

The king is dead. Long live *you*.

In *Usurpers*, you are royal courtier, desperate to seize the throne. But, with Raiders breaching the gates, and a throne room full of power-hungry nobles, your window of opportunity is closing. Can you seize ultimate power before the others, or before the kingdom is razed to the ground?

## **I. GAME CONTENTS**

1x Game Board  
150x Muster Cards  
14x Succession Cards  
60x Defence Tokens  
1x Golden Crowns  
1x Raider

## **II. OVERVIEW**

In *Usurpers*, each player plays for themselves and wins after accumulating five Defence Tokens.

This is a game of strategy, bidding, and alliances. You must choose your allies, your enemies, and your moment carefully: take the throne too early and your forces will be whittled away; take it too late, and Raiders will storm the throne room, putting everyone (literally) on the chopping block.

## **III. SETUP**

Lay the GAME BOARD out on the table. Place the RAIDER at Base Camp on the board.

Shuffle the MUSTER DECK and deal out 6 MUSTER CARDS to each player; place the remaining cards in a pile in the centre. Each player must then take three of those cards and place them face-down in front of them – these cards are now in their respective Armies.

To decide who starts the game as King, shuffle and deal out the SUCCESSION CARDS (between 1 and the number of players) to each player. Whoever receives the “1” card reveals it – they take the GOLDEN CROWN and start as King. Everyone else keeps their Succession Card face-down.

## **IV. HOW TO PLAY**

Starting with the King, and moving around clockwise (or sunwise, as the clock hasn't been invented yet) players may perform any of the following actions once:

- You may play a Muster Card from your hand, in one of two ways:
  - o You may play a card into the Muster, face down in the centre of the table – these count as a contribution for the defence of the Castle.
  - o You may play a card into your own Army, face down in front of you; these are used to launch an attack, and during Power Struggles bids (see section on Power Struggles for more information).
- You may ask another player to join an Alliance:
  - o The King may only be in an Alliance with one other player; otherwise, you may form an Alliance with two other players. If the player/s agree, then you are in an Alliance. You may only ask a maximum of two players to form an Alliance per turn. You can only be in one Alliance at a time. Once in an Alliance, all players within the Alliance combine troop contributions from their Armies, for attacks and for Power Struggles.
- You may attack another player (if you are the King, you can attack any player; otherwise, you may only launch an attack against the King). Starting from the King moving sunwise,

players involved in the attack (the King & their allies vs the attacker & their allies) take turns bidding troop cards, face-up, from their Armies. At the end of the bidding, the winning Alliance who bid the most troops is victorious. The winners then receive the “1” card (for the player who contributed the most) and the “2” card (for the next highest contributor) and the player in that Alliance who bid the most troops becomes the next King (if there are three players in the Alliance, the player who contributed the least is removed from the Alliance). The rest of the Succession cards are then reshuffled and redealt.

- If two sides tie in the bid (either from sides running out of cards or from refusing to bid further), players vote on who they want to be their new King. If there is a tie in votes, then the previous King remains in power.
- If the attacker and the King are part of Alliances, other players within these Alliances must bid troop cards as well – if they don’t, the Alliance is broken, they lose a troop card from their Army, and their allies lose two troop cards each. If an Alliance player cannot contribute any cards from their Army, they are out of the bidding, but the attack continues, and the Alliance endures.
- If you are in an Alliance with someone who has already launched an attack in the round, you cannot attack again.
- If you are in an Alliance with the King and attack them, you must discard one card from your army, before bidding commences (the king loses no cards).
- If you bid a negative card, it reduces your opponent’s bid (for example, if they bid +3 troops, a -1 card makes their bid +2).
- If the King retains their throne, they may immediately draw a Troop Card and add one card to their Army.
- If the attacker becomes King, discard the Muster, and start a new round.

After every player has had a turn, the King shuffles, and privately views the Muster. They may discard one card if they choose, and then reveal the Muster:

- If the troop count in the Muster is greater than zero, then the defence succeeded – the King receives two Defence Tokens, and any allies of the King receive one Defence Token. If a player now has five Tokens, then they win the game.
- If the troop count in the Muster is equal to or less than zero, then the defence failed. Move the Raider up by one Raid Position. If the Raider moves into the Throne Room, everyone loses the game. If the Raider is now on a position with a Royal Decree, the King must complete that action immediately (see the section on Royal Decrees for more information). If the Raiders move past a castle defence (Outer Wall, Inner Wall, or Keep), initiate a Power Struggle (see rules on Power Struggles for more information).

The player with the next Succession Card (not currently revealed) reveals their card, becoming the next King, and the next round begins.

## **V. ROYAL DECREES**

A Royal Decree is performed by the current King when the Raider move up to one of three symbols in the Castle: A Royal Inquisition (crowned eye), Imprisonment (cage), or the Crown’s Justice (longsword).

### **Royal Inquisition**

When the Raider reaches a Royal Inquisition space, the King may secretly investigate one player’s Succession Card and share (truthfully or not) the results of the Inquiry.

## Imprisonment

When the Raider reaches an Imprisonment space, the King may imprison one player for a round, stopping them from adding to their Army, attacking the King, or contributing to an Ally's attack. If the King imprisons one of their allies, the Alliance is broken.

## Crown's Justice

When the Raider reaches a Crown's Justice space, the King eliminates one player at the table by saying "I charge [player name] with high treason and sentence them to die." When a player dies, they may not speak, they may not contribute to the Muster or their Army, they may not attack or bid in Power Struggles, and they may not become King for the rest of the game.

## VI. POWER STRUGGLES

A Power Struggle is initiated when the Raiders cross a Castle defence. When this happens, faith is lost with the current royal line, and everyone has a chance to seize the throne.

In any order, all players (except for the previous King) may bid as many Muster Cards as they like, face up in the centre of the table – as they do, they must say their current number of troops aloud. If they bid a negative card, they may play it on another player. Players in Alliances can bid troop cards as a collective. Whoever bids the highest number of Troops in the highest contributing Alliance becomes the next King, receiving the "1" card – their next highest contributing Ally receives the "2" card. If there is a tie, all players vote on who they want as King. If there is a tie in votes, then the new contenders for the throne are in a stalemate, and the previous King remains in power. If any player has more than 7 cards in their Army after a Power Struggle, they must discard two cards from their Army.

## VII. MUSTER DECK CARDS

Cards from the Muster Deck may be used in a Muster (defending the Castle), an attack, or a Power Struggle. Used in the right way, these can make all the difference in defending the castle, taking the throne, or sabotaging another player's bid for power:

- Conscript: worth one troop when contributed to the Muster, an attack, or a Power Struggle (as part of your own army, or as your contribution to someone else's bid).
- Knight: worth two troops when contributed to the Muster, an attack, or a Power Struggle (as part of your own army, or as your contribution to someone else's bid).
- Hero: worth three troops when contributed to the Muster, an attack, or a Power Struggle (as part of your own army, or as your contribution to someone else's bid). But be careful – there is only one Hero in the Deck, so play it carefully.
- Peasant: worth zero troops when contributed to the Muster, an attack, or a Power Struggle (as part of your own army, or as your contribution to someone else's bid). Peasants with a plus (+) symbol played in the Muster allow each player to add a card from their hand into their Army.
- Deserter: worth -1 troops when contributed to the Muster, an attack, or a Power Struggle (as part of your own army, or as your contribution to someone else's bid). Players use Deserters in a Muster to weaken another King's defence, or to another player's bid, during an attack or during a Power Struggle, to weaken their army.