

REMO CONZADORI'S



# GAME OF CROWNS

A GAME OF DIPLOMACY & BETRAYAL  
FOR 4-9 PLAYERS







A game by Remo Conzadori  
For 4–9 players, ages 14 and up

## INTRODUCTION

*Once, the known world stood united under the banner of the Ruelen Empire. Over time, the Emperors of Ruele established a great civilization, its capitol located in the mighty Imperial City. However, even such vast wealth and power does not satisfy all men, and it came to pass that the Emperor desired more. He wished to cement his own legacy for all time by challenging the monstrous Titans. These powerful beings dwelt in the volcanic peaks far from the lands of mankind.*

*Against the counsel of the Nine, his most trusted advisors, the Emperor led his grand army into the fiery mountains. Unfortunately, he had woefully underestimated his enemies. Amongst the magma and thundering roars of the Titans, the last Emperor of Ruele met his end, and the remnants of his forces returned in abject defeat.*

*The Emperor's final battle came to be known as Ruele's Doom, and in its aftermath, the Nine quarreled over whom was to succeed power in the Empire. None of the Nine trusted any of the others enough for a solid alliance, and many were bitter rivals of old. In time, the Ruelen Empire was shattered, torn apart into nine houses led by one of the Emperor's former council. The realms of man were thrown into bitter conflict for decades to come, as each of the nine realms vied for power over the others—each seeking to reunite the broken Empire under their rule. This conflict became known as the Game of Crowns.*

## GAME OVERVIEW

Each player takes control of one of the nine noble houses, attempting to seize the crown and rule over the entire Empire. During the game, players can exchange cards and favors through diplomatic relations, or directly attack opponents through warfare in order to take what they want. It will take clever planning, skillful negotiation, and daring confrontations to gain dominance over your rivals. After three rounds, the game ends and players gain victory points (VP) based on the cards remaining in their hand.

## GOAL

The player with the most VP at the end of the game wins.

## COMPONENTS

- 90 House cards (10 cards for each of the 9 houses)
- 18 Vote cards (9 Attacker and 9 Defender cards)
- 11 Guest cards
- 9 Reference cards
- 1 Round track
- 37 Raven tokens



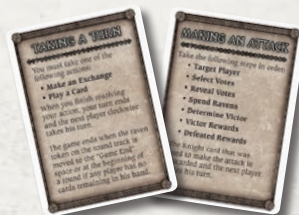
House cards



Vote cards



Guest cards



Reference cards



Round track



Raven tokens



# SETUP

1. **Setup Players:** Each player takes a set of 10 house cards, 2 vote cards (1 attacker and 1 defender), 4 raven tokens, and a reference card. Players should make sure that the banner on their vote cards match the banner on their house cards. Return the unused house and vote cards to the box.
2. **Setup Guests:** Shuffle all of the guest cards to form a face down guest deck and place it in the center of the table.
3. **Determine Starting Player:** The player who most recently wore a crown is the starting player.
4. **Setup Round Track:** Place the round track next to the starting player. Unless players wish to play with the "Longer Games" optional rule, use the side of the round track that features spaces numbered 1–3. Place a raven token on the "1" space. Players are now ready to begin the game!

## Example 6-Player Setup



## House Banners



*House Lyre*

*House Redtower*

*House Orlok*



*House Chiron*

*House Akroyear*

*House Midian*



*House Celestian*

*House Occultus*

*House Ki-rin*

Each of the nine houses features a unique banner on the bottom of their cards. At the start of the game, separate the ten cards from each house using their unique banner.



Guest cards have the same card back as house cards, but do not feature a banner on the bottom of their cards. You can separate the guest cards to form the guest deck by taking all of the eleven guest cards that do not have a banner.



# HOW TO PLAY

The starting player takes the first turn of the game. When a player finishes his or her turn, the next player clockwise around the table takes a turn. Players continue taking turns until the end of the game.

## Taking a Turn

When a player is taking a turn, he is considered the **active player**. During your turn, you must choose to take **one** of the following actions:

- **Make an Exchange**
- **Play a Card**

When you finish resolving your action, your turn ends and the next player clockwise takes his or her turn.

## Make an Exchange

When you make an exchange, you must take the following steps in order:

1. Choose one card from your hand and place it face up in front of you. This is the card which you promise to give to another player when you make an exchange. You may then declare what you would like from the exchange, more or less clearly.
2. All other players, in clockwise turn order, must place one card from their hand face up in front of them. Players may negotiate and try to convince the active player that they offer the best exchange.
3. As the active player, you may now offer an additional card by choosing one card from your hand and placing it face up in front of you. If you choose to do so, all other players, in clockwise turn order, must place one additional card from their hand face up in front of them. If you choose not to offer an additional card, skip this step and proceed directly to step 4.
4. Players may continue to negotiate by adding one or more raven tokens to their offer until the active player chooses to accept an exchange. The active player **must** accept one of the players' offers as an exchange. When you accept an exchange, you must then trade the cards and raven tokens offered with the other player as agreed. All of the other players take back the cards and raven tokens that they offered.

## Play a Card

Choose a Coinage or Knight card from your hand and apply its effect as described in the "Card Effects" section on page 5.

## End of a Round

During a round, each player will have the opportunity to take one turn. When all players have taken a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. The raven token placed on the round track indicates which number is the current round. At the start of the game, the raven token is placed on the "1" space, indicating the first round of the game. When the starting player begins his or her turn (except for the very first turn of the game), the raven token must be moved to the next space on the round track. When the raven token is moved to the "Game End" space, the game immediately ends and players count up their total VP to determine the winner.

## End of the Game

The game ends after three rounds, when the raven token on the round track is moved to the "Game End" space.

The game can also end at the beginning of a round if any player has no cards remaining in his hand.

When the game ends, each player counts up their total VP according to the cards in their hand (see "Card Effects" on the following pages). The player who gains the most VP wins!

If two or more players are tied for the most VP, the player with the fewest cards in his hand wins. If players are still tied, the player with the fewest raven tokens wins. If players are still tied, they share the win.

## Scoring Example

*You end the game with 2 Princesses, 3 Knights, 2 Coinage, 2 Castellans and 7 raven tokens.*

*You have 3 Knights so each of your Princesses gains 3 VP for a total of 6 VP.*

*You don't have any Traders so your Coinage is not worth any VP.*

*You have 7 raven tokens so each of your Castellans gains 7 VP for a total of 14 VP.*

*Your total VP is 20 victory points (6+14=20).*



# Other Rules

## Hand of Cards

Each player starts the game with a set of ten house cards. During the game, you may gain, exchange, and lose cards from your hand. All of the house and guest cards you have are considered to be part of your hand, regardless of how you acquired them.

Vote and reference cards are not considered to be part of your hand.

Players should be careful not to reveal their hand of cards to other players. While you may tell other players what cards are in your hand (and lie of course), you cannot show other players your hand.

In the rare event that a player makes an exchange as their action and you run out of cards in your hand, you can no longer participate in the exchange.

If you do not have any cards remaining in your hand at the beginning of a round, the game immediately ends (see “End of Game” on page 4).

## Discarded Cards

When cards are discarded, they are removed from the game and can no longer be affected by players. Discarded cards should be placed face up next to the guest deck in order to track which cards have been discarded during the game.

## Raven Tokens

Raven tokens score VP at the end of the game based on the number of Castellans you have in your hand. Raven tokens can also be used during an attack to increase your vote (see “Knight” on page 6). If players use the “Negotiations” optional rule on page 8, raven tokens may be used to negotiate with the active player.

## Guest Cards

Guest cards offer unique opportunities to gain VP. When a player receives the most votes during an attack and is the victor, he may choose to either take a card from the defeated or draw a guest card.

While guest cards have the same card back as house cards, they do not feature a banner on the bottom of their cards and are not considered house cards for card effects.

# CARD EFFECTS

The following section describes the effect of each card in the game and lists rules clarifications.

## House Cards



### Castellan

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each raven token you have.*

If you do not have any raven tokens, you do not gain any VP from them.



### Coinage

*Play this card and exchange it with a card taken randomly from the hand of another player of your choice.*

Playing Coinage counts as your action for the turn. Choose one Coinage from your hand and place it in front of another player face down. Then take one card from that player's hand at random and place it into your hand. When you take the player's card, be careful not to reveal it to the other players. The player now takes the Coinage that you placed in front of him and places it into his hand.

## Feud

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each Feud you have if you have the most Feud cards.*



If you are tied with other players for having the most Feuds, each tied player gains 1 VP for each of their Feud cards.

If you do not have the most Feud cards in your hand, you do not gain any VP from them.







## Knight

*Play this card to attack a player of your choice:*

- *Players vote for Attacker or Defender.*
- *Victor chooses to either take a card from the defeated or draw a guest card.*
- *Defeated gains raven tokens used against him.*

Playing a Knight counts as your action for the turn. To resolve the attack, you must take the following steps in order:

1. **Target Player:** Choose one player to attack. This player is considered the **Defender** and you are considered the **Attacker** for the duration of the attack.
2. **Select Votes:** Each player must vote for the Attacker or Defender by selecting the corresponding vote card. After players have selected their vote card, they should place it face down in front of them to indicate that they have finalized their decision. Note that the Attacker may vote for the Defender and the Defender may vote for the Attacker (sometimes it is advantageous to lose an attack in order to gain raven tokens).
3. **Reveal Votes:** Once all players have selected their vote card and finalized their decision, all of the vote cards are revealed face up.
4. **Spend Raven Tokens:** Starting with the Defender and proceeding in clockwise turn order, each player may spend one or more raven tokens to modify their vote by placing them on their vote card. Each raven token is considered one additional vote of the selected card. For example, if a player selects the Defender vote card and spends two raven tokens, the player is considered to have a total of three votes for the Defender.

You may choose not to spend any raven tokens but note that you only have one opportunity to increase your votes during an attack. Once your opportunity to spend your raven tokens passes, there is no possibility to raise.

5. **Determine Victor:** The player who receives the most total number of votes is considered the **victor**, and the other player is the **defeated**. If the Attacker and Defender receive the same total number of votes, the Attacker wins the tie.

6. **Victor Rewards:** The victor may either take a card from the defeated or draw a guest card:
  - If the victor chooses to take a card from the defeated, the victor looks at the hand of the defeated and takes one card of the victor's choice.
  - If the victor chooses to draw a guest card, he draws the top card of the guest deck and adds it to his hand.
7. **Defeated Rewards:** The defeated gains the raven tokens that were spent to vote against him. The raven tokens spent to vote against the victor are discarded and removed from the game.

The Knight card that was used to make the attack is discarded and the next player takes his or her turn.

**Important:** If you gain a Knight from another player, you cannot play the Knight to attack that player. You may play the Knight to attack any other player as normal. In other words, a Knight that has your house banner can never be used to attack you.



## Princess

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each Knight you have.*

If you do not have any Knight cards in your hand, you do not gain any VP from them.



## Trader

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each Coinage you have.*

If you do not have any Coinage cards in your hand, you do not gain any VP from them.





## Guest Cards



### Artist

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each Princess in both adjacent players' hand.*

The player directly to your left clockwise and the player directly to your right counterclockwise are both considered the adjacent players.

If an adjacent player does not have any Princess cards in his hand, you do not gain any VP from that player.



### Bard

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each Coinage in both adjacent players' hand.*

The player directly to your left clockwise and the player directly to your right counterclockwise are both considered the adjacent players.

If an adjacent player does not have any Coinage cards in his hand, you do not gain any VP from that player.



### Diplomat

*At the end of the game, gain 1 VP for each card you have from a different player.*

At the end of the game, look at your hand and gain 1 VP for each house card from another player. In other words, gain 1 VP for each house card that does have your house banner.

Guest cards are not considered to be cards from different players.



### Jester

*At the end of the game, gain 2 VP for each Jester you have if you have the most Jester cards. Otherwise you lose 2 VP.*

If you are tied with other players for having the most Jesters, each tied player gains 2 VP for each Jester they have. If you do not have the most Jester cards in your hand, you must subtract 2 victory points from your total VP gained.



### Priest

*At the end of the game, gain 3 VP for each set of Castellan, Princess, and Trader you have.*

Each complete set must contain 1 Castellan, 1 Princess, and 1 Trader. You do not gain any VP from partial sets. The sets may contain cards from any players' house.

*Example: At the end of the game, you have 2 Castellans, 3 Princesses, and 1 Trader in your hand. This completes one set so you would gain a total of 3 VP. If you had an additional Trader for instance, you could have completed two sets and gain a total of 6 VP.*



### Sentinel

*Discard this card at the start of any player's turn to take half of their raven tokens (round down).*

At the start of another player's turn, you may discard the Sentinel to take half of the player's raven tokens. This does not count as playing a card so it is not considered to be an action during the turn. After the effects of the Sentinel is resolved, the player continues his or her turn as normal.

Using the Sentinel is optional, however, you cannot use the Sentinel on a player that does not have any raven tokens.

*Example: You discard the Sentinel at the start of a player's turn. The player has a total of 5 raven tokens, so you take 2 of the player's ravens and add them to your own.*



### Undertaker

*At the end of the game, gain 3 VP if you have fewer cards than all other players.*

At the end of the game, all player count the total number of cards in their hand, including all house and guest cards. If your total number of cards is fewer than all other players, you gain 3 VP. If you are tied with other players for having the fewest cards, you still gain 3 VP.

*Example: At the end of the game, you have a total of 7 cards in your hand. The other players have a total of 7, 9, and 10 cards respectively. No other player has fewer cards than you, so you gain 3 VP. If another player had 6 or fewer cards, you would have more cards than another player and not gain any VP.*



# OPTIONAL RULES

The following optional rules are presented here if players want to add a deeper level of interaction and treachery. Players should agree upon which optional rules to use at the start of the game.

## Hidden Agendas

*Using this optional rule will guide you towards certain strategies early in the game.*

At the start of the game, remove all Sentinels from the guest deck. Then each player draws the top card of the guest deck and places it face down in front of him or her as a **hidden agenda**.

Hidden agendas are not considered to be part of your hand during the game. Therefore, other players cannot take, steal, exchange, look at or affect your hidden agenda in any way. You may look at your own face down hidden agenda at any time.

At the end of the game, when players count up their total VP, each player adds their hidden agenda to their hand.

## Negotiations

*Using this optional rule will create more opportunities for diplomacy and alliances.*

Players may negotiate with the active player by exchanging cards and raven tokens. For example, if another player attacks you with a Knight, you could negotiate to have him attack another player instead of you by offering him some of your raven tokens or a card from your hand.

Note that players may only negotiate with the active player. If the active player agrees to negotiate by accepting an offer of cards and/or raven tokens, he must honor the agreement. All promises for future deals are not binding.

## Customized Hands

*This optional rule may only be used in 4-player games and will guide you towards certain strategies early in the game.*

At the start of the game, each player takes one set of house cards that are not being used in the game. You may then exchange up to three cards from your hand with the other set of house cards. This is done in secret so that other players are not aware of how many cards you exchanged. All of the unused house cards are returned to the box face down.

## Longer Games

*Using this optional rule allows players to develop greater long-term strategies and alliances.*

You can play a longer game of 4 or more rounds by placing the round track card on the “Variant” side that features spaces 1–6. Longer games are not recommended when playing with 7 or more players.

## Team Play

*This optional rule may only be used in games with 6 or 8 players. Team play allows players to form permanent alliances for the entire game and promotes more dramatic interactions.*

When using the Team Play variant, you are teamed with the player who is seated opposite of you. In a 6-player game this forms three teams of two players. In an 8-player game this forms four teams of two players.

The game plays the same using the normal rules with the following exceptions below:

- At the end of the game, each team combines their VP and scores them together (so the team with the most total VP wins the game). Note that each player still gains his VP separately, based on the cards in his hand. For example, your teammate's raven tokens do not count towards gaining VP with your Castellans.
- You cannot attack your teammate by playing a Knight.
- If you play Coinage and exchange a card with your teammate, your teammate chooses which card from his hand to exchange with you instead of taking a card randomly.





# STRATEGY TIPS

## Choose Strategies Early

Try to choose your strategies to maximize VP as early in the game as possible. Rather than trying to score with a large variety of card types, it's usually best to focus on two or three scoring strategies.

For example, if you exchanged your Princess with another player for a Trader, your Knights will no longer help you gain VP at the end of the game. You can then use your Knights to attack players in order to take their Coinage and enhance your Trader scoring strategy.

While you should choose your scoring strategy early in the game, you must also be flexible when plans change, which is prone to happen when opponents' Knights start attacking.

## Form Alliances

Since a Game of Crowns only lasts three rounds, you must make each turn further your goals, especially during your opponents' turns. Using your opponent's turn to your advantage is the ultimate victory when playing the Game of Crowns.

## Bluffs and Feints

Deception can be a powerful weapon when playing the Game of Crowns. If a player makes an exchange and is likely to accept another player's offer, you can offer a card that is part of your scoring strategy just to make your opponents believe that you no longer are interested in pursuing that strategy.

If you want to offer a Knight during an exchange, it's usually best to offer one of your own Knights from your house. That way your opponent cannot use your Knight to attack you.

## Pick Your Battles

Try to track what cards players attempt to negotiate during an exchange action. Don't attack a player with a Knight unless you are fairly certain that they have the card you want.

Sometimes it is better to lose a battle in order to gain the raven tokens used against you, especially if the Castellan is part of your scoring strategy.

If you are the victor during an attack, taking a card from the defeated allows you to look at that player's hand. This can be very useful information to determine what the player's scoring strategies are, and how to oppose them.



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# THE HOUSES OF RUELE

Once long ago, the Ruelen Empire was united under a single banner. Craving domain over the places of power rumored to exist in the volcanic peaks of the Titans, the last Emperor of Ruele dared challenge these monstrous foes by invading their homeland. Leading his grand army, the Emperor marched straight into the fiery mountains and the wrath of the Titans.

The Emperor met his doom during that fateful battle and the few soldiers that managed to survive returned to the Empire, shattered and broken. With the Emperor dead and his armies laid to waste, the counsel of the Nine vied for power over the others—each seeking to reunite the broken Empire under their rule. The Empire was divided into nine realms, with each realm ruled by the noble house from a counsel of the Nine.



## House Lyre

A chain of prosperous islands off the southern coast comprises the holdings of the wealthy House

Lyre. Although Lyre boasts a large and well-funded military, the upper commanders are often appointed by political acumen and family influence rather than any actual training or aptitude for leadership. Despite this weakness, House Lyre's forces have ground their way to victory over many foes due to their realm's robust economy and substantial resources. The ruler of House Lyre is traditionally a woman, but the current heir is the Queen's only son.



## House Orlok

House Orlok controls a sprawling series of towns and cities nestled in the Western hills. This region

was once a lawless land, controlled only by unruly bandits and cruel warlords. House Orlok changed all of that within one generation, a feat achieved without armies and martial law. Instead, House Orlok employed the best investigators and most tenacious thief-catchers to break the power of the bandits from an unexpected direction. These agents cleaned up the hill-lands from the shadows, and turned the region is a picture of discipline and order. Now with its own lands well in hand, House Orlok casts its gaze outwards at other realms in need of this unique brand of justice.



## House Redtower

Settled amongst rocky, storm-wracked coasts and craggy mountain passes, the domains of

House Redtower are forbidding. Although the house's lands are well-defended, the terrain also ensures that Redtower commanders often have difficulty moving their forces at speed. Baron Redtower, the current holder of the house's throne, endlessly schemes to add more territory and power under his control, a fact that makes his neighboring realms wary. However, the Baron has a solid understanding of realpolitik and does not hesitate to win with diplomacy what he would otherwise fail to grasp with force of arms.



## House Chiron

The northeastern steppes are home to House Chiron. This House welded together a wide variety of

different cultures with a profound sense of duty, honor, and harmony. The knights of House Chiron are as much philosopher as warrior, following in the footsteps of the ruling noble family. Although once fearsomely vital, the rulers of House Chiron have not been seen publicly in many years. There are many who whisper that a mysterious disease afflicts the entire family, and that they intend to strike back at their enemies before succumbing to the end.





## House Akroyear

Of all the nine houses, the myrmidons of House Akroyear are perhaps the most feared in battle. These heavily armored warriors are trained to a peak standard, and each must overcome grueling trials to become worthy. This practice is encouraged by the house's rulers, and noted warriors are often given command over House lands. This means that the armies of House Akroyear are potent and skilled, but unrest simmers amongst the citizens who must toil under the harsh discipline imposed by the warrior elite.



## House Midian

The wooded glens of House Midian often resound with the ringing of bells. Nearly every town and village in these lands possesses a shrine or church extolling the virtues of the Titans. The rulers of House Midian founded this belief in the wake of Ruele's Doom, believing that the Titans were worthy of worship. However, House Midian is alone amongst the nine realms in their creed. The Cardinals of House Midian constantly agitate for the realm to launch a crusade against the unbelievers, and there are many who claim that the house sponsors cults in other realms to stir up dissent and treason.



## House Celestian

The spires of House Celestian glitter amongst the frozen lakes of the far north. Here, the agents of the Celestian Countess seek to create a perfect heir to the Imperial throne. The Countess' plan is to resurrect the Ruelen dynasty through a complex series of intermarriages and mingling of royal bloodlines. Diplomats and scholars of this house have spread throughout many of the other realms, gathering information and arranging treaties that most benefit their frost-swept home. It is also said, however, that the Countess is as cold and ruthless as the north wind itself.



## House Occultus

Perhaps the most mysterious of the nine realms is House Occultus. Centered in the southern swamps, this realm is controlled by scholars and learned men who possess strange powers of divination and curses. Although House Occultus has only a small army compared to its neighbors, the uncanny powers of the house rulers has ensured victory in many battles. Life in the Occultus swamps is hard for most citizens, many of whom are little more than slaves to the House magelords.



## House Ki-rin

In the far deserts, House Ki-rin has established a lavish realm of massive monuments and nomadic traders. Here, the rulers of House Ki-rin have displayed unusual fortune, such that "the luck of the Ki-rin" is a common phrase. In truth, the house's prosperity has been built upon pacts with Jinni, strange creatures of the sands who may be somehow related to the Titans. Each generation of rulers in the house have learned to manage these detailed bargains, for a wrongly-worded request can end in disaster with the proud Jinni.



## Neutral Houses

Several minor houses also exist, living in the shadows cast by the nine great houses. These houses function more like guilds or mercenaries, offering their services to the highest bidder or whenever the situation seems advantageous. Members of the minor houses are united more by common skills and talents rather than bloodline, specializing in the arts, diplomacy, or spiritual matters. The nine great houses maintain a healthy distrust for loyalty that is bought only with gold coins, but must depend on their services nonetheless.



# QUICK REFERENCE

## SETUP

1. **Setup Players:** Each player takes a set of 10 house cards, 2 vote cards (1 attacker and 1 defender), 4 raven tokens, and a reference card. Players should make sure that the banner on their vote cards match the banner on their house cards. Return the unused house and vote cards to the box.
2. **Setup Guests:** Shuffle all of the guest cards to form a face down guest deck and place it in the center of the table.
3. **Determine Starting Player:** The player who most recently wore a crown is the starting player.
4. **Setup Round Track:** Place the round track next to the starting player. Then place a raven token on the "1" space. Players are now ready to begin the game!

## Taking a Turn

When a player is taking a turn, they are considered the **active player**. During your turn, you must choose to take **one** of the following actions:

- **Make an Exchange**
- **Play a Card**

When you finish resolving your action, your turn ends and the next player clockwise takes his or her turn.

The game ends when the raven token on the round track is moved to the "Game End" space or at the beginning of a round if any player has no cards remaining in his hand.

## Make an Exchange

When you make an exchange, you must take the following steps in order:

1. Choose one card from your hand and place it face up in front of you. This is the card which you promise to give to another player when you make an exchange. You may then declare what you would like from the exchange, more or less clearly.
2. All other players, in clockwise turn order, must place one card from their hand face up in front of them. Players may negotiate and try to convince the active player that they offer the best exchange.
3. As the active player, you may now offer an additional card by choosing one card from your hand and placing it face up in front of you. If you choose to do so, all other players, in clockwise turn order, must place one additional card from their hand face up in front of them. If you choose not to offer an additional card, skip this step and proceed directly to step 4.
4. Players may continue to negotiate by adding one or more raven tokens to their offer until the active player chooses to accept an exchange. The active player **must** accept one of the players' offers as an exchange. When you accept an exchange, you must then trade the cards and raven tokens offered with the other player as agreed. All of the other players take back the cards and raven tokens that they offered.

## Play a Card

Choose a Coinage or Knight card from your hand and apply its effect.

