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In the dimension of Elohim, on the planet of Genesis, a grand empire covers three-fourths of that world’s surface. Far from Millestra, the capital, the huge continent of Arcana lies at the edge of the empire’s territory. Arcana is a land of wild magic, harnessed and sold to those willing to buy, who are signified by the branding of a mystical icon on the forearm (or applicable appendage). These branded individuals are known as Iconics.

Here, where the empire’s laws are most lax, powerful corporations rule the cities—even the seat of Arcana’s power, the clockwork city of Capitol Seven. But in the lawless Outer Provinces, Iconics brave dark dungeons and terrifying monsters for the promise of fame and fortune.

Now is your chance to quest in Arcana, or any other world of your or your friends’ creation, armed with powerful magics to defeat any obstacle. Build your characters, create their past, then enter the story to shape their future.

Summary of Play

Tales of Arcana™ provides a simple structure for a collaborative storytelling game. The Story Master (SM) leads the narrative while the players use cards representing their characters to affect the story. The text and images on the cards serve to guide storytelling. The players can’t reuse cards until they play most of their hands, so they have to be creative.

The ideal number of players is three, though the Story Master can decide to include more. Each game session takes 1 to 3 hours and requires at least 1 six-sided die (d6), which you can find in many board games. If you don’t have a d6, you can simulate die rolls using a trusted website (if you are under 18, ask your parents’ or guardians’ permission before going online).

Characters

Each player creates a character with a hand of six character cards. This represents the character’s narrative DNA. Cards can be drawn at random or drafted. A character hand must include 1 Race card, 1 Class card, 1 Trait card, 1 Armament card, and 2 Ability cards. You can use these cards to recreate classic RPG classes or beloved fictional characters. During play, you might pretend that you are that character, adopting mannerisms or accents, or you might simply describe his or her actions.

Optional Rules: At the SM’s discretion, a player may replace the Armament card with a third Ability card, or replace two Ability cards with three Armament cards.

If the SM allows it, a player may replace one Ability card with a second Race or Class card to make a dual-class or half-breed character. Using these optional rules is not recommended when creating a character for the first time.
Cards
Five kinds of cards define a character in the game. Each is described in greater detail here.

Race
The Race card represents your character’s biological attributes, nature, and social status, as well as specific abilities or knowledge he or she might have. It also affects how nonplayer characters (NPCs) react to your character.

When you play this card, don’t just read its text; think about what is suggested by the art and about fantasy tropes that might resonate with you and your friends for the race in question.

• Feats of raw strength, such as challenging another character to an arm-wrestling competition, are well suited to powerful races such as the Orc.
• The Merfolk card is appropriate for aquatic feats, such as swimming beneath the surface of a lake to search for a discarded amulet.
• You might play the Elf card when fighting an animated tree to learn information about this monster from your forest upbringing.
• Minotaurs and Devilkin both have horned heads, so you could play the card to gore an enemy in combat with a head butt.
• Gnomes are agile and clever, so playing this card might let you tell a joke to impress a large crowd or run between an enemy’s legs to avoid a hit in combat.

Tip: The Human card doesn’t seem to offer any advantages at first, but it is actually quite powerful. Humans have more general knowledge about the world than other races, are welcome in more areas, and are known for their charisma and adventuring spirit. You might play the Human card to grease the wheels with an NPC or to learn something about a topic or enemy. Alternatively, since not all races like humans, you might play this card to roleplay realizing your character is out of place, such as in a bar patronized by trolls.

Class
This card represents your character’s profession, how he or she fights, what the character wears, or what he or she knows. Some Class abilities might be more difficult to use in some situations; for example, the Druid’s ability to speak to plants isn’t likely to come into play in a dungeon or outer space. When you play this card, try to be creative about using abilities that make sense for that class.

• You play the Paladin card to narrate how your character strides imposingly into a back-alley gambling den, trying to intimidate the lowlifes with your air of righteousness.
• The Ranger card is helpful when following tracks left by raiders.
• The Fighter card might describe a cool combat move, or let you understand an enemy’s fighting techniques to better prepare your group to face that foe.
Tip: You can play a Class card along with an Armament or Ability card to describe how you use it. For example, a Barbarian might wield an Armament as a cudgel, while a Fighter might exercise more finesse. Wizards might hold their arms out and exclaim in a dead language to conjure magic, but Clerics might close their eyes and pray to cast the same spell.

Not having an appropriate Armament card doesn't preclude you from using your Class card in an appropriate way. A Bard might seem helpless without a Lute, but he or she can still sing or hum. Even without an instrument, a Bard supports allies by boosting morale, which might be through verbal encouragement or telling jokes. Conversely, another class with a Lute card might resort to using it as a weapon or to signify musical talent.

Trait
A perfect character isn’t very interesting. Trait cards represent negative characteristics to add a little unpredictability to the story. They aren’t necessarily bad; rather, Traits challenge players to make the story more entertaining. The goal is to have fun even as a character fails.

The most important use for the Trait card is refreshing the hand of cards (see “Playing Cards” for more information). You must play your Trait card before you can get back other cards that were previously used.

- You play Alcoholic to describe how your character’s hangover is a distraction in combat, causing an attack to miss.
- The Quixotic card explains that your character always sleeps outside, even in the rain, because he or she thinks that buildings are actually giants in disguise lying in wait to eat people.
- In the midst of negotiations with a group of elves, you play the Hothead card to interrupt your party’s diplomatic approach, as your impatient character punches the elf diplomat in the face.
- You insult a dwarf by playing Germaphobe when you meet him, declining to shake his hand out of fear of mine soot.

Armament
Armament cards represent characters’ weapons or implements. While the Class card represents how you fight, Armaments represents what you fight with. You might cast spells through your Armament, such as strumming a Lute to call a Quake or directing a Lightning Bolt through a Double Axe. Armament cards have no text, but they don’t really need any. You decide the effect of the card in the game.

You can also use Armament cards in interesting ways that have nothing to do with combat. Consider the following examples.

- You play your Quarterstaff card to describe helping a farmer pry his wagon from the mud.
- You use your Buckler Shield to slide down a muddy hill in pursuit of an escaped convict.
- You hit a faraway sign with a blast from your Shotgun, impressing goblin children so they’ll take you to their artificer aunt.
For ease of play, assume that Armaments that use ammunition to inflict damage (such as a Crossbow or Shotgun) do not run out of arrows or bullets.

**Ability**

These cards represent the types of magic spells or special powers your character uses in and out of combat. Even if you create a random character that you wouldn’t normally think of as a spellcaster, you can have a lot of fun coming up with unexpected ways to use these cards. How does a Bard cast Frost Path? What does it look like for a Paladin to use Transform: Bee Swarm?

If you draw Ability cards randomly and receive two of the same element, you can choose to discard one and draw another card at random until you get an Ability with a different element. (See “The Elements” for more information.)

**The Elements:** Each Ability card belongs to an **element**, such as Air or Light, which is represented by a unique color and symbol. The elements help guide the SM and players but do not have rigid rules for interaction. When one element interacts with another, the result within the game depends on the situation and die rolls, using common sense and resonant narrative tropes. For instance, Water effects should generally counter Fire, but the Dense Fog card, even though it belongs to Water, probably won’t extinguish a flame (unless the situation makes sense to the SM and the players, or the player rolls a 6 or makes a good enough case).

The following are suggested guidelines for element interactions, though ultimately the decision is up to the players and the SM.

- Water extinguishes Fire.
- Electricity conducts through Water, but not Earth.
- Wind blows out Fire (but a breeze might instead bolster the flames).
- Fire melts Ice and burns flesh and plant life.
- Light expels Shadow, and is more harmful to undead and demonic creatures.

Elements should make sense to the players and, above all, be consistent. For instance, if a campaign features robots that are immune to Lightning attacks, the SM should make sure that is true throughout the campaign unless a good narrative reason exists to rule otherwise, such as a robot is standing in water.
**Who Are You?**

Once you have all your cards, take a moment to flesh out your character. What is his or her name, age, and gender? How has Race and Class affected the character’s past? How does a trait affect his or her performance as an adventurer, and how do Abilities affect fighting style?

Think about your character’s personality and how will it influence interactions with the other players’ characters, NPCs, and various aspects of the game world. What is his or her current motivation? All the players in the group should introduce their characters and discuss how they have come to know each other and what has drawn them to a life of adventure.

**Example Character**

Thea Necropolis is the young gorgon woman illustrated on the box cover. Her hand consists of Gorgon (Race), Cleric (Class), Novice (Trait), and three Ability cards: Flamebody, Lightning Bolt, and Mending Light. (Her player chose to replace Thea’s Armament card with a third Ability.) When Thea heals a character, she uses Flamebody to cauterize wounds and Lightning Bolt to restart a fibrillating heart.

**Playing the Game**

*Tales of Arcana™* is great for a casual one-shot adventure or a multi-session campaign that might last several weeks or months. The group should decide ahead of time which sort of game to play.

Both kinds of game play the same basic way: The SM presents the situation to the players, who use their cards to affect the outcome (whether good or bad). Although the SM has the ultimate say in deciding what happens, the campaign is a communal storytelling experience in which everyone should have fun.

Before starting any campaign or session, the SM should talk with the players and make sure everyone has the same expectations from the game. For example, if everyone is playing good characters but one person wants to be evil—or vice versa—there can be contention. Additionally, it’s helpful to know what style of play the players enjoy. Do they want a dungeon crawl? A mystery? Intrigue? The group needs to find common ground before their characters awake in a dark prison, or bump into each other in the local tavern.
**One-Shot Games**

When playing a single session, randomly distributing the cards is best. Players have to decide on the fly how to make the most of what they’re given. A Merfolk Barbarian with Pyrokinesis or an Orc Bard with Transform: Wolf and a Shotgun might not make sense at first, but you can have a lot of fun using your imagination to bring life to characters like these that you’d never have met otherwise.

**Campaigns**

For a longer campaign, drafting character cards is a better method. That way, everyone can build the characters they want (see “Campaign Play” later in these rules for more information).

**Playing Cards**

During each game session, the SM narrates a story and presents challenges to the players. At any point, one or more players might play a card to affect the situation, or the SM might prompt the players to use their cards in response to an obstacle or enemy. As well, if there is a lull in the action or the players get stuck, the SM might require one or more players to use a card. The choice of what card to play always rests with the players.

A player who wants to use a card declares that he or she is playing it, describes what the character is attempting to do based on that card, and then places it face down on the table in front of the player.

After playing a card, the player rolls a six-sided die (d6) to see how effective that action is, consulting the “Action Results” table. The SM decides what happens based on what the character attempted and the result of the roll, but it’s more fun if the player describes how the character fails or succeeds.

The SM is the final authority when deciding if a player’s action with a card is too powerful or is not in keeping with the world, the character, or the described effect.

**Action Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die Roll</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Failure, often hilarious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>An average result. Bare success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A very good result. Better than expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Great success. An impressive display of luck or talent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A player might choose to play a Trait card to represent an automatic failure rather than rolling the die.

Regardless of success or failure, a played card remains face down.

**Refreshing Face-Down Cards**

Once a card has been played, it is no longer accessible until its player has used all the cards in his or her hand. This is called refreshing the hand.
Exception: It’s not necessary to play a Race or Class card to refresh a hand if those are the only cards remaining. However, if any of these cards have been played, they remain unavailable until that player’s hand refreshes. **If a character has more than one Race or Class card, all but one of them must be played before the hand refreshes.**

A face-down card doesn’t mean the character has lost that attribute, only that the player no longer has the ability to use that card in narrating the character’s actions. For example, if you’re playing a vampire character and have used the Vampire card, your character doesn’t stop being a vampire—you’ve just lost the ability to exploit the strengths (and weaknesses) of that race.

**Tip:** If it fits the narrative, the SM might decide that a card stays face down and can’t be refreshed in the normal way. For example, guards might confiscate the group’s weapons when the characters enter a tavern, so their Armament cards are unavailable until their characters get the opportunity within the story to recover their weapons. Or an evil wizard is suppressing Arcane magic in the area, so all Arcane Ability cards remain face down until that wizard is defeated. Suppressing cards this way is preferable to removing them from play, which represents injury to a character (see “Combat” for more information).

**Non-Card Actions**

At the SM’s discretion, no card is required to attempt a minor and reasonable action, such as inspecting a room, flirting with an NPC, and so forth. Just as with playing a card, the player rolls a d6 to see how successful the action is, though the outcome, even if a 6, should be less dramatic or effective than using a card. As always, err on the side of fun and rewarding ingenuity.

**Combat**

Combat occurs when the characters are in life-or-death struggles against enemies or dangerous obstacles (such as a room slowly filling with water or a collapsing bridge). During combat, players must play their cards one at a time in turn order.

**Face-Down Cards:** Any cards that were face down at the start of combat remain that way until players’ hands are refreshed.

**Story Points (SP):** Each enemy or obstacle has a predetermined number of Story Points, which are removed with successful card play. Story Points represent the number of successes needed to overcome the challenge. When an enemy’s or obstacle’s SP are reduced to 0, it is defeated. The SM describes the enemy or obstacle but keeps the SP total secret.

Players use cards to narrate their characters’ actions, such as laying down mist to distract an enemy, or speaking to a spirit to learn an enemy’s weakness. These actions don’t always have to be attacks; cards can represent any number of creative options.

**Heart Points (HP):** Heart Points represent a character’s vitality and are equal to the number of cards in play for that character, whether face up or face down. Enemy actions can remove cards from play, weakening or even killing a character. Losing a card (and a Heart Point) doesn’t have to be the result of physical damage, which is why **Tales of Arcana™** doesn’t use the more common expression “hit points.” A character might be disadvantaged in combat: becoming disoriented, losing sight of the enemy, or getting knocked over.

**Story Combat:** Most combat is against hostile creatures or characters, in which card play represents using weapons or magic in battle. However, defeating a challenging obstacle or situation can also be a kind of combat, at the SM’s discretion. In such “story combat,” players must play cards in order until all the obstacle’s SP are removed. Examples of such obstacles include a heavy locked door, a burning building, a collapsing cave, or a gaping chasm with no bridge.
Turn Order

Unlike narrative play outside of combat, in which the players and the SM interact in a freeform manner, combat follows a set order of actions. At the start of the combat encounter, the players roll a d6 to determine the order in which they take turns. (To save time, this roll can be instead made once at the start of the session.) The SM rolls for the enemies or obstacles, individually or as a group, and decides whether they act before or after the players. This decision depends on the story or the nature of the enemy. For example, if the players enter a kobold lair and knock over a shelf full of crockery, the kobolds might react first, but if the characters sneak up on the kobolds instead, then the players might go first.

Combat Actions

Each player takes a combat action in order and plays a card, narrating its effect in the usual way and then turning it face down. However, success and failure in combat work a little differently than in noncombat narrative. The player still rolls a d6 to see the result of the action but instead consults the “Combat Action Results” table.

The various combat actions are explained in greater detail below.

Enemies: The creatures or dangers opposing the characters also take actions and roll dice in the same manner as the players, although they generally don’t play cards. However, results that would remove SP instead cause characters to lose that number of HP (see “Losing Heart Points”).

Combat Action Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die Roll</th>
<th>Attack, Understand, Tactic</th>
<th>Defend, Evade</th>
<th>Heal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–5</td>
<td>Remove 1 SP</td>
<td>Lose no HP</td>
<td>Restore 1 HP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Remove 2 SP</td>
<td>Lose no HP</td>
<td>Restore 2 HP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Players can attempt the following specific actions in combat.

Attack: This is the most common action in combat. A character might use an Armament card, such as a Longsword or Shotgun, or cast a spell with an Ability card. Success removes SP, usually by injuring the opponent.

Understand: Taking the time to understand the enemy or obstacle can be vital in a fight. A character might use an Ability card or draw on knowledge related to a Race or Class card. Success removes SP by learning a weakness or gauging an enemy’s powers to aid the other characters in battle. Success with this action generally should not kill or defeat an enemy, but rather set up allies’ strategy.

Tactic: A more tactical character might take time to change or exploit the environment with an Ability card to turn the tide of combat, perhaps by distracting an enemy or setting a trap.

Defend: A character can use a card to block an attack against that character or another. A successful roll does not reduce the enemy’s SP, but the chosen character takes no damage that turn.
**Evade:** This action has the same effect as Defend but describes avoiding an enemy or impending attack rather than physically stopping it.

**Heal:** A character can use a card to restore lost HP to that character or another. If a Heal action is successful, return the appropriate number of cards at random to that player face down.

**Non-Card Actions:** These are minor actions that add more flavor to the narrative, such as trying to talk to an enemy. They do not remove SP.

**Merging Cards**

**Once per combat,** a player can attempt to play two cards at the same time to remove a large number of SP from an enemy or obstacle. This is called merging cards. The player chooses the cards to play, turning them face down as normal, and rolls a d6; on a result of 5 or 6, the cards merge. Then the player rolls again, consulting the “Merging Results” table.

**Merging with a Trait Card:** One of the merged cards can be a negative Trait, though the degree of success is reduced, as shown in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die Roll</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Remove 3 SP (1 SP with a negative Trait)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–6</td>
<td>Remove 4 SP (2 SP with a negative Trait)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combining cards this way has a mechanical effect in the game, but as usual, try to be creative in describing their effects within the narrative. For example, your character casts Fireball. If you play the Quarterstaff card at the same time as the Fireball card, you might say that you hurl a blast of fire from your staff.

**Merging Cards with Another Player:** A player can choose to merge one card with another player’s card, if they agree. This represents cooperation or tactical maneuvering in combat. The die roll is the same, except that each player rolls, using the higher of the two for the result of the merge.

Merging cards this way uses both the current player’s turn and the other player’s next turn, and neither can attempt to merge cards again that combat.

**Losing Heart Points**

When an enemy or obstacle injures or otherwise hinders a character, that player loses a number of cards equal to the HP lost, at random (including face-down cards). Remove lost cards from play by setting them aside, turning them sideways, or otherwise marking them.

If a player loses his or her last face-up card but still has face-down cards left, the remaining face-down cards refresh.

Losing a card does not remove that attribute from the character, but rather indicates that he or she no longer has access to its advantages (or disadvantages). For instance, say you lose the Minotaur and the Shotgun cards. Your character is still a minotaur and still has the weapon, but you can no longer narrate the effects of those cards until they are restored.
**Brink of Death:** When a player loses all his or her cards, that character is on the brink of death. Until the end of that player’s next turn, each player (including that of the dying character) can roll a d6 to save that character. On a roll of 5 or 6, the character is saved.

- If a character is saved, the player gets back half of his or her cards **face up** (at random).
- If a player saves his or her own character by rolling a 6, that player gets all his or her cards back **face up**.
- If the last enemy is defeated while a character is on the brink of death, ending combat, the character is saved and the player gets all cards back, with half of them (rounded down) face down at random.

Alternatively, another player can use a card to attempt the Heal action, or some other action that the SM judges might be able to save the character, rolling for success in the usual way.

**Death:** If the character is not saved, the player can make a new one from the remaining cards. The new character immediately joins the group. (Perhaps he or she had been following the others, or came in response to a message sent by the previous character but arrived too late.)

**End of Combat**

When combat ends, all removed cards are returned **face down** to each player. All effects used in combat are considered to end at this time.

**Creating Enemies and Obstacles**

Making and using enemies is a far simpler process for the SM than with traditional RPGs.

First, assign the enemy or obstacle a number of SP and then describe the situation, consulting the “Challenge by SP” table for guidelines. Then “skin” the encounter’s SP with different types of monsters or evildoers whose unique abilities make sense within the story.

For example, a bandit with a sword, an irate goblin, or a locked iron door might all have 3 SP, though the description of how each fights is different depending on the situation. See “The Elements” for some guidelines for how a creature might behave in combat. A firebird with 3 SP might negate Water attacks with its blazing heat. A rock golem could be immune to Fire effects, or a water elemental might grow stronger when Water is used against it. Armament cards can be inspiration too; for example, an assassin wielding a Longsword can be disarmed.

**Challenge by SP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy (1–3 SP)</th>
<th>Average (4–6 SP)</th>
<th>Hard (8–12 SP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 enemy with up to 3 SP</td>
<td>1 enemy with 4–6 SP</td>
<td>1 enemy with 10 SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 3 enemies with 1 SP each</td>
<td>3 enemies with 2 SP each</td>
<td>3 enemies with 3–4 SP each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adjusting Combat**

The SP suggestions in the table are intended for a group of three player characters. If the group is larger, increase the SP of a single enemy by 2 or add one more enemy to a hostile group for each additional player beyond three.
Another way to make combat more challenging is to have a single enemy with a high SP attack two or three times on its turn (such as a cerberus with its three heads, or an adept swordmaster) or deal damage to each character with a successful attack (such as a dragon’s breath). Alternatively, have all enemies in a group focus on a single character. For examples of enemies, check out the free campaign material available to download from www.TalesofArcana.com.

Optional Rule: Random Enemies
The SM can use the Race, Class, Armament, and Ability cards remaining after character creation to randomly create or skin enemies (or NPCs). Important NPCs might be generated just like player characters, playing and losing cards just as the players do. Such enemies could even merge cards or heal themselves for more challenging encounters.

For more details about creating enemies and obstacles, as well as free creature information, visit www.TalesofArcana.com.

Example of Play
The SM describes the situation: the characters enter a goblin village that is on fire (a 3 SP obstacle).

Player A goes first and uses Waterblast to extinguish the flames, rolling a 2 and removing 1 SP. The SM rules that the fire is somewhat reduced. Then Player B uses Pyrokinesis to move the remaining flames away from the village but rolls a 1, so the fire refuses to cooperate (no SP reduction). Player 3 uses Mudglob to smother the flames and rolls a 6, removing 2 SP from the obstacle and putting out the fires. The goblin mayor thanks the characters for their help.

Player A is suspicious and wants to know if the mayor is being deceptive about the origin of the fires. The SM decides that this action doesn’t require a card. Player A rolls a 4, so the SM informs the group that the mayor seems nervous about something. At that moment, three bandits spring out, and the players enter combat.

The players go first, having already rolled the turn order at the beginning of the session. On their turns, Players A and B each play a card to attack a bandit. Player C decides to play the Sneak card to avoid being attacked this turn and rolls a 6; the character blends into the shadows. Then the bandits attack, two dealing damage to Player A and one missing (the SM rolls 4, 3, and 1 for their attacks, respectively). Player A loses 2 HP and randomly removes two cards.

On the next turn, Player B plays Mending Light and rolls a 6, restoring 2 HP to Player A’s character and returning the two removed cards face down. On their turn, all the bandits attack Player C’s character, dealing enough damage to remove all that player’s cards.

The following turn, Players A and B roll to save Player C’s character, who is on the brink of death, but get a 2 and a 4, which both fail. Luckily, Player C rolls a 5, returning half of the lost cards. The characters eventually defeat the bandits.
Campaign Play

Although Tales of Arcana™ is designed for creating one-shot adventures with randomly generated characters, there’s no reason you and your friends can’t use these cards for a longer, multi-session story, commonly referred to as a campaign.

Instead of randomly drawing cards, each player chooses Race, Class, Armament(s), and/or Ability cards through drafting. To draft cards, determine turn order with die rolls or another agreed method. Then each player picks one card from those still available until each player has all the cards required to build a character.

Trait cards do not affect game play in a campaign (though players can still use these for roleplaying). Thus, players start the campaign with five cards (and 5 HP) instead of six.

Leveling

At the end of the first session of the campaign, each player picks a new Ability card (or an Armament card instead, if desired). At the end of the third, fifth, and seventh session (that is, every other session), each player gets another card (and another 1 HP). Each time a player receives a new card, that character is considered to have leveled. A character reaches maximum level at nine cards (9 HP), though that doesn’t mean the campaign is over.

Optional Rule: If the SM approves, players can continue to pick new Ability cards at the end of every other level after the seventh, either by holding more than nine cards or by exchanging one Ability or Armament card for a new one each time the character levels.

Choosing Cards

When selecting a new Ability card at the end of a session, the element type of the card does matter. You can select any card from those remaining, though an Ability card whose element is different than those of the cards you already hold imposes a penalty of ‒2 on die rolls with that card during the next session of play. This represents the character learning to use a new kind of magic or power.

For instance, Thea Necropolis has the Ability cards Flamebody (Fire), Lightning Bolt (Lightning), and Mending Light (Light). Thea levels and selects Astral Projection (Mental). Whenever she plays Astral Projection in the next session, her rolls using that card have a ‒2 penalty. If she had taken Angelic Wings (Light) instead, she would not have this penalty.

The same rule can be used with Armaments, at the SM’s discretion. For example, it would make sense for a Longbow user to move to a Crossbow without a penalty, but a Longbow wielder taking up a Double Axe would probably suffer the ‒2 modifier.

Optional Rule: Reroll Tokens

At the end of a session in which a player does not get a new card, the player receives a “reroll token,” which he or she can use once per session to reroll a die roll of any kind. This token can be represented with a coin, chip, pop tab, or similar small object. Thus, after seven sessions, a player would have nine cards and three reroll tokens.

More Information

In the future, the “Campaign” section at www.TalesofArcana.com will have more information about player inventory, currency, items, and campaigns.
Rules Conflicts

If a situation arises that these rules do not cover, the group should decide the best course of action. Likewise, if the SM or a player has questions, he or she should feel free to ask for tips or advice from any other participant. This is meant to be a communal, fun experience where everyone is involved, so always err on the side of fun and respect the unexpected.

Website

For more detailed explanation of the rules, comprehensive storytelling guides for each card, more lore about the world of Arcana, roleplaying tips and articles, and free campaign and monster material, check out www.TalesofArcana.com.