Shadows & Syndicates

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

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100% AI Generated Card Images

HOW TO PLAY

ENGLISH

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Welcome to the world of Shadows & Syndicates!

Lose the fight, but never lose your path...
Two factions – the Righteous and the Criminals. Which side you play is decided at the beginning of a game. Be prepared for anything!

This rulebook has 4 parts:

Introduction - Page 5

Basics - Page 6 to Page 12

Quick Start - Page 13 to Page 20

Glossary - Page 21 to 23

You only need the game rules if there are any disagreements about how to do something in the game. You can find them separately on the website at: https://shadowsandsyndicates.com/gamerules.html

If you have any questions, feel free to send an email to:
support@shadowsandsyndicates.com

Of course, you can also just leave feedback:
feedback@shadowsandsyndicates.com

And now, have fun reading and playing!

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Object of the Game

You defeat your opponent by reducing their Leader's points (KT) to zero, or by causing them to forfeit before then.

One value! No separate resources, no mana screw & mana flood!

There is only one numerical value, and it is called KT (KO Threshold). KT is counted strictly in increments of 10 and cannot fall below 0.

Don't be fooled! This value is powerful and serves simultaneously as:

1. EXHAUSTION GAUGE (your buffer to KO)
2. SKILL TRIGGER (requirement for the availability of certain skills)
3. CURRENCY (to pay costs, e.g., for Yellow Skills)

There are two factions in Shadows & Syndicates: the Lawful (green) and the Criminal (red). Each faction has its own character cards (marked green or red in the top left) and a two-sided faction card.

FX cards (marked yellow in the top left) are effect cards that buff or debuff one or multiple characters, or influence the player themselves.

Faction Cards

Character Cards and FX Cards

Card Types: Character Cards

Just like in a movie, every character in Shadows & Syndicates has a role. There are fixed roles and—depending on the set—a varying number of guest roles.

Every character belongs to a category. There are fixed categories as well as changing bonus categories. Some of these bonus categories appear completely new, while others return in later sets. Even if a category returns, it can still be partially or completely filled with new characters. This is how new sets stay exciting.

The fixed categories, outlined in red here, include the Leader, the Family, Friends, Passionate Supporters, and Reluctant Supporters.

All other categories—such as the category of Altruists in this example, to which the black-outlined Whiz belongs—are variable.

IMPORTANT: Categories can be represented by a single person or multiple people.

Card Types: Duo Character Cards

There are characters who share a close relationship. They have special active or passive skills that only take effect as long as their partner is **also** in the team zone.

If you draw part of a duo, you immediately place it in your team zone. Afterwards, you search the "Character Draw Pile" for the partner and also place them immediately in the team zone. Then, you shuffle the "Character Draw Pile" face down and return it to its place.

IMPORTANT: Remember that drawn characters must always fill empty slots first. Only when all slots are occupied will the excess character be placed on another character as a so-called bodyguard.

IMPORTANT: Duo characters do not need to be adjacent to each other for their active skills to be executed or their passive skills to take effect.

Examples: While Jasper Lawkins benefits from a passive skill as long as Dakota is by his side, Jack Briggs has an active skill as long as Harrison covers him.

Card Types: FX Cards

FX cards are effect cards. Every effect belongs to a category. Just like with character cards, there are fixed categories as well as changing bonus categories. Depending on the set, completely new categories will appear, while others return in later sets.

The fixed categories include:

- Energy Boosts, which provide characters with a one-time buff
- Mental Boosts, which protect characters from damage short-term
- High-Tech Stuff, which grants advantages to characters or the player
- Bungle Boosts, which inflict disadvantages on characters or the player

All other categories – such as the black-bordered card groups "Hangover Timeout" or "Food Coma Timeout" in this example – vary depending on the set.

Card Layout of Character Cards

If your cards show "Art: Donny Altamont" instead of stars in the top right, and rarities instead of G & R in the oval bottom right: Congrats! You own the very first print before it was changed!

There are special characters that are part of a **duo**. In this case, **"In a duo with"** followed by the name of the partner is written above the skill type.

Card Layout of FX Cards

Card Group

Class symbol

Effect Type (chemistry flask symbol): These FX cards influence characters or the player.

Check if such a card may only be applied to a specific role (Leader, Family, or Supporter).

Apply it and place it in the discard pile.

Effect Description

Card ID

Card Group

Class Symbol

Effect Type: (head symbol): These FX cards act like a shield. Place them on characters and check if such a card may only be placed on a specific role (Leader, Family, or Supporter).

If the card has taken damage equal to the bonus value, place it in the discard pile.

Bonus Value

Effect Description

Card ID

IMPORTANT: You may set Class 4 FX cards with a black text band and positive effect aside (face down or face up) and apply them at a time of your choice. All other FX cards must always be applied immediately.

Game Formats

Sumo Rush

Format: You play with 4 Characters and 12 FX Cards
Casual: Quick sessions / Tournament: Qualification rounds

Controlled

Format: You play with 6 Characters and 16 FX Cards
Casual: Main format for beginners and pros / Tournament: Quarterfinals

Fiasco

Format: You play with 8 Characters and 20 FX Cards
Casual: A true challenge / Tournament: Semifinals & Finals

In all formats, you receive 1 point for every game won, and an additional point for the overall victory of a series.

Card Zones

Organizing Cards

Sort your cards before starting a game. This makes your game flow smoother!

For each faction, arrange them in the following order: Leader first, followed by Family, then the remaining character cards in any order, and finally the faction card.

Place the faction you are not playing completely into the discard area; this way, the faction you are playing is perfectly prepared for the start of the game.

If two of you are playing with a Player's Edition, lay it out exactly like this in the middle of the table—this ensures that everyone has their faction ready at hand to start the game.

Gameplay: Starting the Game

IMPORTANT: All formats share the same gameplay, there are just fewer or more supporters and FX cards in play. Cards from draw piles are always drawn one at a time and immediately placed or applied—even if you are supposed to draw multiple.

1) Determine a **starting player** (e.g., by rolling dice) who opens the game.

2) The starting player chooses the green or red faction, and the other player automatically gets the other faction.

3a) Players with their **own** Player's Edition place the faction they are not playing into the **discard area**.

3b) Players **sharing** a Player's Edition take their faction from the center.

4) Each player places their faction card with the white side into the **faction area**.

5) Each player places their **core team** face up and centered in the **team zone**, Leader to the right of the center, Family to the left of the center.

6) Each player shuffles their remaining character cards and places them face down in the **character draw pile area**.

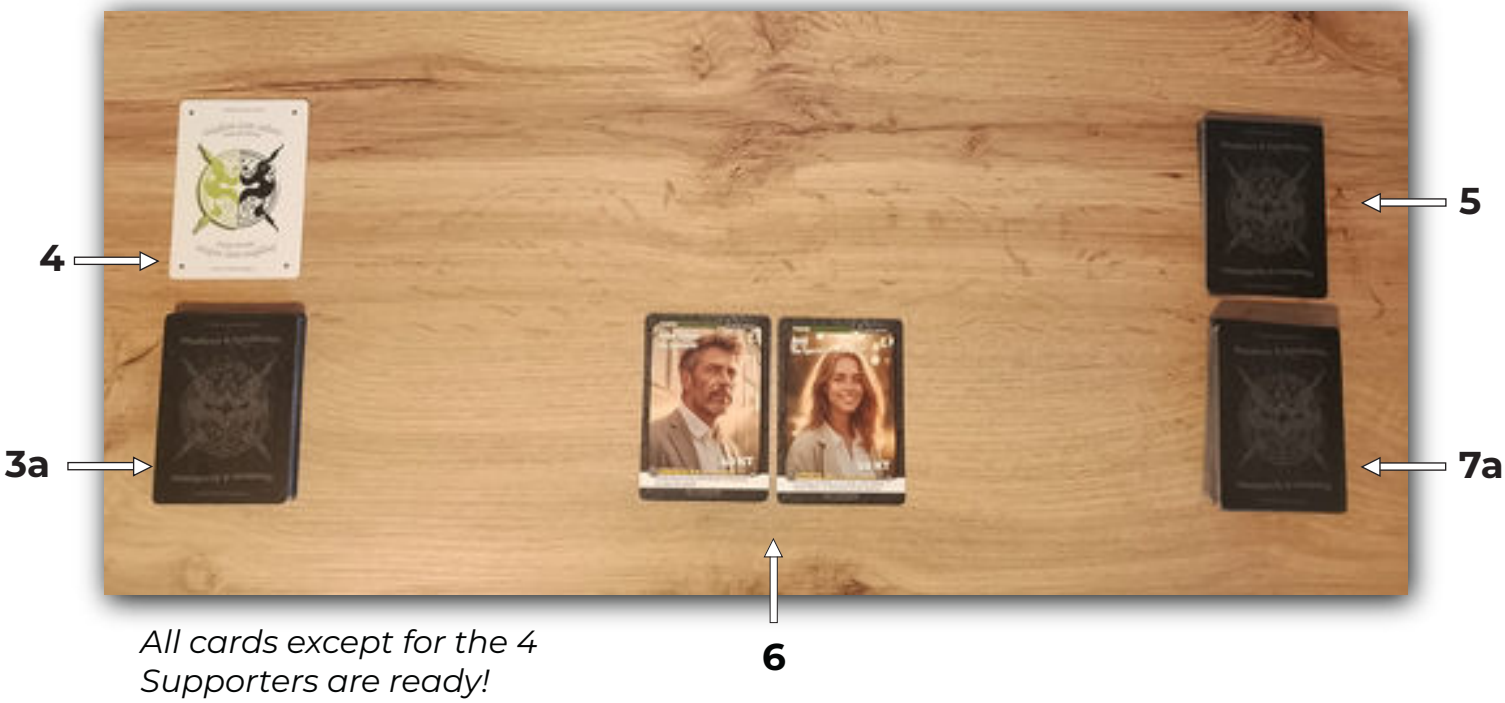
7a) Players with their own Player's Edition shuffle all their FX cards face down, count off 12, 16, or 20 cards from the top depending on the format, and place them face down in the **FX card draw pile area**. The remaining FX cards go into the **discard area**.

7b) Players **sharing** a Player's Edition shuffle all FX Cards face down and place them **all** face down in the center of the table.

8) Depending on the format, each player draws 2, 4, or 6 characters one after another from their **character draw pile** and places one half to the right of the Leader and one half to the left of the Family.

Playfield Setup - Preparation

This example shows the Controlled Format, which is played with 4 supporters. This is what your playfield side looks like **before** you draw the 4 supporters for your characters from the draw pile.



All cards except for the 4 Supporters are ready!

Penalty Characters

When you draw a character with a penalty, you must check whether it is compatible with the remaining characters in your team zone, whether it has to leave immediately, or whether another character must leave the playfield (discard pile).

Duos

If you draw one part of a Duo, place them in the Team Zone. Then, search your Character Deck for the matching Duo partner. Place them in the Team Zone. If all Supporter slots are already occupied, regardless of the format, the Duo partner becomes a **Bodyguard**. Afterward, shuffle the deck face down and place it back in its position.

IMPORTANT: Duo cards do not have to be placed next to each other for their active or passive skills to take effect.

Playfield Setup - Ready to Play

This is what your finished player side looks like! Every character has a **KT value** that needs to be **updated** continuously during the game. You can do this classically with dice – or easily with our in-house **KT Tracker app**. Just open ***shadowsandsyndicates.com/kttracker*** on your smartphone.

All complete!

8 **8**

Core Rules

The game is played turn by turn. One action is performed per turn. Passing is not allowed. There are no opponent actions during a turn.

Each character has a maximum capacity of 60 KT (rested) and leaves the field at 0 KT (discard pile).

Characters entering the game must always fill empty slots first. If none are empty, they are placed on existing characters.

Hidden characters in the team zone do not take part in the gameplay. They do not act and are immune to all attacks and effects. All characters beneath the top character card are rested (60 KT).

Eliminated characters as well as applied and destroyed FX cards go to the discard pile and do not return to the ongoing match.

The First Turn

Both players signal to each other that they are ready for the first turn. The player who is not the starting player takes this first turn to compensate for the fact that the starting player was allowed to choose their faction.

Both players take turns performing exactly one action. In Shadows & Syndicates, there are no structured turn phases or sequences.

Possible Actions

A player must perform exactly 1 action per turn:

- perform a free standard attack with **one** of their characters, dealing 10 KT damage to an opposing character
- **or** trigger a skill from **one** of their characters
- **or** draw an FX card and **immediately** apply it to a character, unless a card description states otherwise
- **or** apply a **stored** Class 4 FX card
- **or move** a bodyguard with 60 KT to assign them to **another** character or bodyguard to provide protection

IMPORTANT: When you use a skill, everything required to execute that skill counts as **one** action.

Example: You are normally only allowed to draw one FX card per turn. However, some characters may draw multiple FX cards and perhaps even distribute them.

The characters receiving these FX cards must then usually apply them immediately and perhaps perform several action steps. This all counts as one continuous chain of action.

Executing Actions: Standard Attacks

In this example photo, MC Collins De Alpha attacks the opposing character Ignacio (**who has 50 KT at this point**). You can place the attacking card opposite the target or simply declare the target to your opponent.

Ignacio loses 10 KT from the standard attack, unless a **passive** skill makes him **immune**, which is not the case in this example.

Failure due to immunity: If an action is performed against an immune enemy character, the action is considered failed and the turn ends. The cost of the action will not be refunded.

Executing Actions: Applying Skills

IMPORTANT: You always pay the cost first and apply the skill afterwards. Face-down characters cannot trigger passive skills.

Skills

Normal skills (highlighted in yellow) can only be triggered if the character has 60 KT (rested) at the time of activation. You pay 10 KT (leaving your character with 50 KT) and apply the skill.

Leader's One-Time Skill

It is triggered and paid under the same conditions as normal skills. Afterwards, you flip your faction card to the black side. This lets everyone know that your leader has already used the skill.

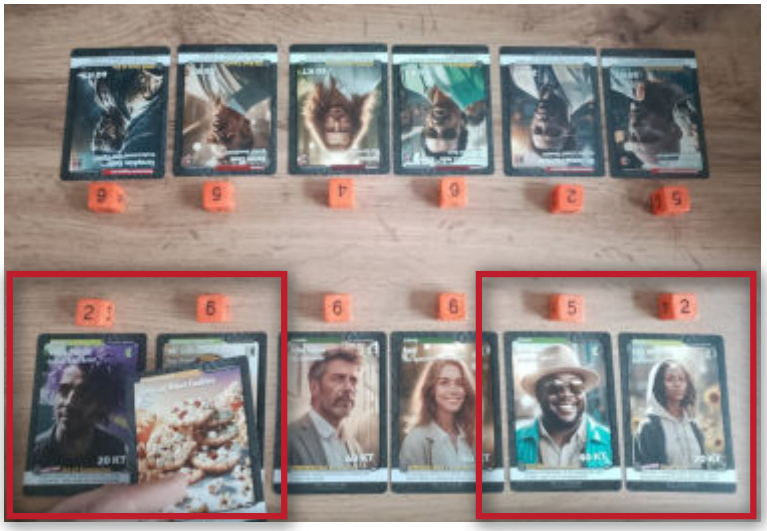
EDGE-Skills

EDGE-skills (highlighted in red) are free and characters do not need to be rested (60 KT) to activate them.

Passive skills are free and active as long as the conditions on the card are met.

Executing Actions: Applying FX Cards

FX cards with a chemistry flask symbol are **consumed**. You inform your opponent what the effect does precisely. In this visual example, an FX card is applied that gives 10 KT to a target character and may only be applied to a **support character** - in this case, the character that previously had 50 KT gets 10 KT added.

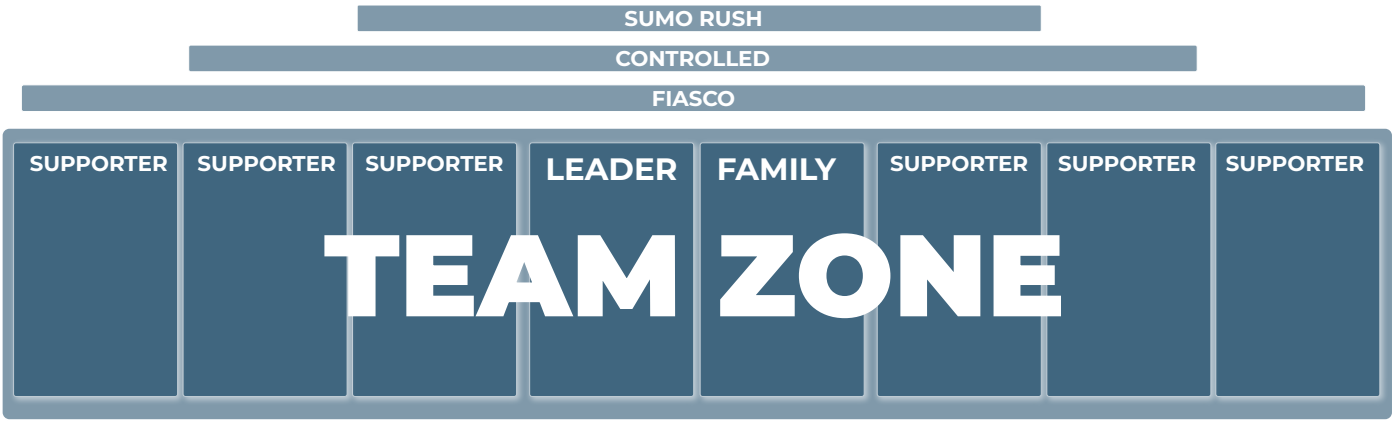


FX cards with a **head symbol** are placed on characters as a **shield**. Damage always hits only the top card. Damage is not split up. If 20 KT of damage hits a 10 KT FX card, the remaining 10 KT of damage is ignored.

IMPORTANT: Characters that need to skip a turn are simply flipped to their back side. If you as a player have to skip a turn, you turn your faction card sideways for the specified time.

Bodyguards

The team zone has a limited number of slots for supporters. Depending on the format, 2, 4, or 6 supporters are added to the core team of Leader & Family.

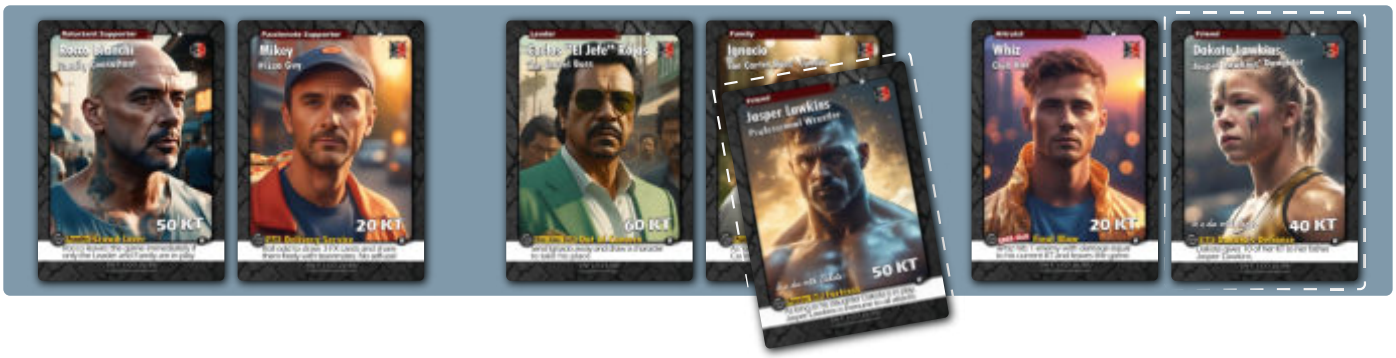


A character located as the topmost card on one or more other characters is referred to as a Bodyguard. They use the die of the character they are placed upon (if you play with dice as a KT counter). You can also place a bodyguard on top of another bodyguard. In this case, the now covered bodyguard becomes a normal character that does not act.

All characters beneath the top character card are automatically rested (60 KT).

A rested bodyguard (60 KT) can change slots. If they move to an empty slot, they become a normal character since they are now alone in the slot.

In the example below, we assume a Controlled match with 6 slots, where Dakota Lawkins is the last character drawn at the start of the game. She takes the final free slot. Her father, Jasper Lawkins—who is immediately added—acts as a bodyguard in this case, protecting Ignacio (the Family). Ignacio is therefore rested and has 60 KT.



Glossary

Action
The single unit of action in the game. Every player must perform exactly one action during their turn; passing is not allowed, and there are no opponent reactions during the active turn. Permitted actions are: a standard attack, skill activation, drawing and immediately applying a regular FX card, playing a stored Class 4 FX card, or assigning a rested bodyguard.

Bodyguard
A stacking mechanic. If a player draws a character and all regular slots in the team zone are occupied, the new card must be placed on top of an already placed character (or another bodyguard). The bodyguard on top completely protects the cards underneath. Protected, covered cards do not participate in the active game, cannot trigger passive skills, and are immune to all attacks and effects. A bodyguard who is rested (60 KT) may change their slot as an action and becomes a normal character on an empty slot.

Class 4 FX Card
The only card type in the game that breaks the timing rules. These special cards (recognizable by the black text band) do not have to be consumed or applied immediately upon drawing - but only if the card's effect is positive. They may be set aside face-up or face-down and played at a later, freely chosen time as a regular action.

Core Team
The foundation of the team zone, consisting of the Leader (right of center) and the Family (left of center). These two cards are already placed face-up on the field at the start of the game.

Discard Area
The end zone for all cards that have been removed from the current game. This includes defeated characters (0 KT), destroyed or consumed FX cards, as well as the entire faction that the player did not choose for this match. The return of cards from the discard area to the active game is absolutely prohibited.

Draw Pile
The separate card piles for characters and FX cards. An empty draw pile explicitly does not mean the end of the game.

Glossary

Duo Characters
Two characters that are mechanically linked via the "In a duo with..." note. If one half is drawn, the partner is immediately brought from the draw pile into the team zone, after which the pile is reshuffled face-down and returned to its place. Duo partners do not have to be adjacent to each other for their skills to take effect, but they must not be covered by other characters.

Faction
The playable side: Righteous (Green) or Criminals (Red). Before the match, chance determines which faction you play.

Each player marks their side with the double-sided faction card. This card is flipped to the black side as soon as the Leader has used their one-time skill, and it is turned sideways when the player has to skip turns.

Failed Action
If an action targets a character who is immune, the action is immediately considered failed. The turn ends, and any costs paid for activation are not refunded.

FX Cards
The effect cards of the game (marked yellow).

KT (KO Threshold)
The only numerical value in Shadows & Syndicates, counted in increments of 10. It combines three functions: exhaustion indicator until K.O. (at 0 KT the character leaves the field), prerequisite for skills (Rested at 60 KT), and currency for triggering skills.

Leader
The most important character role and the victory condition of the match. If the opponent's Leader's KT drops to 0, the game is won. Possesses a single-use one-time skill.

Penalty
A restrictive effect that certain character cards have instead of a skill. When drawing such a character, it must immediately be checked whether they are allowed to join the current team, are discarded immediately, or displace another character from the field.

Glossary

Rested
A crucial character status. A character is only considered rested if they have exactly their maximum capacity of 60 KT. This status is the mandatory prerequisite (trigger) to even be allowed to declare and pay for normal, yellow skills or the leader's one-time skill. Characters that are covered underneath a bodyguard are automatically considered rested by the system.

Skills
The abilities of the characters, categorized by cost and timing:

- Normal Skills (yellow): Strictly require 60 KT (rested). The costs are paid before the skill is applied.
- EDGE Skills (red): Are completely free and can be used regardless of the character's rested status.
- Passive Skills: A permanent effect without cost that is active as long as the conditions remain fulfilled. Covered characters cannot trigger passive skills.

Standard Attack
The free basic action of the game. It deals 10 KT damage to a targeted enemy character, provided they are not immune.

Team Zone
A player's central area on the field where their characters are placed. The size depends on the format (Sumo Rush, Controlled, Fiasco) and offers space for 2, 4, or 6 supporters alongside the core team (Leader & Family).

If the "Family" leaves the game, their slot may subsequently be used by a supporter.