

Romance of the Nine Empires™

Wait!
Read Me First!

Don't Panic!

If this is your first experience with *Romance of the Nine Empires* (R9E), you are about to start exploring a strange, new world with a story that defies imagination. At its heart, the game mechanics are simple, but the four main portions of the game—the Summer Phase, the Attack Phase, the Autumn Phase, and the Raiding Phase—each have their own nuances to challenge you.

This guide will walk you through learning R9E so you can explore its strange world of elves, evil antipaladins, US Army vets, extraplanar beings, and more.

When learning a game as deep and rich as *Romance of the Nine Empires*, we don't recommend learning all the rules at once. Instead, a stepwise approach makes the learning easier and more enjoyable. And while R9E can be played by any number of players, it's perhaps easiest to learn playing head to head.

As tournament decks, these are built to be played with two players, head to head. We suggest you do the same, and save playing with three or four players for later, when you've mastered the rules and can focus on the politics.



ZOMBIE ORPHEUS
ENTERTAINMENT™



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Getting Started

In your first game, play **Ord** versus **Malchior**. These two decks are fairly straightforward military beatdown decks. **They win by destroying all of the enemy castles.** Easy, right?

Setting Up

Choose your decks, then find your **stronghold** card, your castle cards, and your *Motte and Bailey*, all of which are discussed below.

One of these is your stronghold card. This represents which faction you are playing, and provides you with a supply of gold and a unique faction power.

Note that the cards both say, “Bows for 4 gold.” To bow a card, turn it sideways; that shows everyone that you have used that card this turn, and can’t use it again.



Castles

Each of you has five **castle** cards, including the cards pictured here. Castle cards have the stone-wall frame.

Castles are where you store your food. Food is more precious than gold, honor, or steel in R9E.

Place food tokens on each castle equal to the storage value given in the barrel icon.

Properties

Finally, these are **property** cards, which represent the various resources that are available to you.

You start with a *Motte and Bailey* property card (left) in play.

Most properties provide you with gold, as well as other special effects that can aid you in conquering the realm.

Once you have your stronghold out, your five castles (with their food tokens), and your *Motte and Bailey*, shuffle your deck and draw nine cards. Make sure you have at least two property cards in your hand; if you don't, discard your hand and draw nine more until you do (don't worry about cheating; this is a learning game). Then choose a player to go first.



Turn Structure

Each turn goes through four phases: Spring Phase, Summer Phase, Autumn Phase, and Winter Phase. Both players play through each phase at the same time, alternating actions. That is, one player takes one action during the Summer Phase, then the other, then the first, etc., until both player pass. Randomly choose one of the players to get the Ordained marker. Each turn, the Ordained player gets the first action.

- During the **Spring Phase**, everyone straightens all their bowed cards by turning them upright. 'Nuff said.
- During the **Summer Phase**, you'll buy new cards and do a few other things; we'll discuss these things presently.
- We'll skip the **Autumn Phase** for this first game; it's where players try to steal food from each other.
- In the **Winter Phase**, you check to see if anyone wins, and draw new cards for the next turn.

Ready? Then let's get started!

Buying Properties

We can skip the Spring Phase, since everything is already straightened and ready for play. Instead, we'll start at the Summer Phase.

Choose a property card in your hand. In the center, the card has a gold cost (in the coin) and a food cost (in the barrel). You must pay both of these costs to bring the card into play.

- To pay the gold cost, you must bow your stronghold and/or your *Motte and Bailey* to create gold greater than or equal to the card's gold cost. (Remember, bowing means to turn a card sideways to show that it has been used.) If you overspend, the extra gold is wasted.
- To pay the food cost, discard that many food tokens from any combination of your castles.

Once you have paid the costs, you can play the property. It comes into play bowed. Because it is bowed, you can't use it this turn, but it will be able to provide resources to you starting next turn.

Each player should be able to play one (or possibly more) of the property cards in hand in the first turn. That's what we're hoping for.

Once both players have bought all the property cards they can, skip to the Winter Phase. Each player draws four cards, then discards back down to nine (this is your hand maximum; see page 9 of the rulebook). The role of first player passes to the other player.

Buying Heroes

In turn 2, you should have your stronghold plus one to three property cards.

In the Spring Phase, straighten all these cards by turning them upright. Now you have a lot of gold.

You should have some heroes in your hand. Heroes have special decorative card frames that look like this (Ord on the left, Malchior in the middle, and Unaligned on the right):

Heroes have a gold cost and a food cost just like properties. They also have a Strength rating in the upper left-hand corner (in the red jewel). Strength is used to inflict and absorb damage in battles.

You bring in heroes the same way you bring in properties, except that, unlike properties, heroes come into play unbowed and ready for action.

Have each player buy as many heroes and/or properties that they can. Then we'll see some action!



Heroes have special decorative frames that look like these. Ord is on the left, Malchior in the middle, and Unaligned is on the right.

Battles

Once you've each bought some heroes, let's start a battle. We're not going to worry about how battles fit into the game at this moment; this is a learning game.

Choose one player to be the attacker. Have the attacker split his or her heroes into two groups. In game terms, these are called armies. The armies don't have to be even. Then, for this example, the attacker chooses two castles belonging to the other player and assigns one army to attack each castle.

The other player, called the defender, should then assign his or her heroes to armies to defend those castles. Again, the division doesn't have to be even.

Next the attacker chooses one battle to resolve. At that battle, players alternate taking one action at a time, starting with the defender, until both players are done taking actions.

When it's your turn to take an action, you can do one of the following:

- You can smash the enemy army.** Armies don't hurt each other just by standing around; they have to get in and fight! In game terms, you engage one of your heroes to damage the enemy. To engage, bow the hero (turn it 90 degrees to mark it as used). The hero does damage to the enemy army equal to its Strength. All of this damage must be absorbed. To absorb this damage, the other player chooses a hero and buries it (removes



it from the game). The hero absorbs damage equal to its Strength. Additionally, the player can choose to discard a card from his or her hand to absorb extra damage equal to the card's Fate value (the number at the very bottom center of the card). There are also some special rules about absorbing damage:

The Attacker can declare a hero immune to damage if the hero's Strength is larger than the initial amount of damage that a defending hero engaged for. For example, if the defender engages for 3 damage, and the attacker has a 4-Strength hero, that hero is immune to the damage.

The Defender can destroy food tokens to absorb damage. Each food token absorbs one. And once all the food tokens are gone, the defender can destroy the castle. When a castle is destroyed, it absorbs all remaining damage, and the battle immediately ends.

- You can use a Battle ability on a card in play.** Some heroes, properties, and strongholds have special abilities printed on their cards. For example, the Malchior stronghold says, "**Battle/Summer:** Bow your target unbowed mine. Add +2S to your target hero." That means you choose one of your mines that is not yet bowed, bow it, and give one of your heroes a Strength boost of +2. You can do this as either a Summer Phase action (instead of buying a card, for example) or in the midst of battle.



- You can also use a Battle ability on a **tactic card in your hand**. Tactic cards look like this. They are special surprise moves you can use to tip the battle in your favor. To use one, show it, do what it says, and then discard it.

So fight out one battle, then fight out the other. Again, don't worry overmuch about who wins and loses; we're just trying to learn the game.

Cohorts, Items, and Spells

Now that you know the basics about heroes, properties, castles, and even a bit about tactic cards, let's talk about some special card types that augment your heroes and make them truly awesome.

Cohorts (on the left) are soldiers that follow your hero into battle. When you engage a hero to damage an enemy army, the cohorts can also engage to increase the damage done. Or a cohort can engage by itself to inflict damage.

Items (in the middle) are special pieces of equipment. Sure, every hero has a weapon and armor, but these are objects with awesome power. Items add to your hero's Strength and give him extra abilities.

Spells (on the right) are magical or supertechnological abilities that your wizard heroes can learn.



All three of these card types can be played just like heroes and properties, but they must be attached to a hero when they are brought into play.

If you like, play another turn or two and have another battle using them.

Playing It for Real

Now that you know the basics, read the rulebook (skipping the sections on the Autumn Phase, Raiding, and Questing). Then you can play a full game to see how well you do. The Malchior Deck is the quicker of the two, but is heavily food reliant. The Ord deck is a jack of all trades, and is more subtle. Because it uses items rather than cohorts, its units are more vulnerable to certain cards.

During this game, if you draw a card that has an Autumn or Raid ability on it (each deck has a few), just discard it and draw a replacement.

The Next Steps

Once you've mastered the basics of buying cards, the Summer Phase, and attacking, we suggest you explore the rest of the game in this order:

Game 2: Raiding

Next you'll learn about the Autumn Phase by playing the Displaced deck against the Ord deck. Read the section on the Autumn Phase (page 9 of the rulebook) and the Raiding Phase (page 13). The Displaced deck is a combat-ready defensive deck that seeks to win through hardcore raiding (see Winter Phase, page 9; the Displaced try to win by stealing all of the enemy's food). Displaced heroes are cheap, weak, and generally expendable.

Game 3: Control

Next play the Ixhasa deck against Malchior. The Ixhasa deck is a control deck that wins through a non-military starvation strategy. It seeks to steal or bleed out opponent's food. Yet it's flexible; it can attack a raid deck or raid a military deck, but in general it seeks to control the board position and food resources.

Game 4: Quests

Finally, read the section on Quests (page 14 of the rulebook) and play the Holden deck against either the Ord or Malchior decks. The Holden deck is a combination deck that seeks to win by completing quests.

And Then...?

After that, you can experiment with adjusting the decks to better suit your play style. We have extra cards in the set that represent the favorites from past tournaments. See if you can build a better deck than those played at the 15th Anniversary World Championships!

The fate of Countermay is in your hands!

