



# Rules for playing Gondolin Cards

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# 1. Introduction

Gondolin Cards (GC) is a collectible and playable card game with unique rules for single player gameplay. As a player, you are tasked with leading a group of people into the wild to create a new settlement. For each game, you can choose a different combination of location and storyline, while building a deck which may or may not make it possible to have the settlement survive for the duration of the story.

The cards to use for the game are designed, professionally printed and given away by the Danish dungeon synth music label Gondolin Records. For now, they are obtained as freebies by purchasing releases from the label when they are available. They follow the same aesthetic and thematic approach as the label, combining elements from Tolkien's 1st age with other fictional, mythological and historical references to form a dark mythic fanfic world to explore through the cards.

The rules you are currently reading describes the game in its current single player format, the "2nd generation", launched in 2023. In its current form, the game is intended to be difficult and complex enough to offer a new and challenging experience with each attempt while also being a relatively simple single player card game. A previous "1st generation" was a 2-player game format sustained from 2019 to 2022 with 40 different card titles introduced in that period. The cards from the 1st gen are incompatible with the 2nd gen cards and rules described here.

Once a player has amassed enough cards to meet the criteria for playing a story, it is highly advisable to use the game sheets created for the chosen story. They make it easier to keep track of the different parameters during the game, and the sheet may also serve as a reference, that means the game can be recreated afterwards. These can be found as print-friendly PDFs on the GC website.

Should the player's settlement survive the story, a simple formula is given for how to calculate a final score. On the website instructions can be found about how to submit the score in case it qualifies for entry on the scoreboard.

On the website it is also possible to find a full list of cards currently introduced and circulated.

Find the website at: <http://gondolincards.com/>

## 2. Basics

### 2A. The setting

The player sits down at a table with room enough for laying out two rows of cards with about 60-80 centimetres of width. The player has already read these rules, chosen a story, constructed a deck, and found the game sheet for the story. At the side of the writing/typing hand the game sheet is placed. At the opposite side, the Story card is clearly visible and the deck is presented in a deck pile with the back of the cards facing upwards.

Some fitting music has also been selected.

### 2B. The stories

Each game follows the events laid out on one of the Story cards. A Story card is easily recognisable from all other game cards in that it does not have a coloured background with the logo on the reverse side of the card. Instead it has a listing of fixed events happening at certain turns of the story, which will affect the rest of the course of the game. The Story card also lays out some rules for how a deck can be constructed to play the particular story, and for how many turns the game can potentially stretch over, should the player be able to construct a deck and be lucky enough to survive the entire course of the storyline. In the unlikely event that the Settlement survives, a simple formula is given by the Story card for how to calculate a final score.

### 2C. The decks

The decks are constructed strategically by the player with a particular Story in mind. The more cards the player has, the more options exist for trying out different strategies. The rules for deck construction are defined by the chosen Story as well as some general rules based on the type of the cards available. Read Chapter 3 about Card Types carefully before attempting to construct your deck for a Story.

As the Story begins, the player receives information on how to initialise the game from the Story card. As the game progresses, the deck pile is gradually divided into cards in play, cards on the hand, and played cards ending up in a new pile separate from the deck. This *played pile* consists of all cards that have entered out of play from either having been destroyed somehow or from having happened as events. This is all explained in detail in Chapter 4 about Turns.

## 2D. The stats

The state and progress of your Settlement are a result of a number of stats. Many cards and events influence the stats of your Settlement, and keeping track of them is made much easier by using the predesigned game sheets on the GC website. The stats are listed here as a basic introduction:

### **Resources (R):**

Necessary to play new cards such as Defenders and Achievements from your hand.

### **Surroundings (S):**

Half of your current Surroundings stat are converted into R every turn (rounded down). Not taking care of your surroundings means the game will soon be over for you.

### **Maintenance (M):**

Having some cards in play adds to the Maintenance stat. This amount is subtracted from your R every turn.

### **Proficiency (P):**

Some cards require a certain level of Proficiency to be played. Defeating enemies is one way to add to your P.

### **Total defence (TD):**

Counting the sum of Defence (D) from the Defenders you currently have in play as well as any added defense bonuses. If you are targeted by an attack where the Total attack (TA) of the enemies is larger than your TD, the settlement is destroyed and the game is over. More about this in Chapter 5.

### **Total attack (TA):**

Counting the sum of Attack (A) from the Enemies involved with an attack against. After sieging ends, one or more enemies may join in on the attack, just as the attack may be boosted further by other circumstances active at the moment of the attack. If you are targeted by an attack where the Total attack (TA) is larger than your Total defence (TD), the settlement is destroyed and the game is over. More about this in Chapter 5.

To keep track of the stats during the game, it's highly advisable to use the game sheet for the story you are playing.

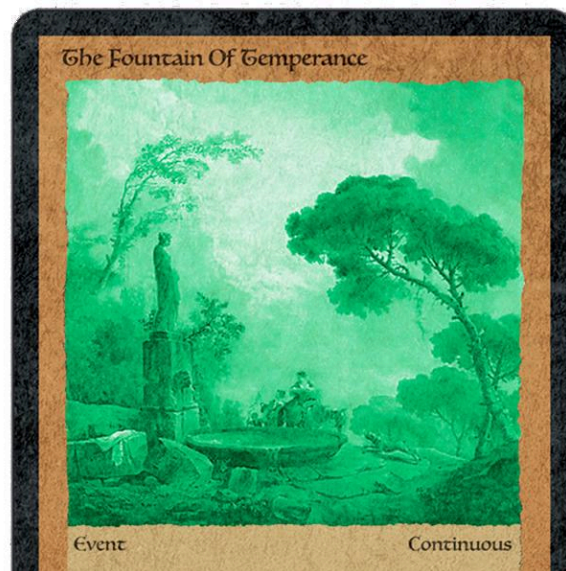
They are available as a free resource on the GC website at <https://gondolincards.com>

### 3. Card types

There are two main types of cards; Story cards and Game cards. As explained in the previous chapter, a Story card is chosen before a game can begin, and sets some parameters for how a deck may be constructed to play through the events of the Story card. Here is an example:



The remainder of this chapter deals with the different types of Game cards. There are four main types of Game cards: Locations, Events, Defenders and Achievements. Some of these can also have subtypes, which will be explained in detail below. You can find the card type stated on the left side of the card below the image. A subtype can be mentioned on the right side, like this:



### 3A. Location

Only 1 copy of the same location card in a deck. Typically, stories will only allow one Location type card in total in the deck.

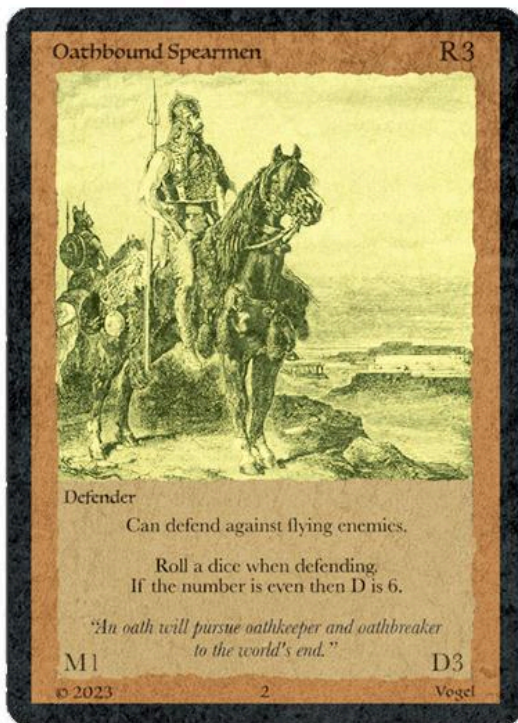
The location card sets the initial Stats for your settlement, and have a significant impact on which strategies can be used for the rest of the deck construction.

A location will always be chosen in the first round to initialize the game. See more in Chapter 4 on Turns.

### 3B. Defenders

Up to 3 copies of the same defender card in a deck.

A defender will always have a Defence value (D), a Resource cost (R) and a Maintenance cost (M). Your Settlement has a Total defence (TD), which is the sum of the Defence values of the Defenders you have in play at any given time. Here is an example of a Defender:



Defenders are able to enter play from the hand after the necessary R is paid.

Beyond their D, defenders may also have special abilities described. One important aspect to consider is how well you need to defend against flying enemies. Only if it is explicitly described on the card, can a defender defend against flying enemies. If you are attacked by a flying enemy, and you do not have any defence against it, the game is over. See more in Chapter 5 on Siege & Attack.

### 3B1. Defenders: Heroes

Only 1 copy of the same Hero card in a deck.

As a subtype of Defenders, Hero cards are usually better than the average Defender card, but otherwise exactly the same from a rule-perspective except you can only have one of each in a deck.

### 3C: Achievements

Only 1 copy of the same Achievement card in a deck.

An Achievement card will always have a Proficiency requirement (PX) and a Resource cost (R).

Achievements are able to enter play from the hand after the necessary R is paid.

Intended as extraordinarily beneficial to the Settlement, Achievements are only possible to put into play after the stats allow it a bit into the game. The strategic decision is not so much whether to include a good Achievement card in a deck, but being able to put it into play at the right time.

There are two types of Achievements:

#### 3C1. Achievements: Improvements

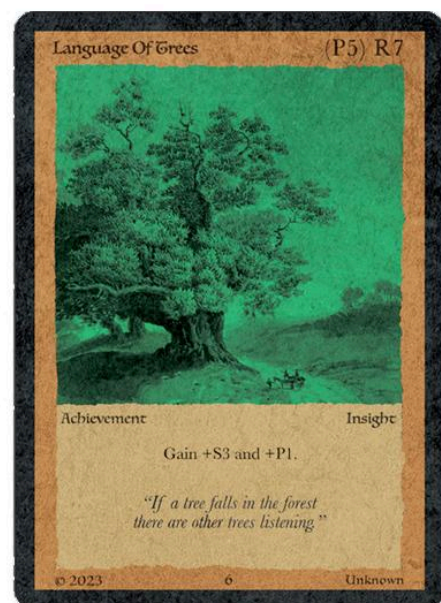
Once in play, Improvement cards stay in play on the table, and give their effect continually through the game as described on the card.

They may or may not come with a Maintenance cost (M).

#### 3C2. Achievements: Insights

These enter play to give an instantaneous but significant effect as described, and then go out of play on top of the Played pile.

Here is an example of an Insight card:



## 3D. Events

Event cards enter play directly from the deck pile, and do not require a resource cost.

Event cards can not be played from the hand, and may not be present there during the initialisation of the game.

A Story card will specify how many event cards in total are required for a deck to play the story, and also how many of the event cards have to be Enemy type cards in total. Beyond this there are different limits for how many copies of a specific Event type card can be included in the deck.

### 3D1. Events: Occurrence

Only 1 copy of the same Occurrence card in a deck.

These enter play to give an instantaneous effect as described, and then go out of play on top of the Played pile.

### 3D2. Events: Continuous

Only 1 copy of the same Continuous card in a deck.

Once they enter into play, they stay in play on the table, and give their effect continually through the game as described on the card.

### 3D3. Events: Enemies

Up to 3 copies of the same Enemy card in a deck.

Enemy type cards always have an Attack value (A), and contain information about how many turns that the enemy is willing to Siege as well as the bonuses that you get from defeating the Enemy card in the ensuing attack.

Beyond these, defenders may also have special abilities described. One important aspect to consider is if the enemy is flying. Flying enemies will usually give a better bonus, but if you don't have Defenders that can fight against flying Enemies at the time of the attack, the game is over. See more in Chapter 5 on Siege & Attack.

### 3D4. Events: Eminent Enemies

Only 1 copy of the same Eminent Enemy card in a deck.

Eminent Enemies cards are usually better than the average Enemy card, but otherwise exactly the same from a rule-perspective except you can only have one of each in a deck.

Here is an example of an Eminent Enemy card:



## 4. Turns

The game is turn based, and each turn is divided into different phases, where different actions are mandatory or permissible. These will be described in detail further down.

### 4A. Initialising the game

1. Choose a story by picking one of the Story cards available.
2. Construct a deck from your pool of available cards according to these rules and the specifics mentioned on the Story card.
3. Print the according game sheet for the chosen Story card. Find the PDF files at [gondolincards.com](http://gondolincards.com)
4. Go through the deck and pick the Location card.
5. The game is initialised in the first turn by playing the Location card and adding the Stats from the Location card to your Stat overview. You also draw the amount of cards to your hand as described on the Story card.

Only Defender and Achievement type cards can be included in your hand.

**Easy mode:** Go through the deck and pick the exact cards you want to put into your hand at the beginning of the game. Shuffle afterwards.

**Hard mode:** Draw the cards for your hand from the top of the shuffled deck. Skip any Event cards drawn this way until you have the specified amount of cards in your hand. Shuffle again afterwards.

### 4B. The turn cycle

#### 1. Resource phase

From turn 2 onwards, you update your Resource stat (R) at the very beginning of a new turn before drawing a card. The new resources are added to your R stat in this way:

Divide your Surroundings stat (S) at the beginning of the turn by 2 and round it down. Subtract from this your current Maintenance stat (M). What is left is added to your pre-existing Resource stat.

Example:

*As the turn begins, you have S=5, R=3, M=1.*

*Boost from surroundings: 5 divided by two rounded down is 2.*

*Cost of maintenance subtracted: 2 minus 1 is 1.*

*Adding to your existing resources: 1 is added to the 3 resources*

*You now have R=4.*

### **1b. Maintenance check**

Did you just run out of resources? This can happen if your S has gone down, your M has gone up, and you also didn't save up enough R to sustain the Settlement in these new circumstances.

When this happens you must destroy one or more Defenders or Improvements that are adding to your M, so that your R does not go below 0. You may only destroy one card in play at the time in this way to bring down your M. Once your M is low enough, so that your R will be 0 or above in the Resource phase described above, you are not allowed to destroy more of your Defenders or Improvements in this way this turn.

### **2. Draw phase**

Draw a card from the top of the deck. If you don't have any more cards left in the deck pile, proceed to the Event phase.

If it is a Defender or Achievement type card, add it to your hand. There is no limit to how many cards you may have in your hand once the game has been initialised. Continue to the Event phase

If it is an Event type card put it into play and go to the Event phase.

### **3. Event phase**

Look at the Story card to check if there are any new events happening in the Story that will have an effect on the game from now on.

It is also a good idea to check the Story card now just to remind yourself of which events have taken place in the story so far, so you can keep taking those effects into account. The same goes for other effects from continuous events or improvements already in play.

If you drew a Defender or Achievement card in the Draw phase, you may now proceed to the Main phase unless you are under Siege.

If you drew an Occurrence-type Event in the Draw phase, put it into play now, update everything relevant based on the description on the card, and remove it to the Played pile. Now proceed to the Main phase unless you are under Siege.

If you drew a Continuous-type Event in the Draw phase, put it into play now, and update everything relevant based on the description on the card. Remember to check back on the card continuously while it's still in play. Now proceed to the Main phase unless you are under Siege.

If you drew an Enemy (or Eminent Enemy) in the Draw phase, put it into play now. If there are any descriptions of immediate effects happening as the Enemy enters into play, take those into account now. Now proceed to the Siege phase.

#### **4a. Siege phase**

With at least one enemy in play, you are under siege. Refer to Chapter 5 for rules on Siege & Attack

#### **4b. Defence phase**

Once under siege, you may play cards from your hand, or activate effects on the cards already in play. If you are still under Siege after this, and don't have any Defenders in play after this phase, the Siege will automatically turn into a successful attack on your helpless Settlement, and the game will be over.

#### **4c. Attack phase**

Once a siege ends, it becomes an attack. Refer to Chapter 5 for rules on Siege & Attack

### **5. Main phase**

Good, you have made it to the Main phase this turn. You may now play cards from your hand. Be sure to take all active effects into account before updating your Stats the final time this turn. Then proceed to the next turn.

## 5. Siege & Attack

Since a Story requires a minimum number of Enemy cards in your deck, it is inevitable to end up under Siege and also under Attack several times during the course of the story. So you should also make sure you include ample Defenders in your deck to prepare for what is to come.

The Siege is a precursor to the Attack that allows more than one Enemy card to join together, but may also give a well prepared Settlement the time needed to prepare even better, and increase the chance to survive the Attack.

Surviving attacks is a basic requirement of the game. Destroying enemies gives bonuses (most often in the form of increased Proficiency (P)) and allows the player to proceed to the next turn.

However, the Story cards introduce events that make it increasingly hard to do so. Either from boosting the attack of the enemies, or from making it harder to sustain the Settlement and its defences.

### 5A. Siege

The Settlement is under Siege once an Enemy type Event card is drawn in the game. The Enemy card will explain how many turns the Enemy is willing to Siege before attacking.

The Siege may turn into an Attack in different ways:

- The Enemy sees there are no Defenders in play to protect the Settlement after the Defence phase (Described in Chapter 4). The attack is successful and the game is over.
- The enemy has sieged for the amount of Turns it is willing to wait, and will carry out the Attack alone.
- One or more sieging Enemies are joined by another Enemy card, drawn in a later turn while the first enemies are still prepared to wait in a Siege. Once the enemy with the least amount of turns left to Siege runs out of Siege turns, they all attack together.

## Siege mechanics - Example 1:

### Turn 3

**Draw phase:** An Enemy is drawn. It wants to Siege up to 1 turn.

**Siege phase:** Only the one Enemy in Siege right now. It wants to Attack no later than Turn 4

**Defence phase:** The first Defender of the game is put into play, so the Enemy stays in Siege until the next turn.

### Turn 4

**Draw phase:** A different card than an Enemy is drawn so no new enemies in play this turn.

**Siege phase:** The sieging Enemy would only Siege for 1 turn, so it will attack this turn.

**Defence phase:** The Settlement puts another Defender into play.

**Attack phase:** The sieging Enemy now attacks on its own against the two Defenders.

## Siege mechanics - Example 2:

### Turn 13

**Draw phase:** An Enemy A is drawn. It wants to Siege up to 3 turns.

**Siege phase:** There is only the one Enemy A in Siege right now. It will wait no later than Turn 16 with an Attack.

**Defence phase:** The Settlement has Defenders in play

### Turn 14

**Draw phase:** Another Enemy B is drawn. It wants to Siege up to 1 turn.

**Siege phase:** Enemy A wants to Attack no later than Turn 16. Enemy B wants to Attack no later than Turn 15.

**Defence phase:** The Settlement has Defenders in play

### Turn 15

**Draw phase:** Another Enemy C is drawn. It wants to Siege up to 2 turns.

**Siege phase:** Enemy A wants to Attack no later than Turn 16. Enemy B wants to Attack no later than Turn 15. Enemy C wants to Attack no later than Turn 17. So the attack will take place this turn

**Defence phase:** The Settlement has Defenders in play

**Attack phase:** Enemies A, B and C attack against the Defenders.

## 5B. Attack

To decide the outcome of an Attack, several things must be taken into account.

### 5B0. No defence

As described previously. If you do not have any Defenders in play after the Defence phase of a Siege, the Siege will automatically turn into a successful attack on your Settlement, and the game will be over.

### 5B1. Special abilities

If there are one or more attacking enemies with special abilities such as Flying, there should also be one or more Defenders in play that can defend against this ability. If that is not explicitly mentioned on the card, then it does not have this ability. If you are attacked by flying enemies, and don't have any defenders against them, the attack will be successful no matter the size of your Defence, and the game is over.

### 5B2. Single card attacks

The simplest combat scenario involves a single Enemy with attack A attacking a single Defender with defence D. For this there are always only three possible outcomes:

- If D is larger than A you defeat the Enemy and survive the attack.
- If D is equal to A both Defender and Enemy are destroyed, but the Settlement survives the attack.
- If D is less than A, your settlement is overrun, and the game is over.

#### **Example - Simple Attack mechanics:**

*Enemy X with flying and A=3 attacks Defender Y with defence against flying and D=2.  
Result: the enemy is stronger than the defender and wins and the game is over.*

### 5B3. Multiple card attacks

Attacks with multiple cards on either side should be seen as a battle of combined forces rather than individual skirmishes taking place simultaneously.

For this reason, the task of carrying out a more complex attack becomes a simple question of adding the individual attack (A) of all the Enemies involved in the attack into the Total Attack (TA), and then adding the individual defence (D) of all Defenders involved into the Total Defence (TD). The attack now only has three possible outcomes:

- If TD is larger than TA your Defenders defeat all the Enemy and you survive the attack.
- If TD is equal to TA all Defenders and all Enemies are destroyed, but the Settlement survives the attack.
- If TD is less than TA, your settlement is overrun, and the game is over.

**Example - Slightly complex Attack mechanics:**

The Attackers are:

*Enemy L with flying and A=6*  
*Enemy M with flying and A=3*  
*Enemy N with A=6*

*The Defenders are:*

*Defender Y with defence against flying and D=6*  
*Defender Z with D=10*

*Result: TA is 15 and TD is 16 so the defenders are stronger than the attackers, and all enemies are destroyed.*

## 6. Survival

The game can end in two ways: Either the settlement is destroyed by a successful enemy attack in one of the ways described above, in which case the game was unsuccessful, and does not count as completed. Or the settlement is able to survive all the turns described on the chosen storyline, and is able to complete the story and calculate a final score.

Some common ways a game will end unsuccessfully involves:

- An enemy shows up to an undefended Settlement, and the player is not able to put at least one Defender in play that turn.
- Several enemies are attacking together after a siege, overwhelming the defenders.
- An enemy is attacking with a special ability (like flying), which can not be countered by any of the defenders on the table.
- A loss of Surroundings (S) and/or overspending Resources (R) means the Maintenance (M) can not be paid at the beginning of a new turn, and Defenders must be destroyed, leaving the Settlement vulnerable to the next attack.
- The Settlement's entire defence was destroyed in an attack by enemies of matching strength, and another enemy shows in the following turn without any Defenders in play.

In case these scenarios seem impossible to avoid, it's necessary to understand that the game is intended to be challenging, and that several attempts should also involve different deck building strategies. In this regard, it is also quite possible that the player doesn't have the specific cards necessary to include in a deck, that would even make it theoretically possible complete the chosen Story in the first place.

Should the player be able to complete the Story by having the Settlement survive the last turn described on the Storyline, a simple formula is given on the Story card for how to calculate a final score. If the game can be documented as described on the website, the score can be submitted for possible inclusion on the GC scoreboard.

Read more at <https://gondolincards.com>.

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