

~Game Rules~

Shadows & Syndicates

Lose the fight, but never lose your path...

**Welcome to the world of
Shadows & Syndicates**

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LEGAL NOTICE – CE MARKING

This product does not fall under the European Union's Toy Directive 2009/48/EC. It is a card game explicitly designed for individuals aged 16 and above.

Content, language, presentation, and game mechanics are not suitable for or intended for children under the age of 14. The graphic design serves an artistic purpose and is not aimed at a child-specific audience. Therefore, CE marking is not required.

Disclaimer

All elements of this collectible card game are inspired by reality to varying degrees. Any similarities to real-life events or persons are purely coincidental and unintentional. Great care has been taken to remain as far removed from reality as possible in order to create an original and unique game world, minimizing the chances of accidental resemblance.

Concept & Presentation

All characters and other elements in Shadows & Syndicates are portrayed in an exaggerated manner. The game deliberately avoids realistic depictions of drugs and weapons.

Gameplay & Collecting Worlds

This collectible card game aims to return to the true spirit of playing and collecting: players should be free to play, collectors free to collect. That's why Shadows & Syndicates is available both as an unlimited Player's Edition (complete set) and as a limited collector's edition.

Each edition uses different card stock: light and tactile for gameplay, enhanced and archive-ready for collecting. The closed collecting system ensures that no more collectors begin a collection than can realistically complete it in the end.

Sustainability & Collecting Fun

Special attention is given to avoiding bulk: collectors receive the CO, UC, and RA cards guaranteed in a limited "one-per-customer" collector's box — without having to give up boosters — and can still enjoy the hunt for Super Rares and 1/1 cards.

Foiled cards are not part of regular sets. They've become a mass product — some love them, others don't. Players get distracted by their glare, and they're not exactly environmentally friendly either.

Of course, foil enthusiasts shouldn't miss out. That's why each set also includes a limited Collector's Foil Edition, containing the complete set in foil — plus the extremely rare True One-of-One cards, which are also foiled and genuine one-of-a-kind collectibles.

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Formats for Casual Play

- Sumo Rush: You play with 4 characters – 8 matches, best total score wins
- Controlled: You play with 6 characters – 3 solo matches, each Best of 3
- Fiasco: You play with 8 characters – 3 matches, each Best of 3

Formats for Tournament Mode

- Sumo Rush: You play with 4 characters – 8 matches, 6 points qualify for Controlled
- Controlled: You play with 6 characters – 3 Best-of-3 duels, 4 knockout rounds, 3 wins required to qualify for semifinals
- Fiasco: You play with 8 characters – semifinals & finals, each Best of 3

In all formats, you receive 1 point for each match you win, and an additional point for winning a match series.

Victory Conditions

- Your opponent's Leader has 0 KT.
- Your opponent surrenders.

Counting System

In Shadows & Syndicates, counting is done in steps of 10. So, for dice with pips, you simply add a 0 to the rolled value.

Characters – Part A

Depending on the format, there are 2–6 slots for Supporters. Depending on the format, place 1–3 Supporters to the left of the Leader and to the right of Family.

- each character can have a maximum of 60 KT. This is independent of the character's starting value printed on the card.
- a character must have at least 10 KT to stay on the field. A character with 0 KT is considered KO and leaves the field.

Values above 60 or below 0 KT (through skills or FX cards) are ignored. Any excess points cannot be saved or transferred and are lost.

After the game begins, new characters can only be brought into play through specific skills and FX cards.

Newly drawn characters must always fill empty Supporter slots first, unless the summoned character explicitly enters play as a Bodyguard. If no Supporter slot is free, the newly summoned character automatically becomes a Bodyguard for a character of your choice.

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Characters – Part B

A character may not transfer KT or FX cards to other characters, nor trade them with or for others, unless a card description states otherwise. Only the top character of a character stack in a slot (Bodyguard) can attack, be attacked, and use FX cards. Characters underneath are always passive: they cannot attack, cannot be attacked, cannot use skills, and cannot use FX cards. This applies to all situations in which two or more characters are stacked in the same character slot.

Bodyguards

A Bodyguard is a character card placed on top of one or more other character cards. It is created when you draw a character during the game and all supporter slots are already occupied. You decide which of your characters will receive the Bodyguard for protection.

Bodyguards use the dice of the characters they protect for their own current KT values.

Protected characters with a Bodyguard on top are automatically set to 60 KT (the character is recovered).

A Bodyguard can move to protect another character – provided the Bodyguard is rested and has 60 KT.

If the Bodyguard leaves the protected character, that character's die is set to 60 KT. This means you do not need to track separate KT values for characters underneath a Bodyguard. All characters under a Bodyguard automatically have 60 KT.

Only the Bodyguard can attack and be attacked. All characters underneath are immune and passive: they cannot attack, cannot be attacked, and cannot use FX cards.

Multiple Bodyguards on a Character

A simple rule applies: the top card of a character stack in a slot is the active Bodyguard. For example, if you place a newly drawn character on top of an existing Bodyguard, only the new top character counts as the Bodyguard, and the "old" Bodyguard becomes a "normal" character and is set to 60 KT.

Basic Rule for Damage

Damage always affects the top card of a stack in a slot, regardless of whether it is a character card or an FX card.

For example, if there are 4 characters stacked with 2 Mental Boosts on top, the opponent must first attack and destroy the top Mental Boost, then the second one. After that, the top character (Bodyguard) receives damage.

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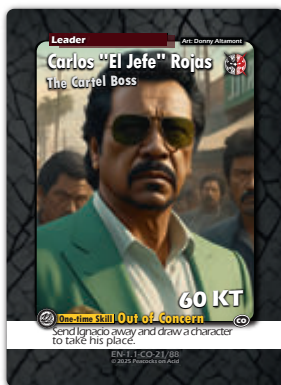
Card Types

There are only three card types: Faction Cards, Character Cards, and FX Cards.

The green Faction Card belongs to John Silver, the red Faction Card to the opponent in this episode – in this case, Carlos “El Jefe” Rojas (Season 1, Episode 1).

Character Cards are color-coded green and red (factions).

About half of all FX Cards are helpful – but the other half have negative effects on your characters. So think carefully about if and when you really want to draw an FX Card!



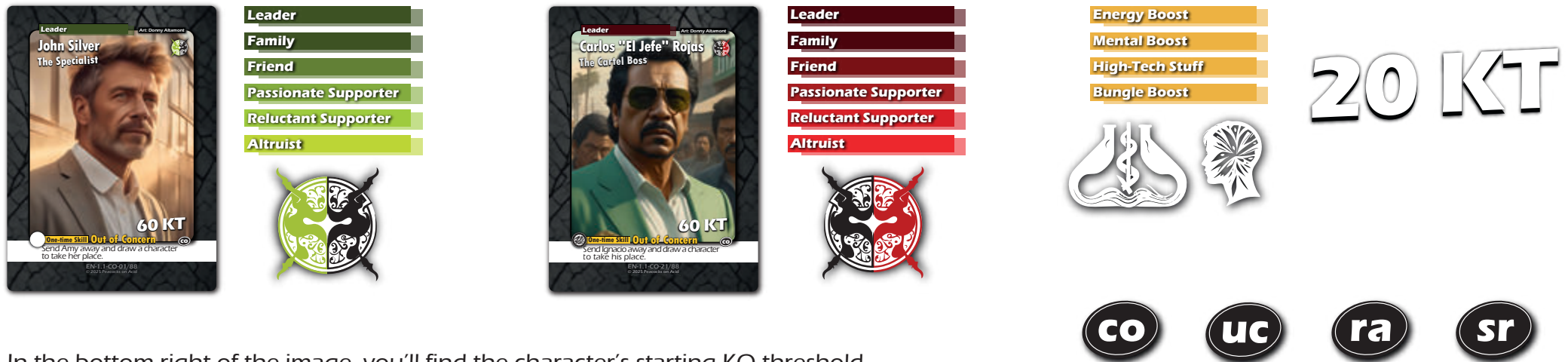
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Card Layout

All cards in **Shadows & Syndicates** follow the same layout. This prevents distractions from different designs and lets you focus entirely on tactics.

Character Cards feature color gradients. The lighter the green or red, the less control the Leader has over them. Light green and light red characters are total free spirits who listen to no one! However, they can deal massive damage with special skills – or turn the game in other ways.

The top left of each Character Card shows the faction symbol. If you see this symbol on other cards, it means that the card is faction-bound and may only be used by Green or Red.



In the bottom right of the image, you'll find the character's starting KO threshold.

On the bottom left edge of the image is the description of the skill, effect, or penalty – and on the right edge, the card's rarity.

Some Character Cards have an "Is in a duo with" label. This lets you immediately see whether a character is part of a duo.

FX Cards are always marked with a yellow bar. The piston symbol with a snake stands for Boosts, which take effect immediately and are then discarded.

The head symbol indicates that the card is placed on a character. The card text explains whether it must be placed on a specific character or freely on one of your choice – and how long it remains in play.

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Card Management

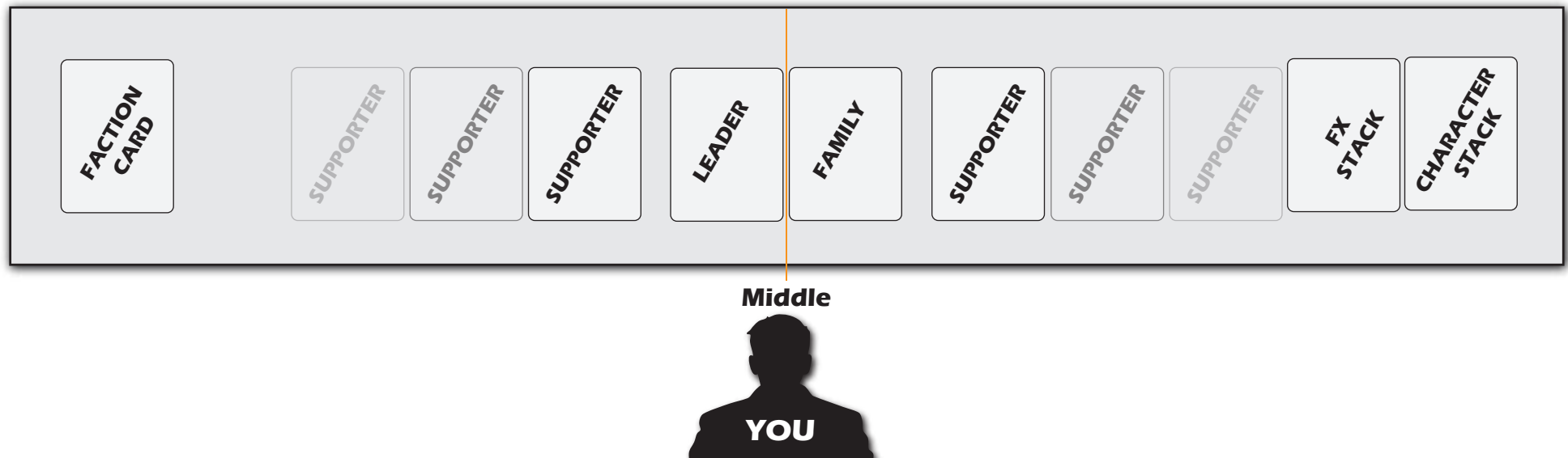
- Every card exists only once.
- There are no hand cards, and therefore no bad hands requiring a mulligan (card exchange).
- Except for the “Duo Rule”, cards are never exchanged or put back. After the game begins, only FX Cards – and in rare cases, Character Cards – are drawn.

The Game Board

There are up to 8 character slots in a fixed layout. The Leader is always placed in the center left, with Family placed directly to the right.

Depending on the format, place 1–3 Supporters to the left of the Leader and 1–3 Supporters to the right of Family.

Place your Faction Card on the far left, and FX and Character cards on the far right. Both face-down.



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Can't Play Without This

- A standard die or number die for resolving outcomes
- Depending on the format being played, 4–8 dice or other markers to track KT (KO Threshold) for each character

Sumo Rush -> 4 dice oder markers

Controlled -> 6 dice oder markers

Fiasco -> 8 dice oder markers

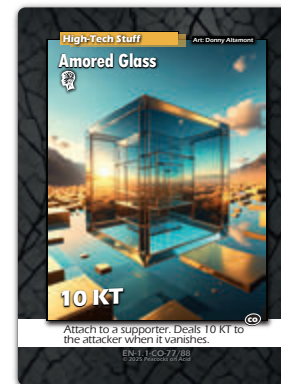
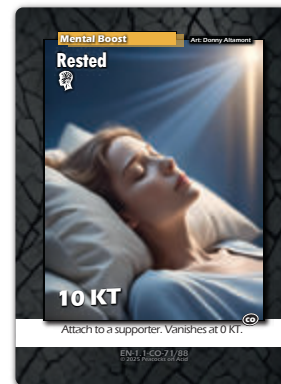
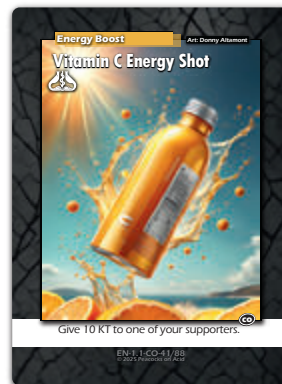
Freely Mixing rarities

In **Shadows & Syndicates**, skill mechanics as well as the strength of penalties and skills are tied to card rarity. Different rarities may also sometimes have separate mechanics from one another.

You and your opponent can, for example, agree to play with only Common and Super Rare cards – a relatively simple match that can still take a dramatic turn thanks to the Super Rare.

Organizing Your Cards

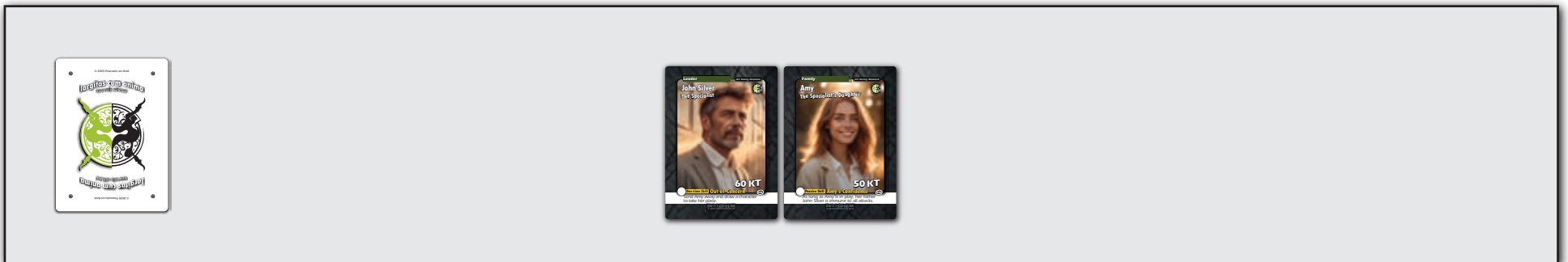
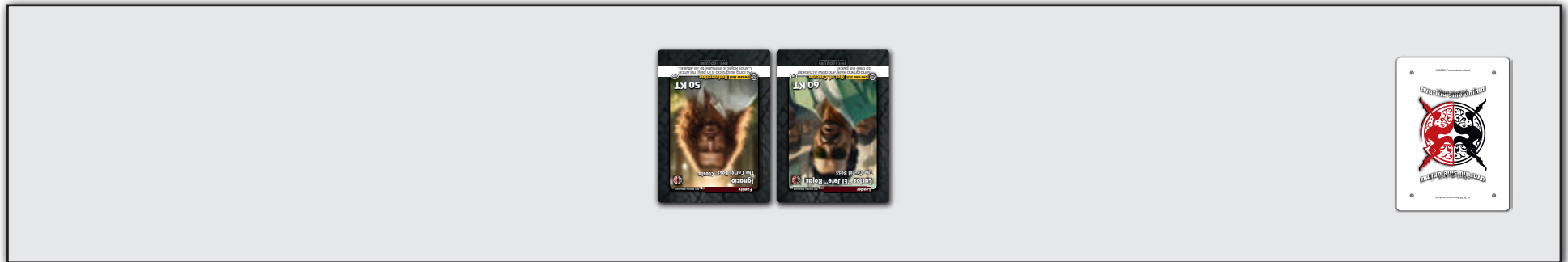
There are only green- and red-marked Character Cards and yellow-marked FX Cards. On the game board, you only place your Faction Card, the Character Cards of your faction, and FX Cards. Anything else that's not needed is set aside.



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Setup – Part A

- 1) Both players roll a die. The higher number wins. If it's a tie, keep rolling until there is a winner. 
- 2) The winner chooses the green or red faction. Both are balanced at their core. The loser automatically plays the other faction.
- 3) Both players place their faction card face up (white side) in its designated spot.
- 14) In **Shadows & Syndicates**, the Leader + Family form the CORE TEAM. They are always set and have fixed positions. Once it's clear who plays green and who plays red, both players place their Leader center-left and Family center-right in front of them.



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Setup – Part B

- 5) Shuffle your remaining Character Cards face-down and place the deck face-down on the far right.
- 6) Shuffle your FX Cards face-down, draw 12 (Sumo Rush), 16 (Controlled), or 20 (Fiasco) from the top, and place them face-down to the left of the face-down Character Deck. Set the remaining FX Cards aside.
- 7) Depending on the format, you have 1–3 Supporter slots to the left and right of your CORE TEAM. The sample image shows the layout for the “Controlled” format with 6 characters. Draw 4 characters from the top of your character deck (which you just shuffled and placed) and put them wherever you like in the Supporter slots.
- 8) Transfer the starting values shown on the Character Cards to dice. For John Silver, for example, set the die for the character to 6.

Wording is Rule: The texts on the cards are always binding. You may, for example, sacrifice characters, because by doing so you are following both the card text and the rules. The rules only state that characters with 0 KT leave the field – not that sacrificing them is forbidden.

“Draw 3 FX cards and pass them on” means, for example: you may distribute them any way you like – even all to a single character – because it is rule-compliant. This way you can act freely based on just a few core rules, without having to read half a novel on every card.



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Team Analysis

Before things get started, you need to check whether your team actually works. For example, not everyone can team up with just anyone, or maybe you've been lucky enough to draw a duo or at least part of one.

Get an overview and arrange your supporters in the way that works best for you.

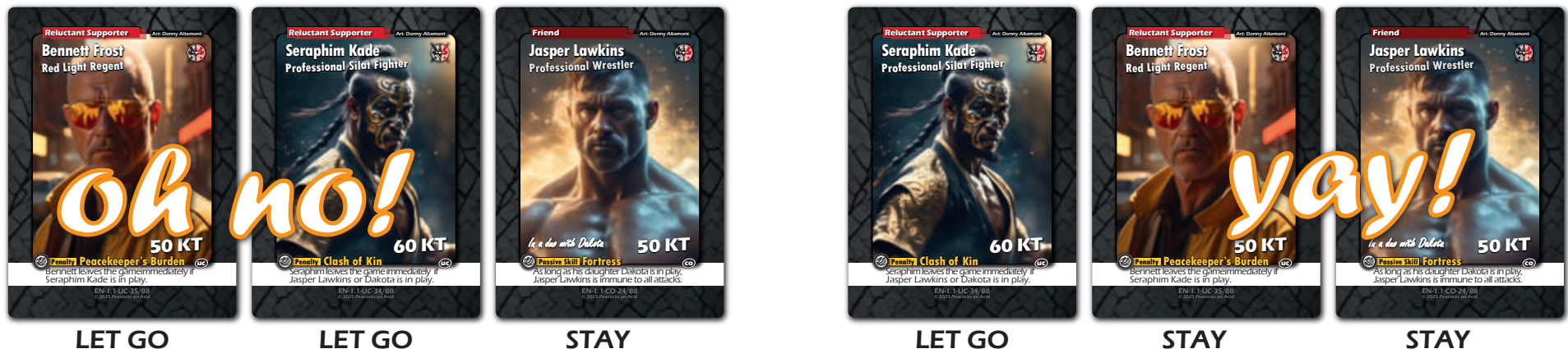
Duos

If you draw only part of a duo, you may search the character deck for the matching counterpart. To do this, discard a previously drawn character. Then shuffle the character deck again. This is only allowed before the game begins. If later you are allowed to draw a new character and you get part of a duo, you may not call in the duo partner. Duos do not need to be placed next to each other for their skills to work.

Penalties

If you've drawn multiple characters with a Penalty, choose strategically. Sometimes, you can have one character "leave" first so another is allowed to stay.

Example: If Seraphim Kade leaves the game first, Bennet Frost can stay. You simply let Seraphim Kade go first and avoid the conflict between Bennet Frost and Seraphim Kade – just like in real life. This way, you save a character!



Every character that leaves the field is placed next to the character deck and cannot be used again during the current match.

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Game Start

Once both players have fully analyzed and organized their teams, they signal to each other that they're ready for the first action. Since the winner of the die roll got to choose the faction, the loser takes the first turn.

Both players take exactly one action per turn, alternating back and forth. In **Shadows & Syndicates**, there are no structured turn phases or sequences. Each player performs exactly one action per turn.

IMPORTANT: When you use a skill, everything required to activate the skill counts as a **single** action.

Example: You may draw only one FX card per turn. Some characters can use skills to draw multiple FX cards and then distribute them. The characters receiving the FX cards usually have to use them immediately. All of this counts as a **single** action.

Actions

Once per turn, you may:

- perform a standard attack, which costs you nothing and removes 10 KT from the opponent
- or use an active skill, which costs 10 KT – requirement: the character must be at 60 KT
- or draw an FX card and apply it immediately to a character, unless the card says otherwise
- or play a Super Rare FX card that you previously held in reserve
- or assign a Bodyguard with 60 KT to another character or Bodyguard to protect them

Used cards are placed face-up next to their respective deck and do not return to the game.

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Performing and Ending Standard Attacks

Inform your opponent which of their characters you wish to attack. Your opponent marks the 10 KT damage on that character's die.



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Using Active Skills

Only rested characters with a full 60 KT can activate skills.

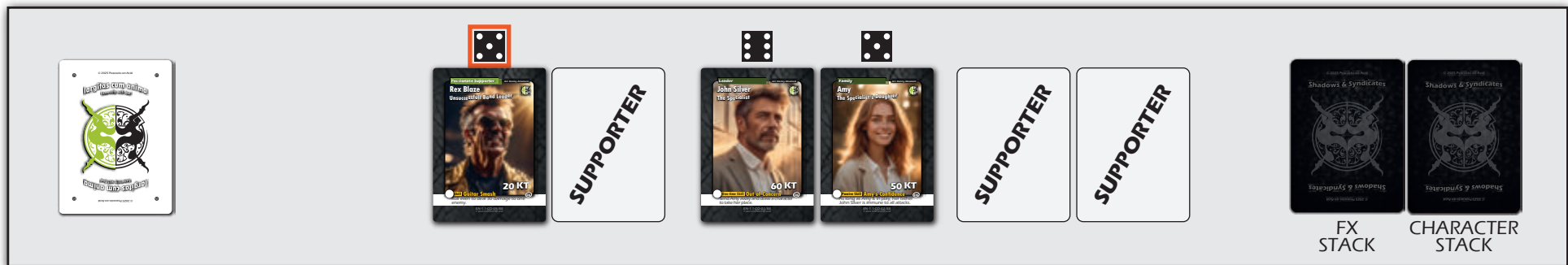
Let's take Rex Blaze as an example: if you roll an even number, he deals triple damage. Let's assume you're in a longer match and Rex has now collected 60 KT to trigger the skill.

Announce the skill to your opponent, pay the skill cost of 10 KT, and then roll. If you roll even, proceed with the attack as you would with a normal one. The opponent's character loses 30 KT from the skill instead of 10 KT.

This is how most active skills work – and you can always activate them as long as your character has 60 KT.

Passive Skills

A passive skill like Amy's confidence costs nothing and is always active. That's what makes it tricky – and your opponent will try to take out such characters (or their Duo partners) as quickly as possible.



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The Leader's One-Time Skill

For this special skill, the Leader must, as usual, have 60 KT to activate it. Announce the skill to your opponent, pay 10 KT, let the Family member leave, and draw a new character from the character deck. Place the new character in the Family slot and set the die to that character's starting KT value.

Important: If the character in the Family slot leaves the field, the slot cannot be refilled, as it is reserved for the Family.

Flip your faction card (white side) to the black side.

This lets your opponent, referees, spectators - and yourself - see that the One-Time Skill has been used and is no longer available.



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FX Cards

There are many different types of FX Cards. About half of them strengthen or protect your characters – the other half can harm them or your entire team. So think carefully about if and when you want to draw an FX Card.

A character can be given multiple FX Cards, and may also apply multiple FX Cards in succession.

FX Cards that are placed on a character may be stacked. Attacks only affect the topmost FX Card.

If one or more FX cards are placed on a character or a character stack with a Bodyguard in a slot, all characters remain inactive as long as the FX card is not destroyed.

Boosts

Boosts give your characters a short-term power boost – or drain their strength. You apply the card to a character of your choice, adjust the KT value accordingly, and then discard the card.

Timeouts

These cards are placed on a character of your choice. A Timeout means that the character is incapacitated during the next round. The card remains visible on the character for the duration of the timeout.

Stuff

These special cards are also placed on characters and remain there as long as specified by the card text. Stuff can represent equipment, mental states, or other effects.

Apply immediately or hold back?

All FX Cards are applied immediately – unless they are Super Rare FX Cards with a black text bar and white lettering.

Positive Super Rare FX Cards may be held and played later. Negative Super Rare FX Cards must be applied immediately.

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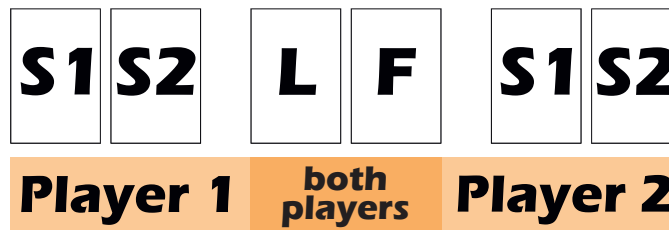
Multiplayer Mode - Sumo Rush

Two players form one team. Since this is not about mixing decks, both players share one Player's Edition in this special case. Solo still applies as always: each player needs their own Player's Edition!

2 vs 2 Sumo Rush

The regular Sumo Rush field consisting of Supporter, Leader, Family, Supporter is expanded to include two more Supporters. One player takes the left flank of Supporters, the teammate the right. Both manage the core team together (Leader/Family).

Victory and faction selection follow the same procedure as in a standard 1 vs 1 match. Shuffle all character and FX cards separately and place them face down. Lay out all character cards face down where both players can reach them. Then draw 12 FX cards at random — these also belong to both teammates. Set the remaining FX cards aside.



Duos — Special Rule for 2 vs 2

If both teammates draw a character from the same Duo, that character remains with the player who drew it. Skills remain active even when the Duo is split between two players.

Card Texts

All card texts apply exactly as in single-player matches. The player who draws an FX card is also considered the user of that FX card. All standard rulebook regulations apply.

Bodyguards

Bodyguards are not bound to a flank and may move and act freely within the standard rules.

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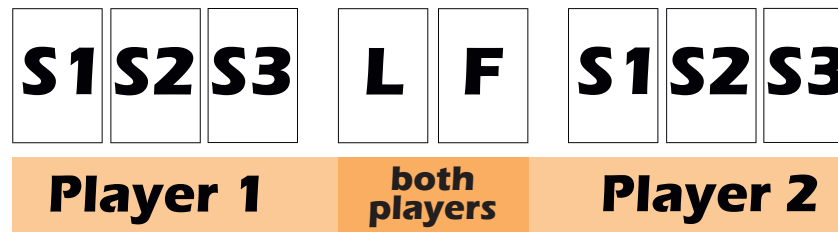
Mehrspieler Modus - Controlled

2 Spieler bilden auch hier ein Team. Damit es nicht zur Vermischung von Karten kommt, teilen sich in diesem besonderen Fall 2 Spieler eine Player's Edition. Solo gilt aber immer: jeder Spieler braucht eine eigene Player's Edition!

2 vs 2 Controlled

The regular Controlled field consisting of Supporter, Supporter, Leader, Family, Supporter, Supporter is expanded by two additional Supporters. One player takes the left flank of Supporters, the teammate the right. Both manage the core team together (Leader/Family).

Victory and faction selection follow the same procedure as in a standard 1 vs 1 match. Shuffle all character and FX cards separately and place them face down. Lay out all character cards face down where both players can reach them. Then draw 16 FX cards at random — these also belong to both teammates. Set the remaining FX cards aside.



Duos — Special Rule for 2 vs 2

If both teammates draw a character from the same Duo, that character remains with the player who drew it. Skills remain active even when the Duo is split between two players.

Card Texts

All card texts apply exactly as in single-player matches. The player who draws an FX card is also considered the user of that FX card. All standard rulebook regulations apply.

Bodyguards

Bodyguards are not bound to a flank and may move and act freely within the standard rules.

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Glossary – Shadows & Syndicates (alphabetical)

Bodyguard: A character placed on top of one or more other characters.

Boost: A special FX Card with an immediate effect. Boosts are marked with the piston-and-snake symbol.

Bungle Boost: A seemingly harmless Boost that actually triggers an immediate negative effect (e.g. damage or blocks).

Duos: Two characters with strong synergy that must be in play together to activate a special ability.

Family: A main character in the team, equal in rank to the Leader. Each faction has exactly one Family card.

Faction Card: The faction card (white side) shows which side a player belongs to (green = John Silver, red = Enemy).

FX Cards: Whether it's food, tech devices, or conditions – these cards support or harm characters or entire teams.

KT (KO Threshold): Each character has KT as their health. If a character's KT drops too low, they leave the game.

Leader: The most important character in a player's team. Each player has exactly one Leader. If the Leader is defeated, the game ends.

One-Time Skill: A one-time special effect of the Leader.

Passive Skill: A permanently active effect of a character that requires no cost and works automatically as long as the card is in play.

Penalty: An automatic drawback that triggers when a specific combination of characters is drawn at the start of the game.

Skill (Active Skill): A repeatable effect of a character. May only be activated when the character has exactly 60 KT.

Standard Attack: A basic action that deals a flat 10 KT damage to the chosen target and costs nothing.

Super Rare FX Cards: FX Cards with a black text bar. Positive effects may be held and played later.

Supporter: All additional characters in the team who are not Leader or Family. Depending on the mode, 2–6 Supporters may be used.

Timeout: An FX Card with the head symbol, placed on a character to block their next action.