
Swords and Stones®



IF YOU HAVE STONES, YOU'RE STILL IN THE GAME



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***Disclaimer - This game is in no way meant to be historical, realistic, or accurate... It is more about stuff I remembered and loved as a kid: comics, fantasy books, b-grade movies, and kick-buttery. I hope you enjoy it! -Doug**

Blah blah blah → Backstory.... Let's just cut to the action. This is a simplified weapon fighting card game. Reduce your opponent's morale to zero by taking turns attacking the other players in the game. Blue Stones represents morale. Remember: if you have Stones, you are still in the game.

Oh, I hate explaining games, but you're in luck because here comes Mr. Cletis. Mr. Cletis is the town dru.... umm... mascot, and he will be more than happy to show you the basics. Mr. Cletis? Mr. Cletis! No sir! That is not a public urinal. Would you come over here this instant and tell our good friends about this amazing game?

Indistinct chatter

"For one thing, they seem very nice, and I seriously doubt that they bite. Secondly, what do elderberries smell like anyway, and how would you know? Just get over here now! Please don't make me drag you... again."

Okay, he is coming. Just for safety... oh... did I say *safety*? I meant: to make sure he doesn't miss anything. I'm going to stick around a little and might add in something if Mr. Cletis happens to miss details. Mr. Cletis is perfectly *harmless* unless you happen to be from Schrodinburgh or have an open alcoholic beverage. So, if you don't mind... you in the back? Yes, you know who you are. Put that away now! Thank you. Now no one is from Schrodinburgh, are they? No, don't answer that. Could you just keep that to yourself? I see that look over there. Keep that quiet: no one needs to know, and I have my eye on you!

Ladies and gentlemen? I give you Mr. Cletis.

Thank you, Mr. Arnold. Greetings and salutations, unwitting adventurers. I am here to tell you about this fantastically adventurous game that will pit you against your closest friends in a battle of wits and the loss of dignity. It is called Swords... Swords and Ummm... hmmm... Swords and Stoned.

Stones, Mr. Cletis. SWORDS AND STONES!

Oh yes, Swords and Stones. It rolls right off the old tongue, doesn't it? Yes, a smashing game full of fun, and who knows, maybe peril. I don't know. Villany and whatnot. Yes, yes, yes. This game has it all. Let's get down to business, shall we? But first, I require a beverage to keep my speaking voice in top condition. Oh, thank you, Mr. Arnold. <<gulp>> <<coughs>> Dear God, man! That was water! What are you trying to do? Kill me? You know I played King Lear? I am a proper thespian!

Mr. Cletis, perhaps you should start with setting up the game?

You don't need to tell me where to start, sir. I'll have you know that I'm a professional! I will continue with my parched throat and valiantly endeavor to show these friendly people how to play the game... Unless they are from Schrodinburgh, None of you are from that terrible dung-pile, are you? If you are, you will get no lesson from me.

No one is from there, Mr. Cletis. Please carry on for the love of all that is good.

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Okay, but why did you look in the back when you said that? No matter, let's continue! Setting up the game is really simple. Open the box, and it is going to contain all of the items you need for play. **There will be a bag of stones (about 60), a die, a turn token (looks like a sword), and six decks of cards (two Play decks with 47 cards each and four Defense decks with six cards each).**

This is all you need to play. Now, I know the side of the box says that there are ways to play with 1 to 4 players... the truth is that the game is better with more players. And even though there are only four defense decks in the box, defense decks can be shared. All of the defense decks have the same six cards in them. If you need more stones, use something like pennies, beans, teeth, or poker chips. It's okay: we won't judge you.

Oh, another thing, upfront: don't mix up the decks. Use the backs of the decks to separate them and remove all of the 'intentionally blank' cards, placing them back in the box.

So, every player playing should be given 12 stones (or pennies... you get the idea), and if there are four or fewer players, each player will take a defense deck. This deck will be used the entire game. None of the cards in defense decks are discarded during the game. If there are more than four, players will have to share defense decks, which is completely fine unless one of those players bites or is from Schrodinburgh because there is no sharing with those kinds of people.

At this point, each player must choose to be a Viking or a Samurai. What? Not in real life, you idiot. Mr. Arnold, are you sure that person in the back isn't from Schrodinburgh? Nasty people, those Schrodinburghers. Okay! No, interesting person in the back, not in real life, though that sounds fun. Trust me: Vikings and Samurai do not get along, especially at formal dinner parties. In the game, there are two different play decks, One for Vikings and one for Samurais:



The Two Play Decks

The two decks have the exact same distribution of cards, but their attack strategies are slightly different. **The Viking tends to want to attack the middle the most (41% of the time), then the top (37%), then the bottom (22%). A Samaria has exactly even distribution on their attacks (all 33%).** Though this does give some insight into Viking strategy, there is little advantage since the sum of all attack cards for both decks are the same.

Still, each player needs to pick a hero, and players should use the hero that matches the defense deck they are holding so it is easier to remember. Once everyone has picked their hero type, it is time to start playing the game.

Both play decks need to be shuffled. In gameplay, it is possible to use all of the cards in a deck. If this occurs, shuffle up the discard pile and continue.

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Each player takes five cards from the play deck of their chosen hero. Somehow, someone is picked to start the game. Now, you can do this any way you like, but I would suggest avoiding using sharp objects to pick the starting player. Also, avoid using devices that explode to determine this because they might mess up the cards. I would also suggest never letting someone from Schrodinburgh start the game. It would be a terrible mess and not fun for anyone. The game would probably get sacked anyway... so pick the starting player. You could use the die to determine this, but far be it from me to suggest such a way to determine the starting player.

Oh, I almost forgot, if there is a doubt on rules, the bugger who owns the game has the last say. A little legal mumbo-jumbo that I needed to say... Now, where were we?

You were still setting up the game... Cletis, it isn't that hard. Everyone gets five cards from their play deck, A defense deck (with six cards), 12 stones, and the starting player gets a turn token (The sword). There should also be a stone repository that we will affectionately call *The Pile Of Morale Stones* and discard piles for the used play cards.

Um, yeah, that pretty much sums it up. Say, is anyone thirsty? Perhaps we should break and get some refreshments. I also feel like singing...

Nope, we'll have none of that. On with it, Mr. Cletis, you have a long way to go, and you are just on gameplay.

Right-o chap. Gameplay is the most important thing to playing the game... correctly. Gameplay is made up of each player taking turns and trying to use the cards they have in their hands. The goal is to keep your stones. The stones represent morale, and so when your morale goes to zero, you are out of the game. Buh-Bye! No one wants that... really.

The main goal here is to be the last one to survive. It is like going to dinner with aunt Hermiemie and her sniveling boyfriend, Russel. In that case, the goal is to be the last one awake, so you aren't stuck having to pay the whole dinner tab. The last time, it was just my mum and me left, I was clearly in the running, and she did me dirty by offering me another pint of Autumnal Meed. Ten minutes later, I'm stuck with the bill and having to find a ride home. But I digress.

Now let's talk about a player's turn. If you look at the play cards in your hand, you will notice that some cards have the word **starter card** in the lower left of the card:



As the name implies, these cards are the only cards that can be used at the start of your turn. Most of the **starter cards** are **attacking cards**, but there are two exceptions: **Courage** and **Useless**. The **Courage** card will add three stones to your pile and end your turn immediately. **Useless** will simply end your turn immediately. Much like my cousin, Reginald, it is a total waste of time with no taste in clothing (Oh, that's just Reginald, not the **Useless** card).

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Now you are asking yourself: Cletis, Sure, you've told me how to start my turn, but how can I use more than one card per turn?

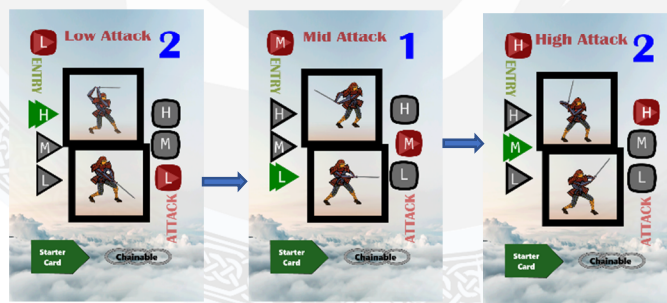
This is a great question, and I love your enthusiasm! I will answer it, but first, I must talk about attacking. Attacking is the primary way we take someone else's morale (stones). Here is an example of an attack card:



Now this card has the following items on it. First, see in the lower left? It is a **starter card**. We already went over that. The next thing on the bottom is that it says that this card is **Chainable**. This will require some explanation too. There is the attack position (on the middle right of the card and noted on the top), there is an Entry Position (On the middle left of the card), and there is damage value (upper right).

Using the available card in their hand, a player can attack an opponent with a high, middle, or low attack. If the player is successful in their attack (see below), they can use other cards in their hand in conjunction with this card to 'chain' together with a combination of attacks on their opponent.

Now, to chain together attacks, the Entry position must match the Attack position of the previous card. Consider this example:



The first card (the far left) was a low attack, which requires a low entry on the second attack card (middle). The second card had a middle attack, so the third card (far right) needed a middle entry. This combination is quite formidable.

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If this were someone's play, each successful attack card used grants the attacker one stone (three stones from The Pile Of Morale Stones), and the number on the right tells how many stones are taken from the victim for that successful attack (In this case, six stones go to The Pile Of Morale Stones).

Now, so far, I've only talked about the attacker. Let's take a moment to discuss the defender. **Only on the initial attack does a defender get to defend.** When a player is informed they are about to be attacked, the defender uses their **defense deck** to pick their best defending stance against the attack. The defender picks their primary and secondary defended positions (from High, Middle, and Low). This will leave one of the three positions entirely open for attack. The six cards in the **defense deck** cover all of the possible choices for protection. So the defender picks the appropriate card and waits.

When the players are ready with their **attack card** and **defense card**, they simultaneously reveal their choice to determine the outcome of the attack. One of three outcomes can occur:

- 1) The **attack card** hits the **open defense**, and the attacker is allowed to continue using the cards in their hand against that player
- 2) The **attack card** hits the **secondary defense**, ending the attacker's turn, but allows the single attack card to count
- 3) The **attack card** hits the **primary defense**, which allows the defender to use their hand to counter-attack the attacker. Something worth noting, **there is no defense from a counter-attack.** The counter-attacker can use any cards in their hand, and rules for chaining still apply

Here is an example of a Viking attacking a defending Samurai:



The Samurai blocked the mid-attack of the Viking with their secondary defense position (Well done, Chap!). This means that the attack counts for two stones being lost by the Samurai and one stone gained by the Viking for a successful attack. This also ends the turn of the Viking.

Mr. Cletis, let me stop you for a second and discuss just a few additional rules here. First of all, the most attack damage that can be done in any turn is seven. You can still keep attacking, and for each successful attack card, the attack will still pick up a single stone, but only seven points of damage are possible to the defender. This number does exclude poison, which is assessed later in the player's turn.

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A player's attack (or counter-attack) sequence is finished when one of three things occurs:

- 1) The player plays a card that has a hand that says 'end turn' on it
- 2) The player can make no more plays with his cards
- 3) The play runs out of cards

Once the attack or counter-attack sequence is completed, any poison cards given to these players are assessed.

The last thing in a turn is to replenish a depleted hand. Both the attacker and defender might replenish their hand if they expended any cards that turn. Before picking new cards, a player may discard two cards from their hand (Any card but **Useless**). The player may draw up to three cards, but at no time should a player have more than five cards in their hand.

By the way, **there are no limits to how many stones a player can possess.**

Boring! Are you through yet?

Well, yes, I am, but that was most rude.

Mr. Arnold, you should leave the explanations to the professionals. I, after all, was the lead in King Lear.

Of course, you were, and you still would be if you could have stayed sober through the second act.

What?

Oh, nothing. Carry on, oh great fount of wisdom.

Well, thank you, good sir, and carry on is what I shall do. But first, perhaps we should break for a quick swig of something. I'm thinking of a nice port.

Nope, keep going, Mr. Cletis.

Oh, very well. You may notice that there are a couple of extra cards in the play deck. I am going to describe each of them briefly.

Brutal Strike – A pure damage card: the player adds no Stones to their morale for this card.

Reckless Strike – A variable damage card that has a chance to invoke a counter-attack.

Poison – This card is placed on the table in front of the attacked player. At the end of the holder's turn (they still play their normal turn), they lose one stone and place it on this card. When the holder has placed three Stones on the card, the poison effect ends. The holder then discards the poison card to the appropriate Discard Pile and puts the stones in The Pile Of Morale Stones. **Note: there is no limit to how many poison cards a player can hold.**

Courage – Also can be used as a Starter Card: It merely adds the amount of Stones in the upper right corner to the player's morale

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Distraction – Playing a distraction card forces the recipient to lose their ability to attack their next turn. Even though the player cannot attack during their turn, the effects of poison will still be assessed at the end of the turn.

Dirty Trick – Dirty Trick is a bit of a chance card. The defender rolls a die. A value of 1, 2, or 3 means the attacker may continue using any other card in their hand. A 4 or 5 means that it is the end of their turn, and 6 means the defender can counter-attack.

Useless – As the name implies, the useless card fills up a slot in your hand. It can't be discarded at the end of a turn. It must be played. Playing the **Useless** card will also end a player's turn.

Shield – This is a strange card. You can use it to defend yourself from an attack. It covers the open defense with a second, secondary defense. Once used, the card is discarded. The card has no other use. When this card is used, it must be shown with your selected defense card. It cannot be used after the fact.

When your turn is finished, the turn token (the little sword) is passed to the person to the left. Try not to stab them with it. I know it is tempting, but stabbing with the turn token will not grant you any stones whatsoever. When the token is passed, then their turn begins.

Well, that's about it.

Is there anything else you want to say?

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods...

King Lear! I should have seen that one coming. Okay, Mr. Cletis, thank you for your time. This brings our quick tour of this game to an end. On behalf of Mr. Cletis and Me, we would like to thank you for sticking around. Good luck to you in your adventures with Swords and Stones.

Mr. Cletis? Mr. Cletis? Get up, you miserable sot. This isn't a hostel.

Indistinct chatter

No! No one here is from Schrodinburgh. And remuneration for what? You just talked about a stupid game (no offense Doug). Now move along before I have to cart you off.

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Quick Setup:

The box comes with: A bag of stones (about 60), a die, a turn token (looks like a sword), and six decks of cards (two Play decks with 47 cards each, and four Defense decks with six cards each).

To begin play:

- 1) Shuffle both **Play Decks** and place them on the table
- 2) Make two discard piles for the **Play Decks** as well as a Morale Stone Pile
- 3) Each player choose their hero (Samurai or Viking) and claims the matching **Defense Deck**
- 4) Each player claims 12 Morale stones from the stone pile
- 5) Each player takes 5 **Play Cards** from the appropriate **Play Deck** for their hero
- 6) A starting player is determined and is given the turn token (the plastic sword)

Action Phase:

- 1) The player must choose from the five cards in their hand what action they want to perform
 - a. Only cards that say 'starter' card in the lower left may be used initially.
 - b. If the player chooses to attack another player (any player can be attacked), he must announce it to that player so that they can prepare by choosing a card from their **Defense Deck**
 - i. Attacks can be high, middle, or low. And the defender can defend only two of those three locations. Both the attack and defense cards are revealed at the same time.
 - ii. There are three outcomes to an attack:
 1. The **Attack** lands on the unprotected (Open) spot
 - a. The attacker may continue using cards in their hand to attack
 - b. The Entry (H/M/L) on the new card must match the Attack on the current card to continue with attack cards. This is called **chaining**
 - c. Other specialty cards can be played, but they will end the action phase (They have a hand on them and say '**End Turn**'). Descriptions of the specialty cards are on pages 6 and 7 of this manual.
 - d. The player continues until he chooses to stop, uses an '**End Turn**' card, or has no other plays
 2. The **Attack** lands on the Secondary Defense
 - a. The attack is blunted, though the card counts, it ends the action phase of the player's turn
 3. The **Attack** lands on the Primary Defense
 - a. The defender gets to counter-attack the attacker, using the rules above in item 1. Keep in mind that on a counter-attack, no defense card is used. When the counter-attack is complete, the action phase of the player's turn is done.

Damage Phase

- 1) For Each successful attack card, the attacker gets one stone from the **Morale Stone Pile**, and the damage value in the card's upper-right is taken from the defender and placed in the pile.
- 2) No more than 7 Morale Poison damage can be taken from a defender due to attack cards (Poison is excluded in this calculation)
- 3) Poison is evaluated last. Each Poison card takes one stone from the player, and the stone is placed on the card until there are three stones. Then the card is placed in the appropriate discard pile, and the stones are added to the **Morale Stone Pile**

Card Replenishment Phase:

- 1) Once the damage is evaluated, all involved in the attack may discard up to two cards from their own hands (Useless may not be discarded in this manner).
- 2) When they have discarded what they want, they may pick up up to three more cards from the **Play Deck Pile**
- 3) A player may not have more than five cards in their hand at any time.
- 4) If a Play deck is empty, take the discard deck, shuffle it, and re-use the cards.

Once both players have replenished their hands, the **turn token** is passed to the current player's left, ending their turn.

Special thanks go out to my wife Laura, daughters Emily and Elizabeth, friends Justin Sprague, Garret Gordon, Bennett Redstone, Bill Gailbraith, and last but not least, Clint Wallace for all of their help, encouragement, and support.

Game concept, art, layout, writing by Doug Joseph.