

Note: This FAQ is valid as of March 2026

Q: What is KeyForge?

KeyForge is a competitive, 2-player dueling card game originally designed by Richard Garfield. It debuted in 2018 under Fantasy Flight Games and is still being published today by Ghost Galaxy.

Q: What is the objective of the game?

KeyForge has similar card types to other card games, but the objective is different. KeyForge cards are either creatures, actions, artifacts, or upgrades. Players themselves cannot be attacked / do not have life totals, and there is no base to attack either.

Instead, you win a game of KeyForge when you forge three keys, each usually requiring six “aember”. You gain aember by playing certain cards and using your creatures and artifacts to generate it. Because of that, KeyForge has been described as a “race, not a fight”.

Q: How is KeyForge different from other competitive card games?

Most competitive card games, like MtG, Pokemon, Yugioh, etc, are trading card games (TCGs). You buy booster packs of cards with different rarities and build decks from these cards.

KeyForge, by contrast, is a “unique deck game”. Instead of buying booster packs, you buy ready-to-play decks that have been constructed using a deck building algorithm. Each KeyForge set (Call of the Archons, Age of Ascension, etc) has a large pool of cards, but only a subset of them is chosen to be included in any given deck.

So, the best way to think about KeyForge decks is that they are like pre-made “theme” or “starter” decks from other TCGs, except that every single one is unique. That aspect of discovering your deck’s strengths and weaknesses is a core part of the appeal of the game.

Q: How does the deck building algorithm work?

KeyForge decks are constructed using a method called “procedural generation”, which is often used in video games to make large open-world environments (Minecraft is an example).

The cards chosen in any given deck are determined by an algorithm when the deck is made, in a way that ensures no other deck has that exact combination of cards. Cards in KeyForge have rarities, but they only influence the odds that you might see a given card in a given deck. The rarities ensure that there is some structure to the way that decks are made and that cards are not entirely randomly assigned to a deck.

Each deck is made up of 36 playable cards, divided equally among three “houses”, which are the factions in the game. That means that each KeyForge deck gets assigned 12 cards per house from a fixed card pool for that house.

Q: Does KeyForge have a mana / resource system like other TCGs?

No, and that is one of the biggest and most interesting differences between KeyForge and other dueling card games. In KeyForge, you can almost always play cards from your hand without a cost. In fact, playing cards will often give you some of the resource that you need to win the game (aember).

What stops you from playing all the cards in your hand each turn is the fact that you have to choose just one of the three houses in your deck to play for your turn. You can only play, use, or discard cards from the chosen house that turn.

Q: What is the difference between each of the KeyForge sets? Is there a core set to buy?

There is no core set, and each KeyForge set integrates with each other. They are not expansions, and any KeyForge deck is playable against another KeyForge deck.

The difference between sets has to do with mechanics, what houses have been included in that set, and the card pool.

Q: I opened a KeyForge deck, and there is a QR code on the deck list. What is that for?

It is not needed to play the game casually. You can “discover” the deck and make it publicly known (and searchable by name) by scanning that QR code into the KeyForge MasterVault. Doing this is necessary to play that deck at a competitive KeyForge event. While it will make your deck searchable to others, scanning a deck into the MasterVault does not reveal any of your personal information.

Q: Does the game have different formats?

Yes. There are three “official” game formats.

The first is Sealed: Get two sealed/unopened KeyForge decks, open them, and play them against each other for the first time.

The second is Archon: Play two previously-opened KeyForge decks against each other.

The third is Alliance: A limited form of deck construction, which allows you to build a new deck made up of up to three different house “pods” from decks of the same KeyForge set.

Q: Is there an organized play (OP) scene for KeyForge?

Yes. Ghost Galaxy supports LGS store championships with organized play kits and runs multiple Vault Tours in the US each year. National Championships and International Vault Tours are also organized by partner groups / game stores.

In 2025, Vault Tours were held in the United States (Rochester, Roseville, Portland, Baltimore, and Las Vegas), France, Vietnam, Germany, and Spain. The 2025 organized play season culminated in the World Championship in Roseville at the KeyForge Celebration event in November, which had roughly 150 participants.

Q: Is every KeyForge set legal to play in OP events?

Currently, yes. The idea of set rotation has been informally discussed by the game's publisher in the past, but no changes to the "evergreen" nature of the game have yet occurred as of Spring 2026.

Note that this applies to the Archon and Alliance game formats. Sealed OP events are always set-specific, and the decks are typically provided by the tournament organizer.

Q: What are my options if I have no one to play KeyForge with me at my LGS?

If you have a board gaming group, KeyForge is a great kitchen table dueling card game.

If you have no one to play in person, you can play the game online at thecrucible.online.

Q: Is there a secondary market for KeyForge like there is for TCGs?

Yes, and decks are typically sold on Facebook marketplace, decksofkeyforge.com, or via posts on KeyForge Discord servers.

However, demand for decks on the secondary market is minimal if the deck (or house pod) is not competitive. Using a TCG analogy, selling a non-competitive KeyForge deck is like selling a small pack of common TCG cards.

Q: What is the difference between KeyForge and KeyForge Adventures?

KeyForge Adventures is a co-op / solo mode for KeyForge. To date, four adventure packs have been released: Rise of the Keyraken, Abyssal Conspiracy, Fall of the House Gormangeist, and The Great Hunt.

Q: Why is KeyForge no longer being published by Fantasy Flight Games?

In September 2021, Fantasy Flight Games announced that their deck building algorithm was broken and needed to be rebuilt from the ground up. While FFG stated that they intended to relaunch the game, in June 2022 Ghost Galaxy announced that it had acquired KeyForge.

The backstory is that Ghost Galaxy is owned by Christian T. Petersen, the founder and former CEO of FFG. Ghost Galaxy recreated the KeyForge algorithm using their Forgefire software, and released Winds of Exchange in 2023.

Q: Does KeyForge have an errata / ban list?

For the Archon format, card errata are listed in the KeyForge Master Rules Book, available at KeyForging.com.

For the Alliance format, there is a restricted list, which is available in the KeyForge Tournament Rules & Guidelines (TRG) document under the Organized Play section of the KeyForging.com site.

Q: What can I do with a deck once I have opened and played it?

Most decks have lots of replayability. If you are playing with a friend and find that one of your decks is stronger than the other, you can handicap the stronger deck with “chains”. Chains reduce the number of cards that you draw at the end of your turn. Start with three, and then keep adding them in subsequent games until you feel that the decks are balanced power-wise.

Q: What resources are available to learn about the game?

Keyforging.com
archonarcana.com
decksofkeyforge.com