

The Golden Compass – Duel of the Armored Bears

a game by Peter Neugebauer for two players age 10 and up

translated by Blake Morris

Object of the game

The two armored bears Iorek and Iofur meet in a showdown and fight to become “King of the Bears.” The winner is the player who – after all the cards have been played – has inflicted the most hits on his opponent.

Materials

- 1 game board
- 1 hit indicator [scoreboard]
- 72 battle cards (a set of 36 for each player)
- 2 playing figures with stands
- 2 hit markers
- 6 battle tricks [tiles]

Preparation

- ❖ Before the first game remove all the punched tiles carefully from their frames and place the two bears in the stands of the appropriate color.
- ❖ Place the game board between the two players. Place the scoreboard, on which hits will be marked during the game, beside it.
- ❖ The players decide who plays Iorek (brown) or Iofur (blue). Each player takes a playing figure, 36 battle cards, 3 battle tricks, and a hit marker, all of his color.
- ❖ Each player removes the 10 special cards (the ones with gold stars in the corners) and places them **face up** [in a stack] in front of him. He then shuffles the remaining cards and places them face down in front of him as a draw stack. The Iorek [brown] player begins and draws a hand of 5 cards. He decides how many special cards to take. The Iofur [blue] player draws a hand of three cards to start.

Tip: For the first game the Iorek player should take 2 special cards and the Iofur player 1.

- ❖ Each player puts his playing figure on the starting hexagon of the game board (the one with the colored bear head [of his color]).
- ❖ He then shuffles his three battle trick [tiles] and places them face down in a stack next to the trick hex (the one with his color [compass] symbol) beside the board.

The playing area should look like this [see diagram]:

Starting ritual

After the players have looked at their hands, they bring their bears into position. The brown player (Iorek) starts by moving his figure to an adjacent hex. Next the blue player (Iofur) moves his bear to an adjacent hex. Each player does this twice more.

Course of the game

Basic idea

During the game one player always has the initiative. He is the attacker and can inflict hits on his opponent which can be marked on the scoreboard. The defender seeks to evade the attacks or to seize the initiative from the attacker.

Only at the beginning of his attack phase may a player increase the number of cards in his hand.

Thus he must contest both his own attack phase and the succeeding one of his opponent with [the same] cards. Therefore, he should never play all his cards during his attack, lest he be left defenseless against his opponent's attack phase.

The initiative

The player with the initiative is the attacker. First of all, he draws enough cards that he has **5 in his hand** (not necessary on the first turn). He chooses whether to draw special cards and, if so, how many. Next he must play **at least one** of the cards in his hand. Each player puts his played cards [face up] onto [his own] discard pile. The attacker may play more cards from his hand, all of which are evaluated singly. If he is able to do what he wants with the battle tricks [in front of him], he may use these as well.

A player's initiative ends and passes to his opponent if

- a) the player ends his turn voluntarily, *or*
- b) the defender captures the initiative.

The battle cards

A player may use only the cards in his hand. There are four different types of cards:

Movement cards [marked with a bear paw]: The player **must** move his figure exactly as many hexes as the numeral on the card. He may only move it in a straight line over empty hexes, [except that] he may change direction once during the move.

Attack cards [marked with a red “explosion”]: For an attack card to be played, the two figures must stand on adjacent hexes (sharing a boundary). The strength of the attack is determined by the numeral on the card.

Defense cards [marked with a shield]: These cards may only be used when a player is attacked. The strength of the defense is determined by the number on the card.

Special cards [marked with a star]: Each special card may be used in one of four distinct ways:

[“explosion/shield +1”]: The strength of one of the player’s own attack or defense cards is **increased by 1**.

[explosion <->shield]: One of the player’s own attack cards becomes a defense card or *vice versa*. The strength of the card does not change.

[bear paw 1-3]: The player moves his figure **1, 2, or 3** hexes in a straight line, [except that] he may change direction once.

[compass + trick tile]: When a player has just moved to his trick hex, he draws his top “battle trick” tile.

Important: While any number of special cards may be played in a turn, only one is allowed per action (movement, attack, or defense).

Example: *A player may use one special card to move to his trick hex and another to take a battle trick tile. But he may not use two special cards to increase the strength of a card by 2. Similarly, he may not change a defense card into an attack card and then increase the strength of the [same] card by 1.*

Attack and defense

As soon as the player with the initiative starts his attack (the play of an attack card, possibly with the increase of its strength by a special card), the attacked player **must** react. There are several ways to do this:

1. He plays **no card** (does nothing) and therefore has defensive value “0”. – Then the defender must advance his hit marker along the scoring track by the full value of the attack card.

2. He plays a **movement card** or uses a special card for movement (and thus runs away), which has a defensive value of “1”. – Then the defender must advance his hit marker along the scoring track by the value of the attack card minus 1.
3. He plays a **defense card**, possibly also strengthened by 1 with a special card. – Now the strength of the attacker is compared with that of the defender:
 - a) If the strength of the attacker is **higher**, the defender must advance his hit marker by the difference.
 - b) If the strength of the defender is **equal or higher**, the initiative passes to him. The defender becomes the attacker and draws to increase his hand to 5 cards.
The previous attacker must now defend himself. **No** points are scored.

Hint: If a player exceeds 40 hits, move his marker to 1 and add 40.

After a successful attack the player's turn continues with all possibilities:

- ❖ If the opponent remains on his hex, he can be attacked with further cards.
- ❖ If he runs away, the attacker can, with suitable movement cards, again move to an adjacent hex and attack further.
- ❖ The attacker may use one or more suitable movement cards to go to his trick hex and use a special card to take a battle trick. He can then move to confront his opponent and resume the attack.
- ❖ However, the player can also use a movement card to move one or more hexes away from his opponent to create difficulties for his opponent's next attack.
- ❖ Or the player can decline to take further action, thus ending his turn [with the initiative passing to his opponent].

The battle tricks

- ❖ If a player uses a movement card to move to his trick hex (but not when he is already there!) and also plays a special card, he may then pick up his top battle trick [tile], look at it, and place it face down in front of him. He may use it immediately or later.
- ❖ *Note: It is also possible to pick up a battle trick as the defender by running away from an attack, ending up on the trick hex, and then playing a special card.*
- ❖ A player may have **at most two** battle tricks before him at one time. If he wants a third, he must either use one or discard one unused.

- ❖ Battle tricks may be used in addition to played cards. They are then out of the game and are returned to the box. [While this section is confusing, it seems to say that battle tricks may be never be used more than once per game.]
- ❖ The individual battle tricks are explained [below].

Special situation: No playable card!

Since a player with the initiative must always play at least one card, it may happen that he has no legally playable card. This occurs when he has **no movement card** and **no special card** (which could be used for movement) in his hand and also is not on a hex adjacent to his opponent to play an attack card.

Then the following rule applies:

The player shows his opponent the cards in his hand. He must then play one of his attack or defense cards and **use its strength as a movement value!** The initiative then passes to his opponent, unless his movement brings him adjacent [to his opponent's figure], in which case he may play attack cards as usual.

End of the game

Toward the end of the game, if the draw stack and special card stack are exhausted, a player can no longer refill his hand at the beginning of his initiative. He continues to play normally, but with fewer cards in his hand.

The game ends when **both** players have no cards they are able to play. Then the player who has fewer hits on the scoreboard is the winner. In case of a tie, the game is undecided.

Hint: *It can happen at any time that one player has no more cards, while the other can still play some (as the attacker with the initiative). Such situations can make the endgame very dangerous.*

Example: *One player has no more cards. The other holds three attack cards. He stands one hex away from his opponent. Since he has no playable movement card or special card to play, he uses an attack card for the movement and moves to a hex adjacent to his opponent. With the two other attack cards he inflicts two severe hits on him.*

Tip:

Although the bears have identical [decks of] cards, since their battle tricks are different, the players may [want to] play two games in succession, alternating roles, and add the two results together. The winner is then determined on the basis of the combined results.

The battle tricks individually

Iorek [brown]

Battle reserve: The player shuffles his discard pile face down, counts out 5 cards and places them [face down] under his draw pile. The discard pile is then replaced face up next to the draw pile. In this way special cards can come into the draw pile. The “battle reserve” may be used at any point in the game.

Trick attack: Iorek must run, attack with strength “4”, and then finally move further. The movement must add up to 4 (1 hex, then attack, then 3 hexes, *or* 2 hexes, attack, 2 hexes, *or* 3 hexes, attack, then 1 hex).

The attack value cannot be increased by a special card. If the attack fails and the initiative shifts, Iorek must still move the remaining hexes. The “trick attack” may be played together with “long-distance attack.”

Long-distance attack: As long as this player has the initiative, he may attack across a gap of one hex (i.e., any hex adjacent to the ones next to where he stands – see diagram). Attack or defense cards have their normal value and may not be altered.

***Example:** Iorek may attack [Iofur, shown on the board] from any of the hexes marked in brown. He may not stand adjacent to Iofur. If Iofur runs, Iorek can continue to attack him across a gap of one hex. He may first need to play a movement card to reach him.*

Iofur

Burst of strength: The player takes the top 4 cards of his discard pile and shuffles them [face down] into his draw pile. In this way special cards can come into the draw pile. “Burst of strength” may be used at any time during the game.

Rush of energy: The player may take two additional cards (from his draw stack, his special stack, or both). He may do this at any time, even during a fight (as attacker or defender). However, he may not have more than 5 cards in his hand.

Power attack: The player has an especially powerful attack of value “6”. This value cannot be increased by the use of special cards. No additional attack cards may be played. The other player defends normally.