

Domino Knights, v0.7

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Abstract

Domino Knights is an alternative to the numerous battle-focused, collectable card games on the market today. Instead of special cards, it uses games that you may already have in your bookshelf: a set of dominos, a deck of cards, and pencil and paper. The concept of the game is simply to defeat your opponents in battle using Knights you've trained from the Peasants of the countryside. This game is designed for two to six players.

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1 Introduction

Domino Knights is an alternative to the numerous battle-focused, collectable card games on the market today. Instead of special cards, it uses games that you may already have in your bookshelf: a set of dominos, a deck of cards, and pencil and paper. The concept of the game is simply to defeat your opponents in battle using Knights you've trained from the Peasants of the countryside. This game is designed for two to six players.

Dominos are used to represent the Peasants a player recruits and trains into Knights with which she battles opposing Kingdoms. One side of the domino represents an attack power, and the other side represents a defend power. Which side is use for attack or defend is determined by how the player brings a Knight in to play.

The standard deck of cards provides randomness and variety to the game by determining the type of Knight you bring in to play, and by providing special abilities to those Knights. It is recommended that you use one standard deck with the Jokers for every three players.

The pencil and paper is used to track a player's Kingdom Fame points, which start out at $3 \times$ **maximum pip value** of the domino set. For example, if the maximum pip value for the domino set is 9, each player's Kingdom Fame points starts out at $3 \times 9 = 27$. The game is won by the "last player standing," the last player with positive Kingdom Fame points.

2 Setup

Game play begins with a random card draw. The player with the highest card value goes first, with Kings being highest and Aces lowest. If there is a tie between the highest drawn players, draw again until a winner is determined. The cards are placed back in the deck and reshuffled. Five cards are dealt to each player, who may look at their cards at any time.

Dominos are shuffled, faced-down in the center of the table. These dominos are known as *Peasants*. Each player draws two Peasants and places them in their pool of Recruits. As Knights are defeated in battle, they are placed face up in a player's graveyard stack. If there is ever a case where the Peasants are exhausted, players return all but the top domino of their graveyard stack to the Peasants pool.

The deck of cards is placed face down in the center of the table. The first card is drawn and placed in the discard pile. The first player may choose to take the discarded card or draw a new one from the deck.

3 Game Play

Each player's turn consists of the following steps, starting with the player who won the draw and progressing clockwise around the table.

1. **Maintain** Knights by untapping them, discard special cards, etc.
2. **Draw** cards from the discard pile or deck and transfer Peasants to the Recruit pool.
3. **Train** new Knights
4. **Attack** your opponents
5. **Cleanup** the mess
6. **Discard** extra cards

3.1 Maintain

Untap any tapped Knights. Flip any Candidates in training into play as Knights. Flip the training cards over face up and place the new Knight face up upon the card. Arrange the Knight so that the desired attack score (pips) faces the center of the table and the defense score faces the player.

3.2 Draw

Replenish the pool of Recruits to two Recruits. The player may look at the Recruits at any time. When there is less than five Peasants left, recycle the player's graveyards as described in the Setup.

Next, each player must have six cards at the beginning of her turn. A player may draw the top card from the discard deck, if it has a value of between two and nine, and any additional cards from the deck to reach six cards.

3.3 Train

A player may train a Recruit as long as she has enough points in training cards of a single suit as there are pips on the Recruit. Any card, except the Aces and Jokers, can be used as training cards. Jacks count as 11 points, Queens as 12, and Kings as 13. Keep in mind, however, that the Tens, Jacks, Queens, and Kings all have special abilities that are lost if played as training cards.

To train a Recruit, place the training cards face down, and place the Recruit face down upon the cards. It is now a Candidate in training.

3.4 Attack and Defend

A player may attack any other player, and she may attack any number of players during her turn. However, each attacked must be resolved separately. The attack sequence is as follows:

1. **Declare** Choose a player to attack
2. **Commit Attack** Choose and tap the attacking Knights

3. **Aid the Attack** Any player may provide attack aid whether invited or not by tapping and committing their own Knights
4. **Commit Defense** Choose and tap the defending Knights
5. **Aid the Defense** Any player may provide defense aid whether invited or not by tapping and committing their own Knights
6. **Resolve** attacks and defenses. Defeated Knights are added to the players' graveyard stacks, and points taken from the defending player's life counter.

The attacking player must first declare who she is attacking. She then chooses Knights to attack that player by tapping them: turning the Knight upon the card to a 45 degree angle to the right of forward. The attacking player may ask for aid at this time. Aid is provided by any other player by committing untapped creatures to Attack the defending player. Aid can be given even if it isn't explicitly asked for, but must be declared before the defending player begins committing Knights to defense.

The defending player must then commit defending Knights by placing them in front of each of the attacking Knights and tapping them. Multiple defending Knights may commit to a single attacking Knight. For both attack and defense score, treat the defending Knights as if it were a single Knight, a unit. In order for the attacking Knight to defeat either Knight, it must defeat the unit as a whole. As with the attacking player, the defending player may ask for aid. Defense aid can be given by other players committing their Knights to a player's defense.

There are no rule-based allegiances, and any player may choose to interfere by tapping their own Knights and committing them to attack or defend *Knights*. Knights providing aid in attack can never act as a unit. To defeat any defensive Knight in a unit, all Knights in the unit must be defeated.

All Knights in battle are allowed one attack, even if their defense score is less than the opposing Knight or unit, thereby allowing both sets of opposing Knights the Peasant to be defeated. Attack and defense essentially happen at the same time.

To resolve which Knights are victorious, compare the attack score of a Knight to the defense score of the opposing Knight or unit. If the attack is greater than the combined defense, the attack succeeds. Now, repeat the resolution in the other direction.

Flip over any defeated Knights after resolving the attacks and defenses.

If an attack cannot be defended or blocked, its score is taken away from the Kingdom's Fame counter.

3.5 Cleanup

Discard any special cards no longer in play. Send defeated Knights to the graveyard. At this point, a player may choose to attack another or decide to Discard and end her turn.

If the player has lost all Fame, no Peasants can be recruited for battle. Her time in the game has ended. Discard all cards and place all creatures in the graveyard.

3.5.1 Optional Rule: Loot the Battfield

The defeated Kingdom's land is absorbed by the opponent, and the *battlefield* may be looted. Any single creature defeated upon the battlefield can be placed on the top of the victorious player's own graveyard stack.

3.6 Discard

A player may not have more than five cards in her hand at the end of her turn, but may discard any number of cards if she so decides. Discard any extra cards face up on the discard pile. A player may also discard any number of cards from her hand.

Strategy hint: Always place the lowest value card on the top of the discard pile.

4 Special Cards

What fun would any game be without special effects and attack cards? This section details how Aces, the Face Cards, Jokers, and Tens can affect game play. Each of these cards can be played as *instant effect cards*; they can be played at any time. Any number of face cards can be played at once, by any player, and effects can be stacked.

Special cards may not be drawn from the discard pile. They prevent a player from drawing a point card directly below it. Although special cards may be used for points to train Recruits, you may *not* draw the card from the discard pile. When the last card of the deck is drawn, the discard pile is reshuffled and placed as the deck. The top card is not discarded as in the start of the game.

The effects of special cards may "stack" upon each other. To resolve which effects are first in the stack, examine the period in which the cards is active. If they are active during the same time, apply the least powerful card first. If playing with multiple decks, identical cards may also stack upon each other.

4.1 The Aces: Instant Gratification

The Aces are the most powerful cards in the deck and can affect any Knight on the board, not simply the player who uses the card.

- **A♠**: (*Instant*) Death. This card instantly kills any single Candidate or Knight in play, whether it is in training (blind kill), tapped or active. Discard after killing the target Knight.

- **A♥: (Instant) Life.** This trains a single Knight from the Recruit pool directly into action without requiring training cards. This Knight is never tapped. Can be applied to a tapped Knight in play to untap. Discard after the Knight is defeated.
- **A♦: (Instant) Wealth.** Double the value of all training cards in the player's hand during the Training step of a player's turn. Place the card face up on top of or in front Candidates in training. Discard during the Maintenance phase of the player's next turn.
- **A♣: (Instant) Power.** This card doubles the attack and defend values for a single Knight in play, including any bonus the player may receive for playing the Jack of the same suit. Discard immediately after this Knight is defeated.

The Death card can be played any time on any Knight in play or being trained. This may be useful in preventing a player from building defenders in her next turn.

The Life card is like having a surprise attacker or defender. It is most impressive when using it to pull a Knight directly from the Recruit pool into play. If used in concert with a Joker (Necromancer), the Knight can be stolen from any player's grave and brought directly in to play. It can also be used on Knights already in play, even those that have already been tapped.

The Wealth card may not seem powerful at first, but some Knights require many points to train. The double nine domino, for example requires 18 points in training cards of the same suit to train. When you play the Wealth card, place it face up either on top of or directly in front of your training Knights. This card can only be disrupted during the Training phase of the player's turn. Once the Training phase has ended and the player has entered Attack or Discard phases, the card is inactive and only remains in front of the player to verify that training costs have been met during the Maintenance phase of her next turn.

The probability for each of these cards to come into play is 1/54.

4.2 The Faces: Control Cards

The Face Cards can be played on behalf of any player at the table and remain in effect until the Maintenance phase of that player's next turn. These cards should be placed face up next to the player affected.

- **King: (Instant) Majesty.** Knights of the King's suit under the player's control do not need to be tapped to attack or defend.
- **Queen: (Instant) Loyalty.** Knights of the Queen's suit may not attack the player who this card effects or Knights the player controls that are of the same suit. These Knights, in turn, also refuse to fight opponents of the same suit.

- **Jack:** (*Instant*) Courage. Knights of the Jack's suit gain Attack and Defense Bonuses of 1/3 of maximum pip value for the domino set.

The probability that a King, Queen, or Jack will come in to play is 6/27.

4.3 Tens and Jokers: Wizards and Necromancers

The two other types of cards left are the Tens and Jokers, the Wizards and Necromancers of the deck. The Tens, the Wizards, are masters of disruption. As instant effect cards, they may negate *any* special card played at any time, including other Wizards. Some instant cards have different periods of effectiveness. For example, the Power card (A♣) stays with the Knight until that Knight is defeated. The Wizard can disrupt that card. The Death card (A♠) has a very short period but deadly period of effectiveness. With the exception of the Wealth card (A♦), any special card that is not in the discard pile already can be disrupted.

The Jokers are the thieving Necromancers of the deck. They may recall and place in a player's Recruit pool the top Knight from *any* player's graveyard stack.

- **Ten:** (*Instant*) Wizard. Negate any special card that has been played or is still in play.
- **Joker:** (*Instant*) Necromancer. Resurrect the top Knight from any player's graveyard stack as a Recruit.

The probability that a Necromancer will come in to play is 1/27. The probability that a Wizard will come in to play is 2/27.

5 The Blank Domino: Doppelganger!

The blank domino is the only special domino in a set, the Doppelganger. It has the ability to duplicate any Knight in play of the same suit, including Knights under the control of opponents. It can only duplicate one Knight until either that Knight or the Doppelganger is defeated. If the copied Knight is defeated and the Doppelganger still remains in play, the player must immediately designate another Knight of the same suit for the Doppelganger to copy, or lose it to the graveyard. If there are no Knights of the same suit, the Doppelganger is immediately sent to the graveyard.

Tip: use a marker or indicator of some kind to indicate the copied Knight, such as a coin or piece of tape.

Special effects cards that are applied directly to the copied Knight, such as Life (A♥) or Power (A♣), also apply to the Doppelganger. Player affect cards for opponents, such as Majesty(King), Loyalty(Queen), and Courage(Jack) do not. Lastly, if a special effect card is disrupted with the Wizard(Ten) on the copied Knight, it is also disrupted on the Doppelganger.

If no Knights of the same suit are in play at the time when the Doppelganger completes training and is promoted from Candidate to Knight, it is immediately sent to the graveyard.

6 Option: Domino-less Game

It is still possible to play Domino Knights without a set of dominos; the mechanics of the game change slightly. The potentials and recruit pools are removed from the game. Candidates and Knights are represented by a pair of cards of the same suit, one indicating the attack and one indicating the defense. Stack the defense card upon the attack card, so that the attack values can still be seen.

As with dominos, the player does not need to assign the assign to attack and defense scores until the Maintenance phase of the next turn.

The A♥ no longer gives the player the “no cost” benefit of playing it upon a domino, but a Knight may still be brought directly into play from the player’s hand, and it never is tapped.

The A◇ is the card most affected by this optional rule. One idea is to use this as a Mercenary card, allowing a player to purchase the loyalties of any Knight on the board. The A◇ would be placed under the Knight and if disrupted, the Knight would return to its original owner.

The Doppelganger is also generally not represented in a standard deck of cards. Some decks actually come with a blank card, and some come with a card containing the rules for poker on it. With the change to the A◇ card, it may not be necessary.

A This Document

This document was created using L^AT_EX and the ViM text editor. If you find errors in this document or have suggestions on how to improve it, please send email to Chad C. Walstrom at <chewie@wookimus.net>.

A.1 Changes

- v0.7 - Domino-less game option.
- v0.6 - Copyright and License Update.
- v0.5 - Terms Update: Change spawn and creature terminology to Peasants, Recruits, Candidates, Knights, and Training. Handled case where no Knights of the same suit exist when the Doppelganger is promoted from Candidate to Knight.
- v0.4 - Swapped the 10's, now the disrupters, and Jokers, the thieves. Clarified the Wealth card and Disruption card semantics.
- v0.3 - Added the Doppelganger!
- v0.2 - Created spawn pool mechanism. Require Knight card values equal to pips. Fixed typos.
- v0.1 - Initial incarnation of death, destruction, and mayhem!

A.2 TODO

- Edit: Cleanup layout, add epigraphs, etc.
- Section: Glossary. Place at front just after introduction.
- Appendix: Crib Sheets. A 4x5.5 double-sided crib sheet that can be printed four to a page would be perfect.
- Appendix: Score Sheets.
- Appendix: Index.
- Graphic: Cover art. Deck of cards, dominos, Aristocrat, Death, Cleric, and Barbarian
- Graphic: Example of a table layout
- Graphic: Example of the player's space layout
- Graphic: Domino on card, tapped for battle
- Graphic: Death and A♠
- Graphic: Female cleric and A♥

- Graphic: Jeweled Aristocrat and A♦
- Graphic: Woad Berzerker/Barbarian and A♣
- Graphic: Necromancer
- Graphic: Mage

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