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RULEBOOK

♥♣ POKER ASSAULT ♠♦

Ancient vampires, frenzied werewolves, invading aliens, and fearless aeronauts are locked in an epic battle for survival in this super-charged tactical card game! If you've ever played poker before, you already know half the rules, but the way this game plays out is like nothing you've ever seen ...

OVERVIEW

Poker Assault is a two to four player card game where each player has their own unique 52-card deck (which doubles as a regular poker deck). During your turn you'll make an **Assault** by building a poker hand on the table. Then your opponent will try to Defend against the Assault by playing cards from his or her hand.

What's in the Box?

- **Four 52-card Game Decks**
(one for each faction)
- **Four 8-card Power Decks**
(one for each faction)
- **44 Poker Chip Counters**
- **6 "Modified" Tokens**
- **This Rulebook**

ANATOMY OF A CARD



Suit – The four suits are Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, and Spades.

Rank – The ranks are 2-10, Jack, Queen, King, and Ace.

Special Ability Name – The name helps you quickly identify the card's special ability, if it has one.

Special Ability Text – The text explains the card's special ability, if it has one.

TWO PLAYER RULES

Setup

1. Each player chooses a faction and grabs that faction's Game Deck and Power Deck. Shuffle them separately and set them aside. (Unless otherwise noted, everything from here on refers to the Game Deck.)
2. Each player starts with 10 Poker Chip Counters. These are your starting health points. (It's possible to gain extra chips during the game.)
3. Each player cuts his or her deck to see which player has the highest card (Aces are high). That player goes first. If you're playing several games in a row, instead of cutting for high card, the loser of the previous game goes first in the next.
4. Each player draws five cards.

Game Play

Each round is divided into two parts. First, you'll **Prepare an Assault**. Then, if you successfully launch your Assault, your opponent will **Defend the Assault**.

Preparing an Assault

Your goal is to build a classic poker hand one card at a time (a Pair, a Flush, a Full House, etc. See Legal Poker Assaults on Page 4) and then launch it at your opponent. Typically, the more cards in

your Assault, the harder it will be for your opponent to Defend. Plus, if you launch a Power Assault (a Straight or better) you get to draw a card from your Power Deck.

Here's how Preparing an Assault works:

- Play one card from your hand onto the table.
- Immediately draw a replacement card.
- Repeat this process until you've made a legal Poker Assault or until you can't (or don't want to) make any legal plays.

IMPORTANT: Whenever you play a card, you always draw a replacement. Unless a card effect says otherwise, you should always have five cards in your hand.

You don't need to have a finished Assault (a Pair or better) in your hand. It's acceptable to start playing cards onto the table hoping to draw into the cards you need to finish the Assault. For example, you might have three Hearts in your hand, so you play them one at a time, drawing a new card from your deck after each play, hoping to draw the final two Hearts for a Flush.

Every card you play must contribute to a potential legal Assault. This means that a legal Assault cannot have any extraneous cards played outside the cards that contribute to the Assault.

For example, suppose you've already played the 4, 7, and 10 of Hearts. The only potential Assault you can make from here is a Heart Flush. So you can't play a Club, Diamond, or Spade.

If you can't make any legal plays (or choose not to ... perhaps you want to save a card for later), your Assault fails and the round is over. Discard each poker card you've played, making a discard pile next to your Game Deck, but keep all of the cards in your hand. Now your opponent gets a chance to Prepare an Assault.

1. He doesn't hold much potential in the way of a Straight or Flush, but he has a pair of 7's, so he decides to start there.
2. He plays the 7 of Clubs. He then draws the Queen of Hearts--not much help.
3. He then plays the 7 of Hearts. Now, he owns a Pair. He draws the 8 of Spades.
4. Since it doesn't look like he'll be able to make a stronger Assault, he decides to launch his One Pair at his opponent.



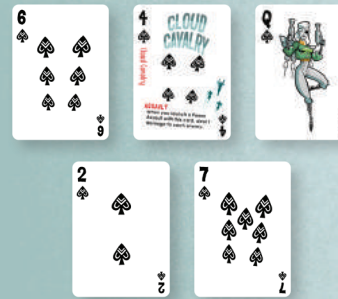
Example 2

Trisha has the following cards in hand:



1. She's got three Spades so she decides to lead with the 6 of Spades. She then draws the 3 of Hearts.
2. She follows with the 4 of Spades and draws the Jack of Diamonds.

3. She then plays her final Spade--the Queen--and draws the 2 of Spades!
4. She plays the 2 of Spades and draws ... the 7 of Spades!
5. She plays the fifth Spade to complete her Flush. And since a Flush is a Power Assault, she immediately draws a card from her Power Deck.



Example 3

Beth has the following cards in hand:



1. She holds three parts of a Straight (4,5,6) and three Hearts. She starts by playing the 4 of Hearts, leaving both options open. She then draws the Jack of Spades--no help.

2. She plays the 5 of Hearts, but draws the 10 of Diamonds. Now it's decision time. She either pursues the Straight by playing her 6, or she can hope for the Flush by playing her 9.
3. She plays the 6 and draws the King of Hearts. Oh no, she should have gone for the Flush!
4. Beth now has no plays that can make a legal Assault. She cannot play the two 10's she now holds in her hand to make a Pair, as the 4, 5, and 6 she has already played would not contribute to the Pair, and an Assault can have no extraneous cards in play. She must discard the cards she's already played and end the round.



Defending an Assault

Once an Assault is launched it no longer matters what specific poker hand it was. What matters are the individual cards; they will each be Defended or not Defended individually. **The Defending player is NOT trying to build a poker hand.**

When you're Defending an Assault, the goal is to Defend against as many of the cards in the Assault as possible. Here's how it works:

- Play one card from your hand to Defend against one of the Assault cards.

LEGAL POKER ASSAULTS

(see definitions of these hands on page 15)

- One Pair
- Two Pair
- Three of a Kind
- Straight*
- Flush*
- Full House*
- Four of a Kind*
- Straight Flush**

* These are "Power Assaults" and allow you to draw a Power Card.

** This is a "Super Power Assault" and allows you to draw two Power Cards.

Example 1

Bob has the following cards in hand:



- Immediately draw a replacement card.
- Repeat this process until you've Defended against all of the Assaulting cards or until you're unable to Defend (or choose not to).

IMPORTANT: Just as when Preparing an Assault, whenever you play a card, you always draw a replacement.

You can Defend against an **Assaulting** card in one of two ways:

1. Play a card of the **exact same rank**. (For example, you can use any 7 to Defend against any Assaulting 7 and any Jack to Defend against any Assaulting Jack.)
2. Play a card of the **same suit and a higher rank**. (For example, a 9 of Clubs can Defend any lower Club and a Queen of Hearts can Defend any lower Heart.)

If you Defend against all of the Assaulting cards, you've Fully Defended the Assault. Both players discard all poker cards in play into their own discard piles, but keep all the cards remaining in their hands. The round is over and it's now your turn to Prepare an Assault.

If you fail to Defend against all cards in the Assault, each card that was left Undefended causes 1 damage to you and you must discard that many Poker Chip Counters. Discard all poker cards on the table: the round is over. The Assaulting

player gets to **Press the Assault** (meaning they're able to Prepare another Assault next round).

If you can't (or choose not to) Defend **ANY** of the Assaulting cards, after you take damage, **you may Reform your hand**. Discard all of the poker cards in your hand and draw that many new cards.

Example 1

Marc launches the following Assault:



Walt's hand is:



Walt plays the Queen of Hearts to Defend against the Jack of Hearts (the only legal Defense he can currently make). He then draws the Jack of Diamonds. Perfect! He plays that to Defend against Marc's Jack of Spades.

Walt has Fully Defended the Assault. He takes no damage, both players discard their

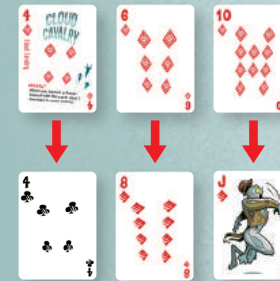
poker cards in play to their own discard piles, and now it's Walt's turn to Prepare an Assault.

Example 2

Walt launches the following Assault:



Marc Defends each card one at a time, drawing after each Defense, playing:



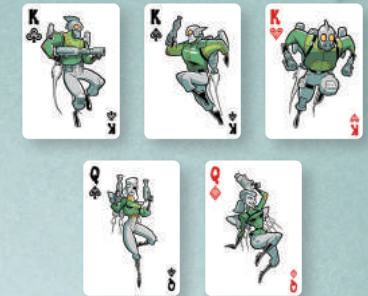
But he holds no more legal Defenses.



Two cards--the 9 and the Queen--are Undefended, and Marc is hit for 2 damage. All poker cards in play are discarded to their respective discard piles, and Walt gets to Press the Assault (meaning Walt gets to prepare the next Assault and Marc must remain on Defense).

Example 3

Walt launches the following Assault:



Marc's hand is:

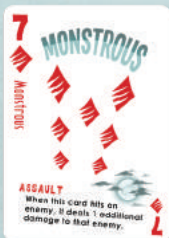


Marc has no legal Defenses, so he must take the full 5 damage and Walt will get to Press the Assault. Since Marc didn't Defend against any of the Assaulting cards, he may Reform his hand. He discards his whole hand and then draws five new cards. You may decline to play defensive cards even if you could play them. In that case, if you didn't play any Defenses you can still Reform your hand.

Special Abilities

Several cards in each Game Deck have special abilities. Each card's ability either works while you are Assaulting or while you're Defending (the card will either read "Assault" or "Defense").

You can play any card as part of an Assault or to Defend an Assault, but you only get to use its special ability if you play it at the right time. For example, if you played **Monstrous**, pictured to the right, as part of an Assault, it deals an extra damage if it hits. If you play it while Defending, ignore its special ability.



Each game deck has four copies each of three different "common" special abilities, and one copy each of four different "unique" special abilities. A total of 16 cards have special abilities for each faction.

Power Cards

When you **Prepare an Assault**, if it's a **Straight, Flush, Full House, or Four of a Kind**, draw a Power Card from your Power Deck. Congratulations! You have launched a Power Assault. If you're lucky enough to make a **Straight Flush**, draw two Power Cards.

The text on a Power Card explains its use. If it says "Secret," leave it face down in front of you until you decide to play it. Secrets are typically revealed--doing something powerful and surprising--and then discarded. If the card does not say "Secret," turn it face up, and it takes effect immediately.

If a Secret card says "Defense," you can only play it while you're Defending an Assault. If a Secret card says "Assault," you can play it either while you're preparing an Assault or right after you launch an Assault (but before your opponent starts Defending it). "New Assault Type" cards unlock new types of Assaults that you're now allowed to make.

When you launch a Power Assault and draw a new Power Card, you have an opportunity to play it during that same Assault, before your opponent starts Defending the Assault. For example, if you draw **Growing Ferocity**, you can play it immediately before your opponent starts Defending, or you can save it face down in front of you for a later turn.

Some Power Cards stay in play indefinitely, while others are discarded when used or when an opponent does something specific. When a Power Card gets discarded, put it in a face-up discard pile next to your Power Deck.



Ending the Game

When a player's Poker Chip stack is reduced to 0, they're immediately knocked out of the game. Last player standing wins.

ADDITIONAL RULES

Aces

Aces are always considered high (meaning an Ace can only be Defended by an Ace) with one exception: If you make a low straight (Ace through 5), then the Ace is considered low and can be Defended against by any rank of the same suit, as well as other Aces.

While you are Defending, your Aces are always considered high, meaning they can Defend against any rank of that suit.

Looking Through Discard Piles

Players are **not** allowed to look through any discard piles. Only the top card of each player's discard pile should ever be visible.

Running Out of Cards

If you need to draw a card or otherwise use the top card(s) of your Game Deck and your deck is out of cards, shuffle your Game Deck discard pile to make a new deck.

If your Power Deck runs out of cards, you can no longer draw new Power Cards.

Must Play At Least One Card

You must play at least one card while Preparing an Assault. You might have an amazing defensive hand that you'd like to hold onto, but you must still play at least one card.

Choosing Not to Launch

After you finish Preparing a legal Assault, you may choose to end your turn and not launch it. This is rare, but your opponent might have some specific defensive cards you're trying to avoid.

Changing Control

If an effect causes one player to steal cards from another player, they now belong to the new player for the duration of the game. After the game, the cards should go back to their original deck.

Attachments

If a Power Card attaches to a poker card, discard the Power Card when the poker card gets discarded.

Golden Rules

- If a card's ability contradicts a rule in this Rulebook, the card is correct.
- If one effect says you "can" do something and another effect says you "can't" do something, "can't" overrides "can."

THREE PLAYER RULES

The three player version of the game plays just like the two player version with the following changes:

- When you launch an Assault, BOTH of your opponents take turns to try to Defend it. First, the player to your left may play one card to Defend or he or she may pass. Then, the player to his or her left may play one card or pass.
- When a player passes, that player takes 1 damage for each Undefended card still in the Assault AND he or she may not play any more cards during this Assault. The two Defenders go back and forth until either the Assault is fully Defended or until both Defenders have passed.
- If your Assault is Fully Defended, the player to your left gets to Prepare the next Assault. But if both Defending players passed before the Assault was Fully Defended, you get to Press the Assault (i.e., Prepare the next Assault).

Example

1. Player A, Player B, and Player C are sitting in that order.
2. Player A prepares and launches an Assault of five cards.

3. Player B plays one card to Defend.
4. Player C plays one card to Defend.
5. Player B passes. Since three cards are Undefended, Player B takes 3 damage.
6. Player C plays one card to Defend.
7. Player C plays one card to Defend.
8. Player C passes. Since one card in the Assault is Undefended, Player C takes 1 damage and then Player A gets to Press the Assault.

In a three Player game, if a Defending player passes without playing any cards, that player can Reform his or her hand.

Example

1. Player A launches an Assault of three cards.
2. Player B plays one card to Defend.
3. Player C passes and takes 2 damage and may Reform his hand if he likes.

When a player's Poker Chip stack is reduced to 0, that player is knocked out of the game and all of their poker cards and Power Cards are discarded.

FOUR PLAYER RULES

The four player version is a two-on-two team game that plays just like the two player version with the following changes:

- Each team shares a starting stack of 20 Poker Chips. When a player takes damage or gains Poker Chips, it's subtracted from or added to the team's Poker Chip stack.
- Team members should sit across from each other so that each turn alternates between the teams.
- When a player launches an Assault, only the opponent to the left Defends against it. If the opponent Fully Defends the Assault, then it becomes that opponent's turn as normal. But if the Assault hits the opponent, that team takes damage, all cards in play are discarded, and the assaulting team gets to Press the Assault. However, Pressing the Assault works differently in a team game. Instead of you receiving another turn, your teammate takes the next turn (effectively skipping the opponent to your left).

Example

1. Players A, B, C, and D are sitting around the table in that order. Player A and Player C are on one team and Player B and Player D are on the other.

2. Player A launches an Assault at Player B.
3. Player B Fully Defends. It is now Player B's turn.
4. Player B launches an Assault at Player C.
5. Player C fails to Fully Defend, that team takes damage, and Player B's team gets to Press the Assault, which means Player C's turn is skipped.
6. Player D then launches an Assault at Player A.

Before the game, players should agree on what "table talk" is allowed. We recommend that players can talk to each other and offer general advice ("Yeah, go for the Flush!"), but should not discuss the specific contents of their hands or their secret Power Cards.

GAME VARIANTS

Cross-Faction Decks (2-4 Players)

Instead of playing with a normal deck, each player constructs his or her own deck by selecting one suit (Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades) from each faction. Take turns choosing suits and shuffle those 52 cards together to make a new deck.

Each player also takes two random cards from each Power Deck and shuffles those together to make his or her Power Deck.

Random Starting Poker Chip Stack

(2-4 players)

Before the game begins, one player should cut to a random card. If it's an Ace through 9, that's how many Poker Chips each player starts with. (Ace = 1.) If it's a 10, Jack, Queen, or King cut again.

Double Decker (2 Players)

Each player chooses two factions and shuffles all of those factions' game cards together to make a 104-card deck. They also shuffle their Power Decks together.

Street Fight (2 Players)

Each player chooses two factions but keeps those decks separate. They each choose one of their factions to start with and they play the normal game. But when one player gets knocked out, that player removes all of their poker cards and Power cards from the game. Then, that player immediately re-enters the game with their second deck and 10 Poker Chips (the other player continues playing with what they have).

When you re-enter the game, it's automatically your turn to Prepare an Assault (your opponent doesn't get to Press the Assault after knocking out your first deck).

THE FACTIONS

Each faction has its own strengths and weaknesses.

VAMPIRE COURT



These ancient bloodsuckers can transform suits and heal damage to outlast their enemies.

Favored Assault: Flush

WOLF PACK



The most aggressive faction, these snarling werewolves can shapeshift the ranks of their cards and use extra damaging attacks to tear apart their foes.

Favored Assault: Straight

ROCKET PATROL



These sentries of the skies use defensive tactics to weaken incoming Assaults and powerful weapons to deal damage directly to enemies.

Favored Assault: Full House

THE INVADERS



These bizarre and mysterious aliens use tricks and subterfuge as they strive to add the Earth to their list of conquered planets.

Favored Assault: ???

STRATEGY TIPS

- It's often a good idea to start Preparing an Assault that gives you multiple paths to success depending on what you draw.

For example, let's say you have the following hand:



You may choose to start with the 7 of Diamonds. If you draw another Diamond you can go for the Flush. Otherwise, you could take the safe route and play your other 7.

- If your hand isn't strong, it's recommended you start Preparing an Assault by playing out your low cards since they're weak on Defense. You might luck into Two Pair or a Straight. You can always start to Prepare an Assault with any two cards since there's always a chance you'll turn them into Two Pair.

- Sometimes you might have a powerful Assault ready to go in your hand, but you're on Defense. Be careful not to sit too long taking damage while hoping your opponent fails to launch an Assault. Those powerful cards will never get used to Assault if your opponent keeps hitting you.

- It's okay to play a card with an Assault ability while Defending and likewise it's okay to play a card with a Defense ability while Preparing an Assault. A large part of the game's strategy is knowing when to wait on a card and when to play it.

- If you are Defending and have a hand of low value cards, sometimes it's better to take a hit and then Reform your hand, rather than to Defend against just one card.

- Don't give up! Sometimes your opponent might Press the Assault several turns in a row because his or her cards were higher ranked than yours. But once your opponent falters, it's your chance to turn the tables since several of his or her high cards will be gone and yours are right around the corner.

INDIVIDUAL CARD CLARIFICATIONS

Celestial Telepath

If you only have one card in your deck when you play this, shuffle your discard pile to make a new deck and put that one card on top of your deck. Then, resolve Celestial Telepath.

Menacer

Until the last Menacer in an Assault has been Defended, other cards may not be Defended.



Mist Form

If you change the card's suit, your opponent must Defend against its new suit (make sure to tell your opponent what the new suit is when you play it). **Also, be sure to place a Modified Token on this card so everyone remembers this card should not be taken at face value.**

It's possible to end up with two cards of the exact same rank and suit. This is fine.

Choosing a different suit is optional. You can just play the card as it is.

Shapeshifter and Master Shapeshifter

If you change the card's rank, your opponent must Defend against its new rank (make sure to tell your opponent what the new rank is when you play it). **Also, be sure to place a Modified Token on this card so everyone remembers this card should not be taken at face value.**

It's possible to end up with two cards of the exact same rank and suit. This is fine.

Choosing a different rank is optional. You can just play the card as it is.

Stowaway

You can always add this card to an Assault even if it doesn't contribute to building a legal poker hand. For example, you could make a 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 Straight and then add this card to your Assault. Or you could start with this card, planning to use it as part of a poker hand, but switch to a different Assault type later on. Either way, the Stowaway remains a legal part of the Assault.

Wingman

You can only use this ability if adding the new card would keep the Assault legal.

POKER HAND DEFINITIONS

One Pair: Two cards of same rank



Two Pair: Two cards of one rank and another two cards of the same rank



Three of a Kind: Three cards of the same rank



Straight: Five cards with consecutive ranks. For example: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Aces can be high or low, so Straight can be from Ace (1) to 5 or from 10 to Ace.



Flush: Five cards with the same suit



Full House: Three cards of the same rank and another two cards of the same rank



Four of a Kind: Four cards of the same rank



Straight Flush: Five cards of the same suit that also have consecutive ranks. For example: the 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 of Diamonds.

