

The Rules of

Diplomacy

THE
GOLDEN
BLADE
CARD GAME

BACKGROUND

In **Diplomacy: The Golden Blade**, each player represents one of the seven “Great Powers of Europe” in the years prior to World War I. These Great Powers are England, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Italy, France, and Austria-Hungary (hereafter referred to simply as Austria). Instead of battling on a map of Europe, each Great Power will be battling the Great Powers on their left, on their right, and beyond.

Each turn, you will secretly issue Orders to attack or support your neighbors. As leader of your Great Power, your goal is to acquire and deploy your Units in pursuit of control over Europe. However, in order to succeed, you will need help from other Great Powers. Knowing whom to trust, when to trust them, what to promise, and when to break promises is the key to success.

CONTENTS





- 102 Order and player aid cards
- 150 Unit cards, covering three years
- 42 Power Grid tokens
- 1 Ambassador Card

HOW TO PLAY

OVERVIEW

At the start of the game, each player chooses which Great Power they will represent. You will be building your power across three domains: **Army**, **Fleet**, and **Political**. All players start with a power level of 0 in all three domains. As you deploy more Units, your power levels will build and can increase up to level 3. The first player to achieve level 3 in **any ONE domain** wins the game. With a mix of cunning and guile, this player will become **The Golden Blade**.

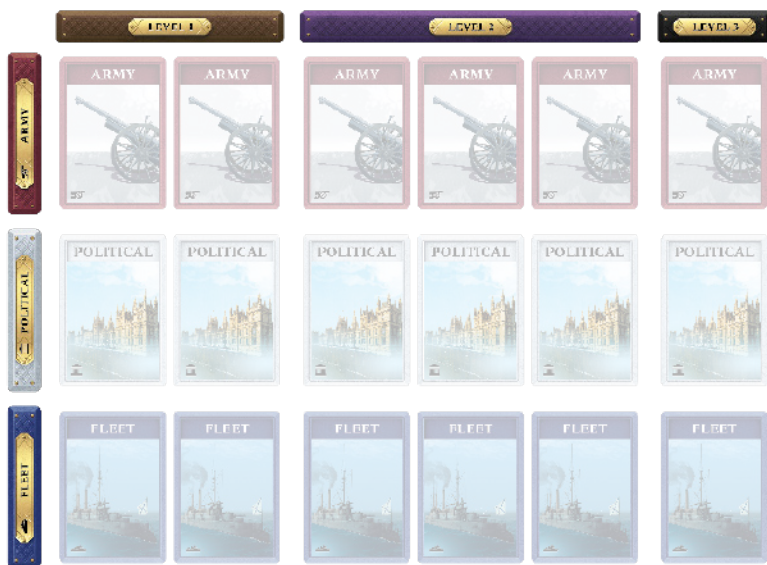
SETUP

1. Sort the Order cards by Great Power. Each player starts with 12 Order cards for their Great Power. There are four types of Order cards: **Army** , **Fleet** , **Political**  and **Promises** .

Note: France and Austria have two extra Order cards that are only used for the 2 player game, noted on the bottom of the card. Leave them in the box if you are not playing that variant.

2. Give each player two **Hold** Order cards, flipping one to show the Phase Order side of the card.

3. Give each player a set of three Power Level markers (Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3) and three Domain markers (Army, Political, and Fleet) and arrange them as shown in the setup diagram to create their Power Grid.
4. Separate all the Unit cards into three decks by the year on their backs and shuffle each deck separately. Using the 1901 deck, deal 5 Unit cards to each player. The rest of this deck will become the Library. Set the other two decks aside until later. The contents of your hand are always kept secret.
5. Randomly choose a player to take the Ambassador token. Set the Ambassador token near the left corner of their Power Grid.



Setup Diagram

First Phase: Before the first turn starts, all players simultaneously perform a single **Build** Phase. See pg. 7 for more details about the **Build** Phase.

PHASES OF A TURN

Each turn is divided into four phases:

1. **Supply**
2. **Diplomacy & Orders**
3. **Order Resolution***
4. **Build**

*The Order Resolution Phase is the only phase that is played sequentially. **All other phases are played simultaneously by all players.**



1. **Supply** - Each player draws 1 Unit card from the Library and adds it to their hand. When the 1901 deck is empty, switch to the 1902 deck as the Library. When the 1902 deck is empty, switch to the 1903 deck. If the 1903 deck is empty, shuffle any Unit cards in the discard pile to create a new Library. It may be that some of these cards are from different years.

2. **Diplomacy & Orders** - Players may now discuss their plans for this turn and upcoming turns. Alliances can be made or shift or be broken. Conversations, deals, schemes, and agreements among players will greatly affect the course of the game. During diplomatic negotiations, players may say anything they wish. They may lean over and talk privately to each other or they may discuss things publicly. These conversations may consist of bargaining or joint planning, but they may also include denouncements, threats, spreading of rumors, and so on. These discussions, however, **do not bind** a player to anything they may say. Deciding whom to trust as situations arise is an important part of the game.

Note: Players may **NEVER** give/receive cards as payment for agreeing to a plan.

Note: While players may flash Order cards to each other during this phase, Orders are **always placed secretly**. You must never be completely sure that a neighboring player chose a specific Order card, and cards must always be placed in a way that their identity is kept hidden. For this reason, each player should shuffle their Order cards before choosing them or select them out of sight of the other players.


Time Limit: Negotiations last no more than five minutes per turn, but may end sooner if all players agree. As players conclude their negotiations, you will begin to choose the Order cards that you will be executing during the Order Resolution phase of this turn.

Some Order cards have a special icon in the bottom right corner. This will feature an Attack icon  or a Power icon . There are some other Order cards that block the resolution of these kinds of Orders. These are not universal and are **only valid** for Orders that match these special icons.

Once you have chosen your Order cards, place one card face down between you and the Great Power on your left and one between you and the Great Power on your right. These are the **fronts** and they are where you will resolve potential conflict between you and your neighbors.

Note: Your left side Order only affects your left-hand neighbor and your right side Order only affects only your right-hand neighbor.

The Orders that are available to you each turn are **limited by your power level** in each specific domain (Army, Fleet, and Political) compared to the power level of your neighbor on that front. You may **NOT** choose an Order from a specific domain if this neighbor has a **HIGHER** power level in that same domain; yours must be equal or higher than that neighbor's power level. If you do play an Order that is illegal in this way, you will be forced to replace it with a **Hold** and will lose your Order on that front this turn. **Note:** If you have a **lower** power level in **all** domains, you may be forced to **Hold** for all your Orders.

Note: The Promise  Order cards require you to trust the player on your left or right, and they have no power level restrictions and can always be chosen.

*Example: A player with an Army power level of 1 may **NOT** choose an Army-based Order on a front if that neighbor has an Army power level of 2. However, they may be able to play an Army-based Order on their other front.*



*This player has Army Power Level 1, Political Power Level 2,
and Fleet Power Level 3.*

Power Levels: Each player starts with a power level of 0 in all three domains. During the game, players will increase their power levels by deploying Unit cards to their Power Grid. The Unit cards in your Power Grid track your power levels, but it is not a 1:1 ratio.

- › 0 Unit cards: **Power Level 0**
- › 1-2 Unit cards: **Power Level 1**
- › 3-5 Unit cards: **Power Level 2**
- › 6 Unit cards: **Power Level 3**

Note: A common mistake players make is thinking that having 2 Unit cards in a domain gives them power level 2 in that domain. Until you have Unit cards under the **LEVEL 2** Power Level marker in your Power Grid, you do not yet have power level 2.

3. Order Resolution – All players simultaneously flip over both of their chosen Order cards.

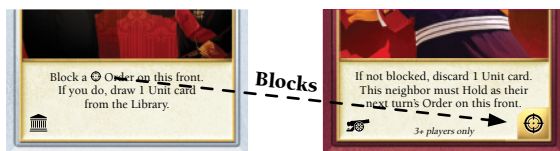
First, check for any illegal Orders by comparing the power level you have in the domain matching the Order you chose against the power level of that neighbor in the same domain. If this neighbor's power level is **higher**, your Order is illegal and must be replaced with a **Hold** Order card.

Note: A player's power levels may change during the resolution of Orders. This does not make any existing Orders illegal. It only matters if the Order was legal at the time that it was secretly chosen, before Order Resolution started.

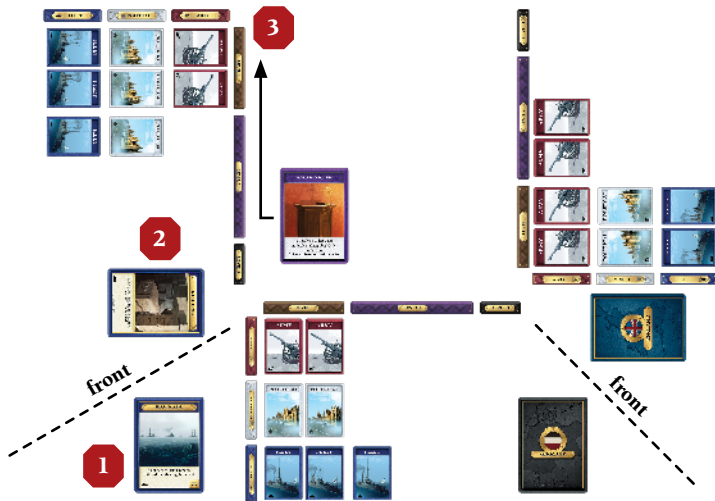
Unlike the other phases, Order Resolution starts with the player who has the Ambassador token and proceeds clockwise. First, try to resolve their left side Order. Then, try to resolve their neighbor's Order on this front.

One or both of these Orders may be a Blocking Order. There are different types of Blocking Orders that can automatically cancel certain other Orders (see pgs. 8-9). Check to see if the special icons on the other Order chosen on this side match those of the Blocking Order.

It doesn't matter if the Blocking Order is resolved first or second, as long as it matches. If an Order is blocked, **nothing** listed on that Order happens.



Note: Coalition is a Promise Order card that can also block other Orders. A Coalition may even be a pair of Orders on a front that has not yet been resolved by the Ambassador token. For each Order, be sure to check that this neighbor did not execute a successful Coalition on their other front.



1. The player with the Ambassador token played the order Blockade. However, the neighbor to their left currently has no Unit cards in hand. Blockade resolves first but since their left neighbor's hand is empty there is no Unit card to take.
2. Next, the right side order of the left hand neighbor is resolved. That player now draws a new Unit card to resolve Resupply.
3. The Ambassador token now rotates to the player to the left. If more orders are yet to be resolved, the process repeats with the new Ambassador's left side Order.

Note: There are some Orders that can **never** be blocked.

Once both Orders on this front have been resolved or blocked, check if more Orders still need to be resolved between other players. If so, pass the Ambassador token to the next player in a clockwise fashion. The above steps are then repeated until all Orders have been processed. After all Orders are done, the Ambassador token will end up in front of the player to the right of where it began the turn.

After each Order is resolved, that player takes the Order card back into their hand. Each turn, you will have access to **all** of your Order cards. Your options are only limited by your power levels and the ability to play legal Orders.

4. Build - All players secretly choose 1 Unit card from their hand to **Deploy**. Place it face down next to your Power Grid. Once all players have chosen, all chosen cards are revealed and placed into the leftmost **empty** slot of that domain in their Power Grid. Check to see if any Great Power has now achieved power level 3 in any of the three domains before starting another turn. If so, proceed to the **End of the Game** instead.

If the game does not end at this time, proceed to the next turn with a new Supply Phase.

END OF THE GAME

When one or more players achieves power level 3 in at least one domain, that player immediately wins the game! If multiple players do so at the same time, compare their second-highest domain to break the tie by counting the number of slots filled. If they are still tied, use their third-highest domain to break the tie by counting the number of slots filled. If they are still tied, use the number of Unit cards in their hands to break the tie. If they are still tied, they rejoice in their shared victory. The winner is *The Golden Blade!*

ORDER CARD INDEX

ARMY ORDERS



1. Sabotage

The removed Unit card goes to the discard pile.

Blocked by **Embargo**.

2. Espionage

You always view their hand, even if you do not swap. Each swap means that you take 1 Unit card from their hand and give them one from yours.

Blocked by **Censure**.



3. Backstab

If this Order is blocked, you do not discard the Unit card.

Blocked by **Censure**.

Used in **3+ player games only**.

4. Sanctions

Used in **2 player games only**.

FLEET ORDERS



1. Embargo
Blocks **Proliferation** and **Sabotage**.

2. Blockade
Blocked by **Censure**.



3. Resupply
Can **never** be blocked, but can be an illegal Order.

Used in 3+ player games only.

4. Convoy
Can **never** be blocked, but can be an illegal Order.

Used in 2 player games only.

POLITICAL ORDERS



1. Censure
Blocks **Stab**, **Espionage**, **Blockade**, and **Subterfuge**.

2. Proliferation
If this Order is blocked, you do not discard the Unit card

Blocked by **Embargo**.

3. Subterfuge
Blocked by **Censure**.

PROMISES



1. Alliance

This neighbor may choose to resolve their Order against you as normal or they can resolve it against your neighbor on your other side. Their Order can never be blocked.

This can **never** be an illegal Order.

Used in 3+ player games only.



2. Accord

If only you chose Accord, this does nothing.

This can **never** be an illegal Order.

Used in 3+ player games only.



3. Coalition

If only you chose Coalition, this does nothing.

This can **never** be an illegal Order.




Doesn't block Orders that can never be blocked. Coalition on one side will block an Accord on the other.


Used in 3+ player games only.

2 PLAYER VARIANT - FRANCE VS. AUSTRIA

Most of the rules for the 2 player variant are the same as for a game with 3 or more players. It is also recommended that you play at least one game with 3 or more players before trying the 2 player variant. Only the specific changes to the rules will be mentioned below. If something isn't mentioned here, it works the same as in a 3 or more player game.

SETUP

1. Use the France and Austria backed Order cards. Each player starts with only nine Order cards for their Great Power. These Order cards will be of three types: **Army** , **Fleet** , and **Political** .

Note: Be sure to replace Resupply and Backstab with Convoy and Sanctions. The Promise  Order cards aren't used in the 2 player variant.

2. Give each player three **Hold** Order cards: two showing either France or Austria on the back, and one showing the Phase Order on the back. Place the Phase Order side face up as a player aid.

3. Give each player a set of three Power Level markers (Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3) and three Domain markers (Army, Political, and Fleet) and arrange them as shown in the setup diagram on pg. 3 to create their Power Grid.

4. Separate all the Unit cards into three decks by the year on their backs and shuffle each deck separately. Using the 1901 deck, deal 5 Unit cards to each player. The rest of this deck will become the Library. Set the other two decks aside until later. The contents of your hand of Unit cards are always kept secret.

5. Randomly choose a player to take the Ambassador token. Set the Ambassador token near the left corner of their Power Grid.

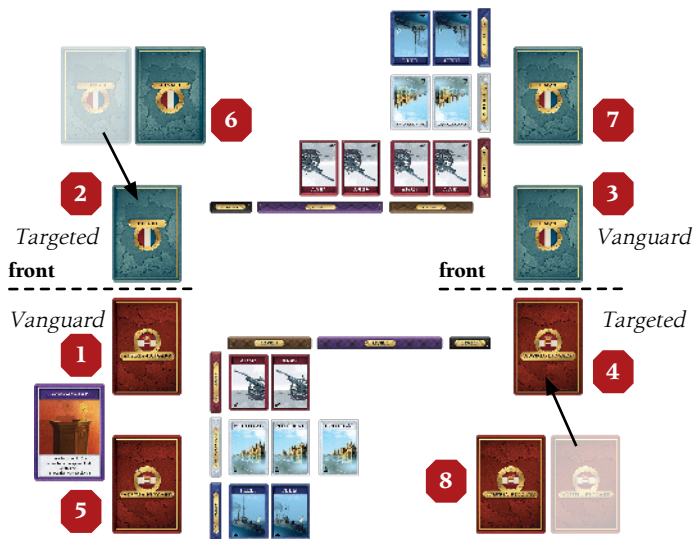
CHANGES TO THE RULES

- *Diplomacy & Orders Phase* – There is no ability to negotiate Orders in a world with only two Great Powers. Instead, you will be playing mind games with your opponent. Your ability to bluff and double-bluff is how you will succeed. You will have two conflicts on each front during each turn. This means that you will be choosing *two* Order cards on *each* side.

Once you have chosen your Order cards, place two of them face-down on your left and two of them face-down on your right. Your Orders that are available to you each turn remain *limited by your power level* in each domain (Army, Fleet, and Political).

Note: If you can only use the 3 Order cards from one domain because of your power levels, you will have to use a Hold card instead of your fourth Order card and effectively lose that Order slot. Be sure to use the Hold card with your Great Power on the back to disguise where you play this Order card.

Many Order cards specify that they have an effect “on this front”. Even though there are now multiple conflicts on each front, each Order will only be involved in one of these conflicts. No Order will ever be involved in both conflicts on a front.



The Orders in a two-player game are resolved in the order shown here

After all Orders have been placed, each player chooses one of their Order cards on their left-hand side and moves it forward as their Vanguard Order.

Then each player will choose one of their opponent's two Orders on this front to target with their Vanguard Order. Slide the targeted Order up next to your Vanguard Order. Leave the other four Orders where they are until later.

- **Order Resolution** - First, check for any illegal Orders by comparing the power level you have in the domain matching the Order you chose against the power level of the opponent in the same domain. If the opponent's power level is *higher*, your Order is illegal and must be replaced with a Hold Order card.

Note: A player's power levels may change during the resolution of Orders. This does not make any existing Orders illegal. It only matters if the Order was legal at the time that it was secretly chosen, before Order Resolution started.

Order Resolution starts with the player who has the Ambassador token. First, try to resolve the Vanguard Order on your left. Next, try to resolve the targeted Order on this same front. One or more of these Orders may be a Blocking Order. Check if they match the special icons on the opposing Order. Remember that it doesn't matter if the Blocking Order is resolved first or second as long as it matches.

Note: Sanctions is a Blocking Order that matches two special icons.

Once both Orders have been resolved or blocked, the Ambassador token is passed to the other player. Repeat the steps above, trying to resolve that player's Vanguard Order and its targeted Order. Then the Ambassador token is passed back to where it started.

Now that all the Vanguard Orders and their targets have been resolved, place them back with the rest of your Order cards. None of these Order cards will remain for the second conflict on each front. There should be only four Order cards in play at this point.

Next, reveal the four remaining Order cards. Check for any illegal Orders again.

It is *highly* likely that one or more power levels will have changed for one or both players. Players may have to recall the game state before any Orders were resolved this turn. It only matters if the Order was legal at the time that it was secretly chosen before Order Resolution started, even if that situation has changed.

Resolve these four Orders in the normal clockwise fashion, passing the Ambassador token to the other player after these next two Orders are resolved. Do not return the Ambassador token to the first player after resolving the second pair of Order cards. The Ambassador token will end up alternating between players at the beginning of each turn.



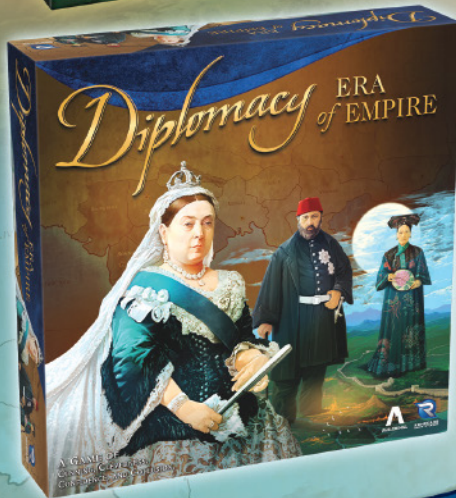
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