

Your Deck must have:

- at least **30 cards**;
- no more than **60 total card value**; and
- only **Neutral cards** and cards from your chosen faction.

Add the card values printed on every card in the Deck to find its total value.

Unless a card is marked **Unique**, you may include as many copies as the available card pool permits. A Unique card is limited to **one copy** in your Deck.

A legal Deck can contain more than 30 cards as long as its total card value remains 60 or less. More cards are therefore not automatically better: they change how often you are likely to draw particular tools.

Choose your Territories

Choose exactly **three different Territory cards**.

No more than one of them may be an **Arena**.

Territories are not part of your Deck and do not count toward either the 30-card minimum or the 60-value maximum. Both players may choose the same Territory titles.

Add your faction components

Include the trackers, reference cards, supplemental cards, and other components required by your faction and Leader. Your Faction Guide identifies what you need and how to prepare it.

The online **Deckbuilder** is the easiest way to construct and validate a custom game package. It can also start from a recommended Deck and let you modify it once you understand what you want to change.

1 The Battlefield and How You Win

The Gauntlet

The battlefield is called the **Gauntlet**. It is a single line of six Territory cards: three contributed by you and three by your opponent.

Each player begins on the Territory at their own end. From your point of view, **forward** is always toward your opponent's end and **backward** is always toward your own.

Your Player Token shows where you are. A Territory's orientation shows who controls it: a Territory faces the player who controls it.

At the beginning of the game, you control your three Territories and your opponent controls theirs. As the game progresses, battles move the Player Tokens back and forth while captured Territories move the boundary between the two sides.

Running the Gauntlet

Every faction can win the same way: **run the Gauntlet**.

You win immediately if you do either of these:

1. **Control the entire Gauntlet** by capturing your opponent's Territories in order until your Front Line spans the whole battlefield.
2. **Force your opponent to make a Last Stand and win the resulting battle** after pushing them beyond their end of the battlefield.

Some factions also have an additional way to win. You will learn those in the faction overviews and in your own Faction Guide.

For now, remember the basic objective:

Move forward. Win battles. Hold enemy ground. Capture your way to the far end.

2 Cards and Your Play Area

Your Deck gives you tools both on your turn and during battles. Most cards can be useful in more than one way, so the same card may help you advance your plan now or be saved for a later fight.

Your normal card areas

Keep these areas separate:

- **Draw Pile** — your face-down Deck. Draw from the top.
- **Hand** — the private cards you are holding. Your normal Hand limit is three at the end of your turn.
- **Discard Pile** — face-up cards that can return to circulation. If your Draw Pile cannot complete a draw, shuffle your Discard Pile to make a new Draw Pile and continue drawing.
- **Graveyard** — face-up cards that are normally out of circulation. They are not reshuffled unless an effect specifically moves them.
- **Asset Bank** — your face-up banked Assets.

Battles temporarily create three more areas: your **Gambit**, your **Reserve**, and your **Tactic**. Chapter 6 explains them.

THE SIX FACTIONS • CONTINUED



Mystics — Complete Rites and protect the Ritual

Mystics build toward a sequence of **Rites**, using Arcane cards and effects that manipulate sacrifice, recovery, conversion, and the Graveyard. Their progression becomes more powerful as Rites are completed.

After completing all three selected Rites, the Mystics can attempt the **Ritual of Ascension**. Completing that Ritual wins the game.

What to watch for: Their important progress is visible in their Rites, not just in their Hand or battlefield position. Pressure at the right moment can matter as much as simply gaining ground.

- **Alchemist** — sacrifice sequencing and conversion.
- **Spirit Walker** — Ritual endurance and protection.



Inquisition — Win by permanent attrition

The Inquisition wants opposing cards to leave normal circulation. It builds **Conviction**, sends cards to the **Graveyard**, and spends Conviction on **Purges** that strip away the opponent's resources.

Its alternate victory, **Purification**, occurs when the opponent can no longer make their normal start-of-turn draw because both their Draw Pile and Discard Pile are empty.

What to watch for: Against the Inquisition, the Graveyard matters more than usual. Cards lost there are not part of the normal recycle loop, so repeated attrition can become a direct threat to the game itself.

- **Grand Inquisitor** — judgment and efficient Purges.
- **Witch Hunter** — defense, retaliation, and pursuit.

Before playing a faction for the first time, read that faction's guide. It teaches how these systems actually work without requiring your opponent to learn them too.

THE SIX FACTIONS · CONTINUED



Financiers — Turn wealth into control

Financiers build **Capital**, develop a **Treasury**, and acquire **Deeds** to Territories. As their holdings grow, their economy gives them more ways to spend for battlefield and strategic advantage.

Their alternate victory, **Controlling Interest**, is achieved by owning the Deeds to every Territory currently in the Gauntlet.

Owning a Deed is not the same as controlling its Territory; the Financiers are playing an economic map alongside the territorial one.

What to watch for: Their position can improve even when the Front Line does not. Keep an eye on their Capital, Treasury, and Deed ownership rather than judging the game only by who controls more Territories.

- **Banker** — collateral and flexible financing.
- **Executive** — aggressive acquisition and control.



Intelligence — Build toward a hidden operation

Intelligence works through **Missions**. Completing ordinary Missions builds **Operation Progress** and earns **Intel**. At the start of each turn, the Intelligence player gains Intel equal to their Operation Progress, so completed Missions keep paying off. Surveillance and interference tools help it learn about and disrupt the opponent's plans.

Its alternate victory is to prepare and complete a **Special Operation** once its operation has progressed far enough.

What to watch for: Not all of an Intelligence player's progress is obvious from battlefield position. A seemingly ordinary sequence of plays may be satisfying a Mission or preparing a later Special Operation.

- **Ranger** — Territory effects and field operations.
- **Spymaster** — Mission tempo and coordination.

CARDS AND YOUR PLAY AREA · CONTINUED

Card anatomy

Most ordinary playable cards use the same frame. These are the parts you will refer to most often:



Unbroken Ranks shown with the current production card renderer.

1. **Card name** — The card's title.
2. **Card value** — Used for Deck construction and whenever an effect refers to a card's value.
3. **Faction identity** — The border and parchment treatment identify the card's faction. Neutral cards use ivory.
4. **Artwork** — The card's illustration.
5. **Effect heading** — Names the effect's role or timing.
6. **Effect text** — Resolve only the printed effect being used unless a rule says otherwise.
7. **Metadata footer** — Shows faction at left, **Unique** in the center when applicable, and the rules version at right.

Effect headings

An effect heading tells you how that part of the card is used. The shared headings you will see most often are:

- **Action** — play the card from your Hand by spending your Action at a legal time.
- **Asset** — bank the card face up so its Asset effect can remain available. Banking an Asset normally costs your Action.
- **Gambit** — risk the card from your Hand during a battle.
- **Tactic** — use the card from your temporary Reserve during a battle.
- **Gambit/Tactic** — the card may be used in either of those battle roles.

CARDS AND YOUR PLAY AREA • CONTINUED

- **Reaction** — use the effect when its trigger happens. It does not use your normal Action unless the card says otherwise. Follow the card for where it comes from, when to use it, and where it goes afterward.
- **Overlay** — attach the card to a Territory as instructed. While exposed, its Overlay effect temporarily replaces the effect immediately beneath it.

Factions also introduce some headings of their own. Follow the card and the relevant Faction Guide when one appears; you do not need to learn those faction systems to understand the shared game.

Only the effect you are using applies. A card used as a Gambit does not also perform its Action or Asset effect just because those effects are printed on the same card.

**ARCANE TRAIT MARK**

Some playable cards show the Mystics sigil immediately before the card name. The symbol marks the **Arcane** trait; its color follows the card's faction identity.

Assets

To **bank** an Asset, spend your Action and play an eligible Asset from your Hand face up into your Asset Bank. Its Asset effect then works according to the text on the card.

Your normal Asset limit is the number of Territories you control. If you are already at that limit when banking a new Asset, you may discard one of your existing Assets to make room. If your limit later falls below the number you have banked, discard Assets until you are within the limit again.

9 The Six Factions

Every faction plays the shared game you have just learned. Each adds its own resource or progression system, its own tools, and its own Leaders. Five factions also add another way to win.

You only need to learn how to **operate** the faction you are playing. You should, however, know what your opponent's faction is trying to accomplish so its public components and major decisions make sense.

✂ Military — Win the battlefield

The Military is the faction closest to the shared game. It builds **Command** through battle success and spends it on the Orders supplied by its Leader. Its tools emphasize movement, combat, pressure, defense, and territorial control.

The Military has no separate alternate victory: it wins by running the Gauntlet better than its opponent.

What to watch for: A Military player can turn one battle win into momentum. Do not assume a battle ending means their movement or positional pressure is finished.

- **General** — movement and attack.
- **Commandant** — defense and control.

🌿 Diplomats — Make every battle a negotiation

Diplomats build and stake **Influence**, present **Proposals**, and can offer Terms before a battle fully develops. Agreements can move them toward a **Peace Treaty**, while refusing them can create other consequences.

Their alternate victory is to ratify enough different Proposals to complete the Peace Treaty.

What to watch for: A battle against the Diplomats may become a choice before it becomes a fight. Consider not only whether you can win the battle, but what accepting or refusing their offer gives each side.

- **Ambassador** — agreement and card flow.
- **Senator** — risk management and resilience.

8 Running the Gauntlet

There are two shared ways to finish the game. Both count as **running the Gauntlet**.

Route 1: Control the entire Gauntlet

Keep advancing your Front Line by capturing your opponent's Territories in order. Because your Front Line must remain unbroken, you cannot skip ahead and win by capturing only the far-end Territory.

When your Front Line spans all six Territories, you control the entire Gauntlet and win immediately.

This is the straightforward territorial route: attack, occupy, survive until Capture, and repeat.

Route 2: Force your opponent to make a Last Stand

You can also win before controlling the entire Gauntlet.

If your opponent loses a battle while defending the Territory at their own end, they retreat **beyond the Gauntlet**. You remain on their final Territory, occupying it if they still control it.

To attack them again beyond the end, you need a **new legal movement sequence**. The movement that started the previous battle ended when that battle began, so unused movement cannot simply carry through it.

If a later rule or effect lets you Advance beyond the opponent's end while they are there, you force your opponent to make a **Last Stand**.

A Last Stand is resolved as a battle, with two important advantages for the defender:

- the defender normally has **Defensive Edge**; and
- the defender separately adds **+1 to their battle total**.

If the attacker wins that battle, the attacker immediately runs the Gauntlet and wins the game.

You do **not** have to control the entire Gauntlet—or even control or capture the opponent's final Territory—before forcing your opponent to make a Last Stand. The territorial route and Last Stand route are two independent ways to finish the same shared objective.

3 Setting Up

For your first games, use a recommended starter package. Each player needs:

- one faction and one of its Leaders;
- one 30-card starter Deck;
- three different Territories;
- one Player Token;
- one six-sided die; and
- any trackers, reference cards, or other components used by that faction.

Then set up in this order.

1. Prepare your faction

Place your Leader, trackers, reference cards, and any other faction components in front of you. Follow any faction setup instructions before shuffling your Deck.

2. Choose your opening Hand

Shuffle your Deck to make your Draw Pile. Draw four cards.

Choose one of those four cards and place it face up in your Discard Pile. Keep the other three as your opening Hand.

3. Arrange your Territories

After seeing your opening Hand and discard, secretly arrange your three Territories in a line facing you.

When both players are ready, join the two three-Territory lines end to end to form the six-Territory Gauntlet, then reveal all six Territories.

4. Take your starting positions

Place your Player Token on the Territory at your own end of the Gauntlet. This starting placement is not movement and does not count as entering that Territory.

5. Choose the first player

Each player rolls one die. Higher roll takes the first turn; reroll ties.

You are ready to play.

4 Your Turn

Every normal turn follows the same six-part rhythm:

Capture → Draw → Opening → Movement → Denouement → Cleanup

The names **Opening** and **Denouement** are just the two places where you can normally spend your Action: before Movement or after it. You get **one Action for the entire turn**.

So after Capture and Draw, the middle of most turns is simply:

Act, then move — or move, then act.

Capture

First, capture enemy ground if you are eligible. Chapter 7 explains when that happens.

Draw

Draw one card.

Opening

Opening is your chance to take your Action before you move.

An Action is usually one of these:

- play a card from your Hand for its **Action** effect;
- bank a card from your Hand as an **Asset**;
- use a faction feature or Leader ability marked **1 Action**; or
- discard one Asset you control.

You may also choose to do nothing and save your Action for Denouement.

Movement

Choose to **Advance**, **Hold**, or **Fall Back**. If your movement enters your opponent's position, fight the battle immediately.

Denouement

After Movement and any battle are finished, you may take your Action here if you did not use it during Opening.

Cleanup

Resolve end-of-turn effects, then discard from your Hand until you have no more than three cards. Any unused Action is lost when the turn ends.

7 Taking and Holding Ground

Winning a battle can put your token deep in enemy territory, but **where you stand and what you control are not the same thing**.

Your Front Line

Your **Front Line** is the unbroken sequence of Territories you control starting from your own end of the Gauntlet.

Control cannot skip a Territory. Even if your Player Token moves farther forward, your Front Line advances only through the next enemy Territory in order.

Occupation

When your token is on an opposing Territory that you do not control, you are **occupying** it.

Suppose you attack onto the first enemy Territory and win. Your opponent retreats and you remain there. You occupy that Territory, but it still belongs to your opponent for now.

That delay gives your opponent a chance to attack you there before you capture the Territory—a **Counterattack**.

Capture

At the beginning of each of your turns, before you draw, check your **Capture** step.

If your token is on or beyond the next enemy Territory immediately past your Front Line, capture that Territory. Turn it to face you and add it to your Front Line.

Normal Capture advances your Front Line by **at most one Territory each turn**.

For example, if you have somehow moved two Territories beyond your Front Line, you do not skip the nearer one. On your next Capture step, you capture only the next Territory in sequence. If you still hold deep ground on a later turn, you may capture the following Territory then.

This creates the basic rhythm of territorial progress:

Win the position now. Hold it. Capture the ground on a later turn.

When you capture the last opposing Territory still outside your Front Line, your Front Line now spans the entire Gauntlet. You immediately run the Gauntlet and win.

BATTLES · CONTINUED

6. Reveal Tactics

Reveal the Tactics and resolve their effects.

7. Roll and compare battle totals

After all effects that apply before the roll are resolved, each player rolls a die and applies any bonuses to determine their **battle total**. The higher total wins.

Some effects give **Advantage** or **Disadvantage**. Cancel Advantage and Disadvantage against each other one for one before rolling.

- With one Advantage, roll two dice and use the higher result. With two Advantage, roll three and use the highest, and so on.
- With one Disadvantage, roll two dice and use the lower result. With two Disadvantage, roll three and use the lowest, and so on.

If the totals tie, the defender normally wins the tie when defending a Territory they control.

This is called **Defensive Edge**. If nothing gives either player the tie, each player makes a fresh, unmodified die roll; higher roll wins and further ties are rerolled.

8. Resolve the result

Normally:

- if the **attacker loses**, the attacker returns to the position they attacked from;
- if the **defender loses**, the defender retreats one position toward their own end;
- a **winning attacker** takes the contested position; and
- a **winning defender** stays where they are.

A winning attacker on an enemy-controlled Territory is now **occupying** it. Winning the battle does not normally capture that Territory immediately.

9. Clear the battle cards

After battle effects are finished:

- your **Gambit normally goes to your Graveyard**;
- your **Tactic normally goes to your Discard Pile**; and
- cards left in your **Reserve normally go to your Discard Pile**.

Then return your set-aside Hand to normal play.

A useful memory rule is:

Gambits are the risk: they go to the Graveyard. Tactics and the rest of your Reserve recycle through the Discard Pile.

Cards, Territories, faction features, and Leader abilities can alter individual parts of a battle. When they do, apply their instructions to this normal sequence rather than trying to learn every possible exception in advance.

YOUR TURN · CONTINUED

Then your opponent takes a turn.

Some effects and faction rules can give additional Actions or change when something can be done. When they do, follow the more specific instruction. The normal turn is still the sequence above.

5 Movement

During your normal Movement, choose one of three options:

- **Advance** — move one position toward your opponent's end.
- **Hold** — remain where you are.
- **Fall Back** — move one position toward your own end.

You cannot choose to Fall Back past your own end of the Gauntlet. If something lets you move more than one position, move one position at a time. You can never move through or past the other player.

A **position** is a place your Player Token can occupy along the Gauntlet, including the spaces just beyond either end when the game pushes a player that far.

Meeting your opponent

If you enter the position occupied by your opponent, your movement stops and a **battle** begins immediately.

The position you entered is the **contested position**. The player whose movement started the battle is the **attacker**; the other player is the **defender**.

Once movement starts a battle, that movement sequence is over. If an effect had given you more than one position of movement, any unused movement from that sequence is lost. You move again after the battle only if another rule or effect gives you a new movement sequence.

Movement can therefore be a commitment. Advancing may take ground, but it may also start a fight before you are ready. Holding can preserve position, and Falling Back can create room—but every step away from the far end gives your opponent more battlefield to work with.

6 Battles

Battles happen when movement carries one player into the other's position.

The normal battle is a short contest of hidden information: you may risk a card already in your Hand, then each player receives three temporary cards and may choose one more card for the fight.

1. Onset

Onset is when you determine whether the battle will actually proceed.

First establish who is attacking, who is defending, which position is contested, and the attacker's previous position. Then resolve anything that specifically happens during Onset or before Gambits are set, including Terms when applicable.

If the battle is prevented or a player withdraws during Onset, it ends there: no Gambits are set and there is no battle result. If the battle still proceeds after Onset, continue to Gambits.

2. Set Gambits

The **attacker commits first**: set one eligible card from your Hand face down as a **Gambit**, or pass. Then the defender sets one eligible card from their Hand face down, or passes.

A Gambit is optional. The defender therefore knows whether the attacker committed a Gambit before deciding, but does not know which face-down card it is unless an effect reveals it.

3. Form Reserves

Set your Hand aside without changing it, then draw **three temporary cards** to form your **Reserve**.

Reserve cards are not part of your Hand. They exist for this battle and will normally be discarded afterward.

4. Reveal Gambits

Reveal the Gambits and resolve their effects.

5. Choose Tactics

Again, the **attacker commits first**: choose one eligible card from your Reserve and set it face down as a **Tactic**, or pass. Then the defender chooses one eligible Reserve card face down, or passes.

Like a Gambit, a Tactic is optional. The defender can respond to whether the attacker committed before making their own choice.