

HIDDEN MANDATE

RULES AT A GLANCE / 1 OF 3

Two players. Three systems. One hidden Core per player.

WHAT TO PRINT

Two fixed 25-card starters, one per player. Each contains **1 Head, 1 Core, 2 Decoys, 12 Operatives, 1 Trap, 1 Bomb, and 7 Tactics**.

Print the cards at actual size and place all 50 in identical opaque sleeves. The backs of facedown Vaults and Guards must reveal nothing about their identities.

THE TABLE

Put **Grain - Ways - Power** in that order. Each player has one Guard slot and one Vault slot per system, with Vaults behind Guards. Put each Head face up in its Chamber; keep a deck and discard pile for each player.

The Archive is shared. Group filed proof cards under their printed system and mark which player filed each. Place a Breach marker by the opposing Vault when your Operative gains a Breach there.

SETUP

1. Place your Head face up. Secretly assign your Core and two Decoys to your three Vaults, one facedown in each. Vault positions never change.
2. Shuffle your other 21 cards and draw eight. Choose three Guard cards from those eight (Operatives, Trap, or Bomb) and place one facedown in each Guard slot. Keep the other five as your hand; the remaining 13 form your deck. If you have fewer than three eligible Guards, reshuffle and redraw eight.
3. Choose the first player randomly. Players alternate, one turn each per round. Switch who starts in the next game. Set out Breach markers and a round counter.

EACH ROUND

At the start of a round, turn all exhausted public proofs upright. At the start of your turn, draw one card if your deck has one, then take **one action** from page 2. You may pass.

After the action, discard down to seven cards in hand. A failed draw when the deck is empty is simply skipped. A round ends after both players act.

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Draw one, then take exactly one action. File ordinary cards or use them in play.

THE SEVEN ACTIONS

FILE. Put a card from hand face up under its printed file sector in the shared Archive and mark yourself as filer. Its Guard or Tactic ability does not happen. You cannot file a Head, Core, or Decoy.

DEPLOY. Place an Operative, Trap, or Bomb from hand facedown in one of your empty Guard slots. You may first retire your own existing Guard there face up to discard. Replacing a Guard does not remove an enemy Breach. A Scout may reveal itself on deployment to inspect the opposing Guard privately.

MOVE. Reveal one of your facedown Operatives and move it to an empty friendly Guard slot. Regular Operatives use adjacent Grain-Ways-Power routes. Engineers (Access 0) and Scouts (Access 1) may go directly from their current slot to either other empty friendly Guard slot. A moved Operative loses its Breach; a revealed card stays face up.

RECON. Turn one ready public proof in the chosen system sideways to privately look at the opposing Guard there. Either player's proof can be cited. Recon never reveals a Vault.

CLASH. Reveal your Operative in a Guard slot and attack the opposing Guard in that same system. Trap and Bomb cannot attack. Apply the results on page 3. Rook may cite one ready proof he filed in that system before the defender is revealed for +1 Access, once per round.

PROBE. You need your Operative in that Guard slot, its live Breach in that system, and at least two **different** proof seals filed under that system. Turn over the enemy Vault. A Core wins immediately; discard a Decoy face up, remove your Breach, and continue. Exhausted proofs still count.

TACTIC. Play a Tactic from hand by turning sideways a ready public proof in the Tactic's printed sector with a **different** seal. Resolve the printed effect, then discard the Tactic. Without legal proof, you may file the Tactic on a later turn instead.

PASS AND HAND LIMIT

You may pass when you cannot or do not wish to act. After an action, choose cards to discard until you have at most seven in hand.

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Reveal the defender only when a Clash resolves. Keep the Vault concealed until Probe.

RESOLVE A CLASH

Empty Guard: Your Operative survives and gains a Breach in that system.

Enemy Operative: Reveal it. Higher Access survives in its Guard; discard lower Access. Equal Access discards both. A surviving attacker gains a Breach. A surviving defender stays revealed.

Trap: Reveal it. An Engineer (Access 0) removes the Trap, survives, and gains a Breach. Any other attacker and the Trap are both discarded with no Breach.

Bomb: Reveal it. Bomb and attacker are both discarded, even when the attacker is an Engineer. No Breach is gained.

PUBLIC PROOF AND BREACH

Proof bears one printed sector and one seal: **Witness, System, or Law**. Two different seals in the same system verify its Vault. Ownership does not restrict Recon or verification; a cited proof becomes ready again at the start of the next round.

One Operative may hold one Breach. A Breach lasts through the **end of its owner's next turn**, unless used for Probe or removed sooner. Defeating, moving, or retiring that Operative removes its Breach. Deploying a replacement Guard by itself does not. A fresh Clash takes another action.

HEADS AND VICTORY

Marian Vale / Free City: Once per round, after you File, privately inspect one opposing Guard in that card's printed sector.

Commander Rook / Continuity: Once per round, before a Clash, cite a ready proof you filed in the target system; your attacker gains +1 Access for that Clash.

Probe the opposing real Core to win immediately. A Decoy does not win. If neither Core has been found after **20 complete rounds**, the playtest ends in a draw.

PLAYTEST NOTE

Paper play uses two players. The guided browser demo offers either a match against the computer or local pass-and-play. Full card abilities and updates: sleeperarchive.com/game/rules/.