Welcome to the Crucible...

You are an Archon. Hailed by some as a god, respected by others for your wisdom, you were born—or perhaps created—on the Crucible, a world in which anything is possible.

The Crucible is ancient, but ever renewed. An artificial planet hanging in the center of the universe, the Crucible’s many layers remain constantly under construction by the enigmatic and mischievous Architects. For raw materials, the Architects have harvested countless worlds, blending them into a new whole both familiar and alien to the creatures that dwell there.

Whether low specimens or entire cultures, the beings brought to the Crucible find themselves in a strange wonderland with no obvious means of returning to their former homes. Some thrive, building new societies and developing new technologies with the aid of the mysterious psychic substance known as Æmber. Some discard the trappings of their old lives, adopting the ways and customs of new tribes discovered in this new world. Others’ bodies, minds twisted beyond all recognition, incorporating Æmber into their very bodies.

As an Archon, you have gathered followers in your journeys throughout the Crucible, allies who find value in your ageless wisdom and your ability to speak to all creatures. With the aid of these allies, you work out Vault hidden throughout the Crucible by the Mysterious Architects. Each Vault can only be unlocked by Archon-forged keys. Once open, a Vault’s contents—the power and knowledge of the Architec—can be consumed by only a single Archon.

When two Archons discover a Vault, only one can gain its knowledge. Only one can move one step closer to the secret of the Crucible...

Overview

KeyForge is a two-player card game in which each player takes the role of an Archon, and leads that Archon’s deck against their opponent. A player’s deck represents a team that is attempting to gain Æmber and forge keys. The first player to gather three keys is able to unlock a Vault and win the game.

Randomly determine a player to take the first turn. This may be done by flipping a coin. The first player draws seven cards, and the other player draws six cards.

The players are now ready to begin the game.

Setup

One player takes the Miss “Onyx” Censorius deck, and the other player takes the Radiant Argus the Supreme deck. Unlike other KeyForge decks, these decks have been designed specifically to teach you the game.

Each deck is led by an Archon, whose name is on the deck’s identity card (shown below). All the cards in the deck are marked with that Archon’s name. Each player places their identity card on the table in front them, shuffles their deck, and places it next to their identity card. Three key tokens are placed near each player’s deck with the unforged side face-up.

How to Play

To play a game of KeyForge, players alternate taking turns until a player wins the game by forging three keys. While a player is taking a turn, they are the active player. During a turn, the active player performs five steps in order, each of which is described in this section.

Step one: Forge a key

The cost to forge a key is six Æmber. During this step, if the active player has six (or more) Æmber in their Æmber pool (on their identity card), they must spend six Æmber to forge a key. The active player places spent Æmber in the common supply and flips one of their unforged key tokens so the forged side is face-up.

No more than one key can be forged during this step each turn. If the active player does not have enough Æmber to forge a key, nothing occurs during this step.

Step two: Choose a house

Each identity card shows the three houses that make up its deck. During this step, the active player chooses one of these three houses and activates it. The chosen house is the active house for the remainder of the turn. The active player will only be able to play and use cards of the active house this turn, so choose carefully!

Step three: Play, discard, and use cards of the active house

This is the step during which most of the game is played. During this step, the active player may play, use, and/or discard from hand any number of cards that belong to the active house (shown during step two). Eligible cards may be played, used, and/or discarded in any order.

Rules for playing, using, and discarding cards are described on the other side of this sheet.

First Turn Rule: During the first player’s first turn, the player may play or discard from hand only one card of the active house.

Step four: Ready cards

During this step, the active player reads all of their exhausted cards.

All cards in play exist in one of two states: ready or exhausted. Generally, a card must be ready for a player to use it. Using a card typically causes it to become exhausted. The “ready cards” step is when the active player gets to ready their cards for their following turn.

Step five: Draw cards

During this step, the active player draws cards from the top of their deck until they have six cards in their hand. If the active player already has six or more cards in their hand, no cards are drawn at this time. If a player needs to draw but has no cards remaining in their deck, that player shuffles their discard pile to create a new deck and continues drawing.

If the active player has enough Æmber on their identity card to forge a key, they announce “Check!” to their opponent, so that their opponent knows they are able to forge a key at the beginning of their next turn.

After this step, the active player’s turn is over. The other player becomes the active player and takes their turn, beginning with step one.

Winning the Game

The goal of the game is to forge three keys, which are represented by key tokens. Each player begins the game with three unforged key tokens. When a key is forged, flip one token to its forged side.

If a player has six Æmber at the start of their turn, that player must spend that Æmber to forge one key. The first player to forge all three of their keys wins the game.

Overview

The defining feature of KeyForge is that no two decks are alike. This is not a trading card game—you cannot craft a deck. Rather, each deck must remain as it is. Every deck in existence is unique.

The goal of this Quickstart is to get you playing as soon as possible. The best way to learn the game is to dive right in! Set up the game using the following instructions. Then, read the rest of this Quickstart and begin your first game.

Quick Reference

A turn sequence and icon key are provided here for easy reference.

Turn Sequence

1. Forge a key.
2. Choose a house.
3. Play, discard, and use cards of the chosen house.
4. Ready cards.
5. Draw cards.

Additional Component: Chain Tracker

The components pictured here are not used for the learning game. When playing with unique KeyForge decks, chains may be used as a handicapping mechanic, and are sometimes required as an additional cost for certain card abilities. The card pictured to the right can be used to track the number of chains a player has at any given time. The complete rules for chains can be found in the online rulebook at KeyForgeGame.com.
PLAYING CARDS

During step three of their turn, the active player can play any number of cards that belong to the active house.

AMBER BONUS

Many cards have an Amber bonus in the upper-left corner. When a card with an Amber bonus is played, the first thing the active player does is gain the amount of Amber that the card grants. This card grants one Amber.

PLAY ABILITIES

Some cards have a bold “Play” ability. Such abilities resolve after the card's Amber bonus is collected, if it has any, and immediately after the card enters play.

ENTERING PLAY EXHAUSTED

When a creature or artifact enters play, it enters play exhausted. This means that generally a player will not be able to use a card during the same turn that it is played.

CARD TYPES

There are four types of cards that appear in decks: action cards, artifacts, upgrades, and creatures. There are different rules for how each type is played.

USING CARDS

During step three of their turn, the active player can discard from their hand any number of cards of the active house. This lets the player remove cards they do not want to play, freeing up space to draw new cards at the end of the turn.

THE DISCARD PILE

Any time a card is discarded (or destroyed), for any reason, it is placed in its owner's discard pile. This is a faceup pile of cards next to that player's deck.

USING CARDS

During step three of their turn, the active player can use any number of cards of the active house that they have in play. Creature cards can be used to reap, to initiate their action ability, or to fight. Generally, upgrade and artifact cards can only be used to initiate their action ability.

REAPING

Any ready creature of the active house may be used to reap. When a creature is used to reap, exhaust the card. Then, its controller gains one Amber from the common supply and resolves all of the creature’s “Reap” abilities if it has any.

INITIATING ACTION ABILITIES

Any ready card of the active house may be used to initiate its “Action” ability, if it has one. To use a card’s “Action” ability, exhaust the card and resolve the described effect.

If a card is already exhausted, its “Action” ability cannot be initiated.

CARD ABILITIES

To resolve a card's ability, a player follows the instructions described on the card. When resolving a card's ability, resolve as much of the ability as possible. Many cards in this starter deck contain options next to assist new players in learning the most important terminology in the game. If the text of a card directly contradicts the text of the rules, the text of the card takes precedence.

When a creature enters play, it must be placed on a flank — at the far left or the far right of its controller’s battleline. Creatures remain in play from turn to turn. Creatures can enter play exhausted, in a line known as the battleline. This line is a row of creatures in front of the player. Each time a creature enters play, it must be placed on a flank — at the far left or the far right of its controlling battleline. Creatures remain in play from turn to turn.

When the “Bad Pony” creature is played, it is placed on the flank of the battleline.

When the “The Terror” creature leaves play, the line is shifted behind.

When the “Fighting Scroll” creature enters play, the line is shifted forward.

Creatures: Enter play exhausted, in a line known as the battleline. This line is a row of creatures in front of the player. Each time a creature enters play, it must be placed on a flank — at the far left or the far right of its controller’s battleline. Creatures remain in play from turn to turn.

If a creature leaves play, gaps in the battleline are removed by shifting the line inward.

Fighting

Any ready creature of the active house may be used to fight. When a creature is used to fight, exhaust the card. Then, its controller chooses one creature controlled by the opponent as the target of the attack. A creature cannot fight if there is no enemy creature that can be targeted by the attack. Each of the two creatures deals an amount of damage (which is explained later) equal to its power to the other creature. All damage from a fight is dealt simultaneously.

After the fight resolves, if the attacking creature survives the fight, resolve all of that creature’s “Fighting” abilities.

Damage

If a creature is dealt damage (for any reason), place an amount of damage on the creature equal to the amount of damage dealt. If a creature has an amount of damage equal to or greater than its power total, the creature is destroyed and placed in its owner’s discard pile. If a creature has an armor value (for the right of a card total), the armor prevents that much incoming damage each turn. A “-” symbol indicates that the creature has no armor.

Example: Tam, who has activated house Sanctum this turn, decides to fight using Radiating Knight (power 4). He exhausts Radiating Knight and chooses one of his opponent’s creatures, Tocin (power 3). Radiating Knight deals 4 damage to Tocin, and Tocin tries to deal 3 damage to Radiating Knight, but 2 of this damage is prevented by Radiating Knight’s armor. The deal is placed on each creature simultaneously. As Tocin only has 2 power and now has 4 damage on it, it is destroyed and placed in its owner’s discard pile. Radiating Knight remains in play with 1 damage on it.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that you have read the Quickstart and have a basic understanding of the rules, try a game using the introductory decks. After completing this game, check out the online Rulebook at KeyForgeGame.com to answer any questions you might have — some cards in the unique Archon decks might require looking up rules in that document. The Rulebook also contains an introduction to the KeyForge setting and a description of the different houses.

THE UNIQUE DECK GAME

Playing the game with the Mike “Olhe” Constantine and Radiant Argue, the supreme decks is only the beginning of your adventure. KeyForge is a Unique Deck Game (UDG) in which every deck is unique, and your KeyForge starter set also comes with two unique Archon decks.

Each of these is a one-of-a-kind deck that is ready to play as soon as you open it. These decks can be played against one another, against the learning decks, or against your friends’ decks. As no two decks are alike, every game is different!

Additional Archon decks are sold separately, and each deck adds a greater variety of possibilities to your collection. There are more than 350 different cards in the initial KeyForge card pool. With each deck, you’ll discover more unique, abstract, and singular mix of cards, tactics, and strategic potential.

Now you can make even greater competition, KeyForge tournaments and championship events are sanctioned and supported by Fantasy Flight Games Organized Play. Find us online at KeyForgeGame.com.

The “Protect the Weak” upgrade is attached to the “Champion Anaphiel” creature.