



PRICE OF INFLUENCE

INTRODUCTION

Price of Influence is a competitive tactical strategy game for 2 players where rival courts test the true cost of power. Recruit Jacks, Queens, and Kings to your banner, arm them with steel and strategy, and manage limited resources to outmaneuver opponents amid shifting momentum and hidden information.

Victory is never singular. Dominate through battlefield strength, economic mastery, or a flawlessly timed tactical gambit. In the end, only one court's influence will endure.

"Power weighs most on those who know its cost"

THE GAME IN ONE SENTENCE

Build a court of nobles, equip them for battle, and outmaneuver your opponent through combat, economics, or perfect strategy.

COMPONENT LIST

- 1 Standard deck of playing cards (52 cards + 2 Jokers)
- That's it!

THE BIG PICTURE (30-Second Overview)

1. **Recruit nobles** (Jacks, Queens, Kings) to your court
2. **Equip them** with **weapons** (♠) and **armor** (♥)
3. **Send them to battle** against opponent's nobles
4. **Manage resources** with **diamonds** (♦) and **tactics** with **clubs** (♣)
5. **Win by:** Dominating in battle, perfect equipment, or a flawless tactical play. All while managing your resources and not over-leveraging your hand.

SETUP (2 Players) - 2 Minutes

1. **Separate the deck:**
 - Nobles pile (In-Council): All Jacks, Queens, and Kings (12 cards) - place face-down
 - Main deck: Everything else (Ace-10 of all suits + 2 Jokers) - place face-down
2. **Deal:**
 - Shuffle main deck, deal 9 cards to each player
 - Shuffle nobles pile, deal 6 nobles to each player face-down
3. **Starting actions:**
 - Look at your cards and nobles
 - Each player discards 2 cards from hand face-down
 - Reveal discards simultaneously (this forms the discard pile)
 - All future discards are face-up
 - Choose 1 noble to keep, return others face-down to In-Council pile
 - Place chosen noble face-down in STRIKE (vertical) or GUARD (horizontal) position, STRIKE will have to fight on your turn.
 - Flip all nobles face-up (your noble and the In-Council pile)

Maximum Hand Size: 7 cards (including leveraged cards)

Use a fair method to determine who will start as Active Player

HOW TO PLAY - THE BASICS

Your Turn as Active Player Has 4 Simple Phases:

1. **COUNCIL** → Recruit or manage nobles (costs tribute)
2. **PLAY CARDS** → Take turns playing cards for effects
3. **COMBAT** → Your STRIKE nobles must fight, GUARD cannot.
4. **RESUPPLY** → Draw cards and clean up

What Cards Do:

- ♠ **Spades (Weapons)** → Equip to nobles for +strength
- ♥ **Hearts (Armor)** → Equip to nobles for +strength
- ♦ **Diamonds (Gems)** → Resource Management – **Save** for card-draw and future Tribute Payment, or **Spend** to clear leveraged cards from hand
- ♣ **Clubs (Tactics)** → Steal cards from nearly anywhere
- ⚖ **Jokers (Wrists)** → Wild cards (count as any suit)

Simple Combat, Active player makes all combat assignments:

- Compare strength (Noble rank + Equipment bonuses)
- Lower strength loses and is "disgraced" (removed from play)
- Ties: Higher rank noble loses

KEY CONCEPTS

Card Locations

- **In-Hand:** Cards in your hand (hidden unless leveraged)
- **Leveraged:** Face-up cards stuck in your hand as a penalty (count toward hand limit), track for defeat condition
- **Gem Pile:** Your personal pile of saved diamonds (face-up, public information)
- **Equipped:** **Weapon♠** / **Armor♥** attached to nobles
- **In-Court:** Your active nobles in play
- **Disgraced:** Defeated nobles (flipped face-down, out of play), track for defeat condition
- **In-Council:** The pile of unclaimed nobles (face-up, public)

Paying Tribute

Council actions cost "tribute" equal to the noble's rank (Jack=1, Queen=2, King=3).

Pay tribute using ANY combination of the following, each action counts as 1 payment:

- **Liquidate:** Move a **diamond♦** from your gem pile to discard pile
- **Leverage:** Flip a card in hand face-up (becomes stuck as leveraged)
- **Dismantle:** Discard an equipped **Weapon♠** or **Armor♥** from a noble

Tribute Payment Example

Jane wants to Recruit a Queen (Rank=2). She has **1 Diamond♦** in her Gem Pile and **1**

Weapon♠ equipped to her Jack. She **Liquidates** the **Diamond♦** (moves to discard) and

Dismantles the **Weapon♠** (moves to discard). Total **Tribute** paid: 2.

Suit Influence

Each noble in your court gives you influence in their suit equal to their rank:

- **Jack** = 1 influence, **Queen** = 2 influence, **King** = 3 influence

What influence does:

- Every turn you can play 1 card of each suit PLUS your influence in that suit
- *Example:* You have a **Queen♠** (2 **spade♠** influence) & a **Jack♣** (1 **club♣** influence), you can play a mix of the following: 3 **spades♠**, 2 **clubs♣**, 1 **diamond♦**, 1 **heart♥**.
- Does NOT change the 4-card maximum per turn - only affects the mix of suits
- **Influence** increases the power of suit effects (weapons, armor, tactics, diamond spending)

DETAILED TURN STRUCTURE

Each turn is a set of 4 discrete phases, led by the Active Player. A phase is complete, and you move to the next once all required actions within that phase have been completed.

There are instances where you will move through a phase without taking actions, Combat for example will simply be skipped if all the Active Players Nobles are in GUARD.

Phase 1: Council (Active Player Only)

Must take at least 1 Action (can repeat or take multiple if you can pay the tribute):

RECRUIT NOBLE

- Select from In-Council pile
- Pay tribute = noble's rank
- Place In-Court in STRIKE or GUARD stance
- Max 1 of each rank (Jack/Queen/King) in court

CHANGE STANCE

- Switch noble between STRIKE ↔ GUARD
- Pay tribute = noble's rank

CHANGE SUIT

- Swap In-Court noble with same-rank noble from In-Council
- Equipment transfers to new noble
- Pay tribute = noble's rank
- No set bonus triggered by this swap

Phase 2: Play Cards (Both Players)

- Players alternate playing one card at a time
- Active player plays first
- Cards resolve immediately when played
- Each player maximum: 4 cards total
- Suit limits: 1 card per suit + **influence** from your In-Court nobles
- Once you pass, you cannot play more cards this turn
- Continue alternating until both players pass or play 4 cards

Phase 3: Combat (Active Player Only)

Part 1 - Declare Combat:

MANDATORY PARTICIPATION:

- All STRIKE nobles must enter combat
- GUARD nobles cannot enter combat
- If all your nobles are in GUARD, or your opponent has NO nobles In-Court, skip Combat

ASSIGNMENT PROCESS:

- Assign each of your STRIKE nobles to fight one or more opposing nobles
- Your noble's rank determines how many opponents it can face:
 - **Jack:** 1 opponent maximum, **Queen:** 2, **King:** 3

COMBAT STRUCTURE:

- Each assignment creates a separate one-on-one battle
- Opponent nobles have no limit on how many of your nobles can combat them
- Opponent rank and stance don't restrict combat assignments

KEY POINTS:

- You choose which opposing nobles to fight
- Your noble's rank only limits quantity of combats it is assigned to
- Multiple of your nobles may be forced into combat against the same opponent

Part 2 - Resolve Combat:

- Compare strength simultaneously but individually
- Strength = Rank + equipped **Weapon♠** + equipped **Armor♥** (including influence bonuses)
- Lower strength is disgraced
- Ties: Higher rank is disgraced (same rank = both disgraced)
- Disgraced nobles: Flip face-down, equipped **Weapon♠** & **Armor♥** are discarded

Combat Assignment and Resolution Example

*During Combat, Active Player has Jack (strength of 5) and Queen (strength of 7) in **STRIKE** stance. Opponent has King (strength of 7) In-Court.*

*Active Player assigns: Jack **combats** Opponent King, Queen also **combats** Opponent King. This is legal - each of the Active Player's Nobles entered 1 Combat (\leq their Rank), and opponent's King can combat multiple enemies.*

*Results: Active Player Jack is **Disgraced**, Opponent King is **Disgraced**, Active Player Queen **remains In-Court**. In a tie, the Higher Rank Noble is **Disgraced**.*

*Note: if the Opponent had a Jack (strength of 7), the results would have been Active Player Jack is **Disgraced**, Active Player Queen is **Disgraced**, Opponent Jack **remains In-Court**.*

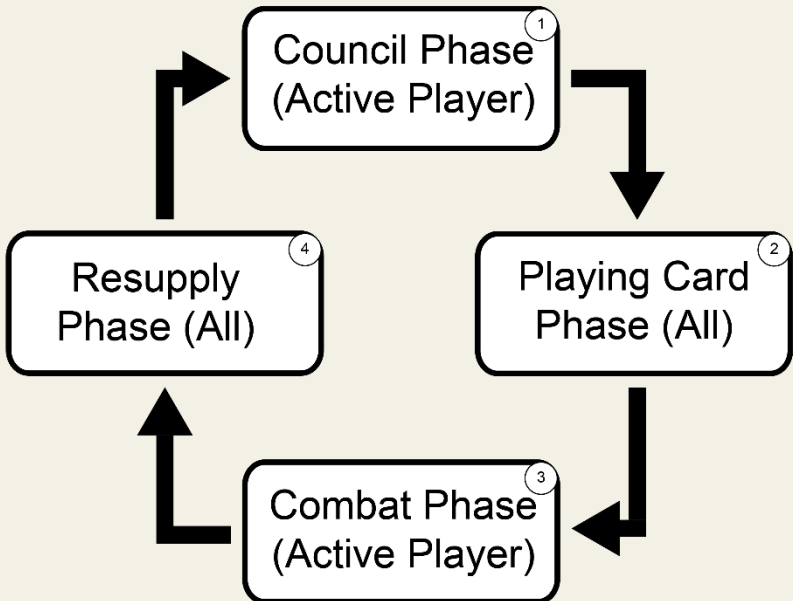
Phase 4: Resupply (Both Players)

1. **Exit combat:** All nobles leave combat
2. **Draw cards:** Active player reveals top 5 cards, splits into 2 face-up piles
 - Opponent chooses one pile, Active player takes the other
 - If deck runs out: See "**Out of Cards**" rule
3. **Equipment check (Active player first):**
 - Nobles keep # of equipment \leq their rank
 - Controller chooses what to discard if over limit
4. **Hand limit:** Discard non-leveraged cards to reach 7 maximum
5. **Check victory/defeat conditions (in order listed)**
6. **Pass turn**

Out of Cards


When deck runs out during any draw:

- Both players must select and leverage **0** cards from their hand.
 - If you run out of cards in hand, select from discard pile, with Active player having preference.
- Shuffle discard pile to form new deck
 - Track the # of reshuffles, after every **4th**, increase the # of leveraged cards required by **1** (this can be done simply with a D4, or tally marks, or by rotating the deck).
 - This is a long but fixed clock to the game. Eventually it will end in economic collapse.
- Continue drawing



CARD EFFECTS IN DETAIL

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N




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Equip to one of your In-Court Nobles. Increase its Strength by **N + ♠INFLUENCE**.
*Can be **Dismantled** to pay **Tribute**.*

When Equipped the Noble with matching **N ♥Armor**,
Trigger **Set Bonus**:
Change stance of any **1 Noble**

N
♥
A
R
M
O
R



R
O
O
M
A
R
A
N

Equip to one of your In-Court Nobles. Increase its Strength by **N + ♥INFLUENCE**.
*Can be **Dismantled** to pay **Tribute**.*

When Equipped the Noble with matching **N ♠Weapon**,
Trigger **Set Bonus**:
Change stance of any **1 Noble**

N
♦
G
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M



M
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Choose One:

SAVE: Place this card in your **Gem Pile**. Draw **2** cards.
*Can be **Liquidated** to pay **Tribute**.*

SPEND: **Target** 1 leveraged card Any Hand with a Value \leq **N + ♦INFLUENCE**.
Target goes to Discard Pile. Discard this card.

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Target face-up card with Value \leq **N + ♣INFLUENCE**.
Valid Targets:

- Equipped **♠/♥**.
- Cards in Discard Pile.
- **♦Diamonds** in Gem Piles.
- **♣** cards in hands.

Target goes to Your Hand. Discard this card.

♠ Spades - Weapons

- Equip to one of your In-Court nobles
- Strength bonus = equipped **Weapon♠** value + your **spade♠ influence**
- Can be dismantled to pay tribute
- Triggers **Set Bonus** if noble has matching-value heart

♥ Hearts - Armor

- Equip to one of your In-Court nobles
- Strength bonus = equipped **Armor♥** value + your **heart♥ influence**
- Can be dismantled to pay tribute
- Triggers **Set Bonus** if noble has matching-value spade

[♠♥] Set Bonus

- Triggered when noble gains both ♠ and ♥ of same numerical value (or both **Jokers⊕**)
- Immediately change stance of ANY one In-Court noble (yours or opponent's)
- Triggers when second matching card is equipped
- Only triggers once per matched pair, but can be broken and reformed across multiple plays

♦ Diamonds - Gems

Choose one when played:

- **Save:** Place in your gem pile, then draw 2 cards
- **Spent:** Discard this diamond card to remove a leveraged card
 - Target 1 leveraged card in any player's hand
 - Target's value must be \leq spent **diamond♦** value + your **diamond♦ influence**
 - Targeted leveraged card is discarded

♣ Clubs - Tactics

- Target 1 face-up card
- Target's value must be \leq played **club♣** value + your **club♣ influence**
- Valid targets:
 - Equipment on any noble
 - Any card in discard pile
 - Diamond in any gem pile
 - Leveraged card in any hand
- Targeted card goes to YOUR hand (un-leveraged and hidden)
- The played **club♣** goes to discard pile

⊕ Jokers - Writs

- Choose any suit when played
- Value = 0
- When equipped: Affected by BOTH **spade♠** AND **heart♥ influence**
- When **Saved** as **diamond♦**: Stays in gem pile.
- When **Spent** as **diamond♦**: Can target other **Jokers⊕**, or higher value cards if you have enough **diamond♦ influence**
- Can target other **Jokers⊕** when played as **club♣**, or higher value cards if you have enough **club♣ influence**

WINNING & LOSING

Victory Conditions (Check at end of each turn)

OUTMANEUVERED

- Have all 3 nobles (J/Q/K) in court
- Each equipped with weapon OR armor equal to their rank
- (Jack with Ace♠/♥, Queen with 2♠/♥, King with 3♠/♥)
- Ties go to active player

FLAWLESS STRATEGY

- Have Ace♣, 2♣, and 3♣ all leveraged in your hand
- Ties go to active player

Defeat Conditions (Instant once condition met)

DEFEAT IN BATTLE

- 4 of your nobles are disgraced
- Ties go to non-active player

ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

- 4 or more cards leveraged in your hand
- Ties go to non-active player

INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS

Price of Influence is about balancing interconnected systems. Nobles give you both combat strength and suit influence, effecting both the cards you can play and their relative power level. Bringing them into play always costs tribute drawn from your limited economy. Every suit pulls on another: weapons and armor build strength, diamonds manage debt, and clubs disrupt by stealing from nearly anywhere. Victory comes from spotting which path is opening, whether the perfect court, dominance in battle, or forcing collapse, and steering your resources and nobles toward it.

QUICK REFERENCE

Noble Rank: Jack=1, Queen=2, King=3, which determines:

- Tribute Cost
- Influence: what mix of cards you can play & how powerful each is
- Combat: Active player assignments limits & strength calculation
- Equipment Restrictions, checked during resupply

Strength Calculation: Rank + (Weapon♠ value + spade♠ influence) + (Armor♥ value + heart♥ influence)

Turn Order: Council → Play Cards → Combat → Resupply

Play Limits: 4 cards maximum, (1 + influence) per suit

Hand Limit: 7 cards including leveraged

Tribute Payment: Any combination of Liquidate/Leverage/Dismantle

“Power isn’t won; it’s paid for.”