

[I am reprinting these rules for the benefit of those who have signed up since issue 18, and to add some explanations, simplify some complicated things, and fix some bugs. The list of character types has also slightly expanded. As before, feel free to give Fred the credit and me the blame. -JG]

1. Except as stated here, the latest (1982) rules of Diplomacy, as published by Avalon Hill, will apply.
2. At the beginning of the game, the GM will assign a Character Card to each unit on the board. The GM will also assign a Character Card to each subsequent unit as it is built. Each card gives the unit certain powers or abilities, as described in the table at the end of these rules.

The power assigned to each unit shall initially be known only to the unit's owner and the GM. However, except as stated in the table, the use of a special power will be reported to all players and will tell everyone what the unit's power is.

Players are, of course, free to tell each other what their units are (or lie) as they negotiate with each other. This should add some spice to the diplomacy!

There are a total of 78 Character Cards, covering 27 different types of units. (Since most GMs are not equipped to print custom cards, I have "mapped" the Character Cards to Tarot cards which may be used instead.)

3. No player may ever have more than one unit of any one of the first eleven types (Annihilator, Gas Attacker, Hypnotist, Psychic, Doppelganger, Invisible unit, Ghost, Move First, Retreater, Hyperspace unit, and Cutter). Also, no player may ever have more than one Double Strength unit (total, not one of each type), nor more than two Minelayers.

In hopes of making the game more fair in the beginning, each player will start the game with exactly one unit from among these 14 powers, and with no two units of the same type. Also, no Free Units will be assigned in the initial deal.

If a card is drawn for any player which would violate this rule, the GM will discard it and draw another. The deck is not reshuffled during the game unless all 78 cards have been used. (And even then, all existing units retain their powers but their cards get re-used.)

4. The Caspian Sea is passable to Hyperspace fleets, Amphibious units, Water Walkers, Superfleets, and Explorers, and to any fleet which is convoyed there by a Neanderthal Army. Also, a Convertible unit may become a Fleet and use the Caspian. The Caspian borders only Armenia, Moscow, and Sevastopol.

The term "(ec)" must be used to designate an East Coast conversion by a Convertible army in Armenia or Sevastopol, or a move from Hyperspace to that coast. If no coast is given, the west coast is assumed. (The order will not be ruled ambiguous.)

5. In order to keep track of which characteristics belong to which unit, each unit will have a number preceding it. (For example, "1A" means "1st Army.") You don't have to use these numbers in your orders, but if you do, they must be correct or the order will be thrown out. When an Amphibious unit reveals itself or a Convertible unit changes types, it will be renumbered.

6. In order to give players a chance to overcome the luck of the draw, players may voluntarily disband any or all of their units in Winter and (if entitled) build new ones.
7. If a unit is dislodged while trying to use its special power, the use of the power is prevented for that turn. Exceptions: the Annihilator, Gas Attacker, Hypnotist, Psychic, Engineer, Minesweeper, and Free Unit powers work anyway. Also, the Hyperspace Unit, Amphibious Unit, Water Walker, Superfleet, and Explorer may use their special movement abilities when retreating.
8. If two or more units try to use their special powers on each other at the same time, the power listed earlier in the table takes precedence. A few special cases are dealt with in the table itself. (The table takes precedence over anything else in these rules.) If two units of the same type use their powers on each other, they both fail, unless the table says otherwise.
9. The victory condition is to own a majority of the supply centers on the board. Spaces that have lost Supply Center status by being annihilated or gassed do not count in the total until they regain Supply Center status.

Types and numbers of Character Cards:

Count    Type, Tarot equivalent, and Meaning

- 2    ANNIHILATOR (Trumps 0 and 1). Unit may destroy the province it is in, or is moving to (even if the move would otherwise be stood off). (This includes a move by convoy, but in that case the move can be prevented by dislodging a convoying fleet, as in normal Diplomacy.) The unit is annihilated too, but the province is impassable on the following turn, and if it is a Supply Center, it loses that status until two full game years after the explosion. (And any ownership of that SC is "forgotten" -- when it recovers, it is neutral until recaptured.) Any unit in the destroyed space is destroyed too, unless it successfully moves out, but any unit that tries to move in on the same turn as the explosion is merely stood off. Sea spaces may not be Annihilated.
- 2    GAS ATTACKER (Trumps 2 and 3). Unit may make a Gas Attack on any adjacent space by writing "(space) gassed" in lieu of any other action (that is, it holds while writing this order). This power may affect spaces the Gas Attacker cannot move to (but not Hyperspace). If there is a unit in the space, it is forced into Civil Disorder for the turn (and so cannot leave on the same turn). Any unit trying to enter the gassed space on that turn is stood off. If a Supply Center is gassed in Fall, it loses that status for one game year, but ownership of that center is not "forgotten." The unit may use its power only once every three (Spring and Fall) turns.
- 2    HYPNOTIST (Trumps 4 and 5). Unit may hypnotize an adjacent unit belonging to another player, and write orders for that unit in lieu of any other action (that is, it holds while writing this order). The GM will not identify the unit doing the Hypnotism, reporting it as Holding instead. The order may involve the use of the other unit's power IF the Hypnotist correctly names that power (exactly), UNLESS the other unit is an Annihilator, Gas Attacker, or another Hypnotist. The Hypnotist need not be capable of moving to the space the victim is in. The unit may use its power only once per game year.

- 2 PSYCHIC (Trumps 6 and 7). Unit may give orders that are conditional on an adjacent unit's order for the same turn. (The Psychic is considered to be "reading the mind" of its victim.) The victim may be in a space the Psychic cannot move to, but not Hyperspace. If the victim is an Annihilator, Gas Attacker, Hypnotist, or another Psychic and is using its power on the same turn, the Psychic will "read" (falsely) that the other unit has been ordered to Hold. If the victim is being Gas Attacked or Hypnotized on the same turn, the Psychic will "read" the victim's original orders, not the ones imposed by the Gas Attack or Hypnotism. The unit may use its power only once per game year.
- 2 DOPPELGANGER (Trumps 8 and 9). Unit may swap powers with any adjacent unit, whether friendly or not. This is in lieu of any other action (that is, it holds while writing this order). The two units need not be capable of moving to each other's spaces. However, the swap fails if the Doppelganger is dislodged; if the victim successfully moves to a space not adjacent to the Doppelganger; or if the situation after the swap would violate rule 3. If the victim is in a space that no ordinary unit can move to, then the victim (now a Doppelganger) may remain there until it chooses to leave. Neither unit may use its new power on the turn after the swap.
- 4 INVISIBLE UNIT (Aces). Unit may become invisible, if its owner so orders. (This may be done in addition to a normal order.) The unit is subject to all normal movement rules. Its location will be reported to its owner, to the owner of any unit which conflicts with the invisible unit, and of any unit which successfully supports or convoys the invisible unit, or is supported or convoyed by it. If the unit enters a Supply Center which is not already owned by that player, it becomes visible to everyone. If a Hypnotist, Psychic, or Doppelganger wants to use its power against an Invisible unit or Ghost, it must correctly guess the victim's location before movement.
- 2 GHOST (Trumps 10 and 11). Like the preceding type, this unit may become invisible (and when a unit becomes invisible, other players are not told whether it is a Ghost or just an Invisible Unit). However, the Ghost, when invisible, does not "occupy" the space it is in. Thus, an invisible Ghost may exist in the same space as other units, cannot be dislodged or prevented from moving (except by one of the preceding powers); cannot support or convoy anything (but may BE convoyed); and cannot affect the ownership of a supply center. Unlike an Invisible Unit, a Ghost that is invisible is completely undetectable, unless a Hypnotist, Psychic, or Doppelganger correctly guesses the Ghost's location and uses its power on the Ghost. (Even if another player successfully convoys the Ghost, the report will say "no such unit.") All of these effects end on the turn that the Ghost gives the order to become visible (or loses its power to a Doppelganger). If a Ghost becomes visible while in the same space as another unit (except another Ghost which is invisible), and neither unit successfully moves out of the space, and both have equal strength in holding that space except for this rule, the Ghost is dislodged. In this or any other case, if a Ghost is dislodged while visible, it may NOT turn invisible as a means of retreating.
- 4 MOVE FIRST (Deuces). This unit moves first in each turn, and thus can enter a space in which a standoff would otherwise occur. This power is always used (mandatory) when the unit moves, and can be a drawback (for example, if trying to enter a space while another unit moves out -- this cannot be done, unless you are able to dislodge the unit

that was already there. For this purpose you are allowed to dislodge your own units). Also, any support given by a Move First unit cannot be cut -- but if the Move First unit is attacked while it is supporting something, it has a strength of zero in defending itself. This power is not reported to other players until it affects the outcome of a turn. If the unit is dislodged, its retreat is normal.

- 2 RETREATER (Trumps 12 and 13). After any turn in which the unit is NOT dislodged, it may voluntarily "retreat" one space in any direction (including spaces where a standoff occurred). May capture supply centers this way. Owner simply submits a "retreat" as s/he would for a dislodged unit. This allows two moves in a turn in some cases, but does not permit moves to any space that is illegal for the unit.
- 4 HYPERSPACE UNIT (Threes). Unit may move off the board to Hyperspace, an abstract space which is adjacent to all spaces on the board. The unit may also retreat to Hyperspace. A unit in Hyperspace may NOT support anything, but if it is a fleet, it may convoy any Army through Hyperspace. No other special power can ever be used on Hyperspace or its occupants -- even if that power precedes this one. Any number of units may occupy Hyperspace simultaneously; therefore, the unit can never be dislodged from Hyperspace or prevented from moving there.
- 2 CUTTER (Trumps 14 and 15). Unit automatically cuts up to two Support orders (per turn) which oppose the Cutter's own orders, or the orders of a unit that the Cutter is supporting. This power is not reported to other players until it affects the outcome of a conflict.
- 4 JUMPER (Fours). Unit may jump over another unit, regardless of who owns it. The Jumper must land in a legal space, but the unit jumped may be anywhere except Hyperspace. The unit being jumped may Support or Convoy something, provided that it doesn't interfere with the Jumper's move, but it may NOT move, any such move order being changed to a hold. The Jumper's power can not be used when retreating.
- 4 MARTIAL ARTIST (Fives). When this unit is dislodged, it may retreat to a space where a standoff occurred. And if two units attempt to retreat to the same space, the Martial Artist succeeds.
- 2 Unit is DOUBLE STRENGTH for all purposes (Trumps 16 and 17). If this unit is supporting something, an attack of strength 1 will cut only one unit of support. A strength 2 attack or two strength 1 attacks will cut all support. This power is not reported to other players until it affects the outcome of a conflict (and even then, if the unit is moving or holding, players will not be told which type of double strength unit it was -- this one or the next one).
- 2 LIMITED DOUBLE STRENGTH UNIT (Trumps 18 and 19). Unit moves and holds with a strength of two, but only supports with a strength of one. This power is not reported to other players until it affects the outcome of a conflict (and even then, players will not be told which type of double strength unit it was -- the previous one or this one).
- 2 SUPER SUPPORTER (Trumps 20 and 21). Unit supports with a strength of 3, holds with a strength of 1, and moves with a strength of 0. This power is not reported to other players until it affects the outcome of a conflict. If this unit is dislodged, it retreats with strength 1.

- 4 DOUBLE MOVER (Sixes). Unit may move two spaces each turn. If the second space is blocked, it moves just one space. (Can retreat only one space.) This is a single move, not an impulse move; each of the two parts is adjudicated as if it were the entire move. However, if the entire move is successful, then a second Double Mover may end its turn in the first unit's "middle" space. Also, if a double move succeeds, the "middle" space (if vacant) is open for retreats by any units (except units dislodged by the double move).
- 4 ENGINEER army / MINESWEEPER fleet (Sevens). Unit automatically deactivates all mines in spaces it enters. GM will report this event only to the unit's owner, who will NOT be told who laid the mine(s).
- 4 MINELAYER (Eights). Unit may leave a mine behind in any space as it leaves it. If it fails to leave, mine is NOT laid. The mine explodes the next time any unit enters the space, and destroys that unit, but does not make the space impassable. A standoff in the space will not set off the mine. A build will (and will still count)! The unit which laid the mine may reenter the space safely by saying "Picks up own mine"; this does NOT deactivate the mine for anyone who enters the space later. If more than one mine exists in a space, each entry will set off (at most) one of the mines. This power and its use are never reported to other players.
- 4 AMPHIBIOUS unit (Nines). Initially reported as an Army or Fleet, according to what it was built as. Once it attempts a move or support that would be impossible for its reported type, it is revealed and is assigned a new number such as "1Amp". The unit may not convoy or be convoyed.
- 4 CONVERTIBLE unit (Tens). Unit may convert from an Army to a Fleet, or vice versa, in any Spring, Fall, or Winter season. If done in Spring or Fall, this is in lieu of any other move. Conversion must take place in a coastal province. Conversion is prevented (but the attempt is still revealed) if the unit is attacked in the same season that it tries to convert, even if it is not dislodged.
- 4 WATER WALKER army / SUPERFLEET (Pages). The meaning of this card depends on the type of unit to which it is assigned. If the unit is an Army, it can cross any one sea space (per turn) without need of convoy. This is allowed regardless of the status of the sea space, and includes the Caspian Sea. If the unit is a fleet, it may move directly between any two sea spaces that both border on any one land space, even if on different coasts; and it automatically supports the landing of any Army it convoys, provided it is the last fleet in the convoy.
- 4 NEANDERTHAL army / AIRCRAFT CARRIER fleet (Knights). The meaning of this card depends on the type of unit to which it is assigned. If the unit is an Army, it may "convoy" a fleet across land! To do this, the Army doing the convoying (or at least, the one at each end of the convoy if more than one Neanderthal is used) must be in a coastal province, and the fleet being convoyed must start and end its move in sea spaces. In all other respects this action follows normal convoy rules. If the unit is a fleet, it may support any action up to two spaces away, even if the fleet cannot move there.

- 4 EXPLORER (Queens). Unit may move to Iceland, Ireland, Crete, Sicily, Sardinia, or the Caspian Sea, (or Switzerland if it is an Army), using normal moving rules. If the unit is an Army, it can treat the Caspian Sea as a land space. In addition, if the unit is an Army, it may move directly between Liverpool - Ireland, Sicily - Naples, or Spain - North Africa (and vice versa), as if these spaces were adjacent; if the unit is a Fleet, it may move directly between Mid Atlantic - Eastern Mediterranean, Mid Atlantic - Norwegian Sea, or Baltic Sea - Skaggerak (and vice versa).
- 4 FREE UNIT (Kings). Once built, this unit needs no supply center to support it. Its owner may thus build as if the Free Unit does not exist, beginning one game year AFTER the free unit is built. (Will NOT be dealt at the start of the game.)

Ideas for this variant have been borrowed from many sources. Thanks to Fred Davis, who thought up Character Dip in the first place but is taking it in a different direction (weakening the characters instead of strengthening them).

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The Assassin's Blade House Rules

revised March 1, 1991

0. How I do things.

I always list players' names and addresses, and e-mail addresses if I have them, so you can negotiate with each other. I will add your phone number if you ask; otherwise I assume you don't want it listed.

I deliberately do not set deadlines more than an issue or two ahead. However, I try to set them 4-6 weeks apart unless that would fall on a weekend when I'll be out; and I try to get the issue out within a week after deadline. So it's a "relaxed" schedule, but not as "relaxed" as some zines in the hobby.

You're welcome to call me at any hour; if I'm asleep, gone, or got too many "junk phone calls" that week, you'll get my machine. I have been publishing about two years but still have things to learn, so I welcome input on anything you might disagree with.

I assume that all letters and e-mail are "OK to print" unless they say otherwise. I will start a letter column as soon as I can provoke you all into writing.

1. Deceiving the GM is about the only thing not allowed. Lie to the other players all you want, but don't send anything phony to or "from" me.
2. The latest rules of Diplomacy, as published by Avalon Hill at the time a game begins, will be used, except for details (such as time limits) which would make no sense in a postal game. At this writing, the last revision was in 1983.

Please phone me right away if you feel I've made an adjudication error. If you're right, I'll send out a correction and extend the next deadline.

If an error report does not reach me before the following move has been adjudicated, the error will be allowed to stand.

3. Press "datelined" from a supply center may only be written by the person who holds that center (the turn BEFORE it is printed), if anyone owns it.

BULLWINKLE press:

Anonymous: Let's think 21st Century!

Italy to all: What's the worst Dip variant, judging by people's immediate reaction to it? Onion Dip!

Russia to Turkey: I sure hope you weren't feeding me a bunch of bull, otherwise I'm going to have a cow!

Russia to Austria: You weren't straight with me, so....

Russia to England: You were straight with me. Unfortunately, you were also downright antagonizing. I offered an out we could both live with. Did you accept?

Russia to Germany: Keep in touch. Please.

Russia to France: Hey, Ralph, I'm still working on an alliance guaranteed to drive you crazy!

Russia to Italy: Hope we can put "Bart Simpson" aside and communicate, although if you're going to have far-fetched ideas, this is probably the right game for them! (Just don't make me the target!)

Turkey to all: The Sultan claims Bulgaria and Greece to be indisputably part of the Ottoman Empire.

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#### Rules Clarifications for Character Dip II:

Several people had questions, so I thought I should print the answers here for all to read. I have not identified the people asking the questions because it might give away someone's intentions.

Q: Can I disband units now in Winter 1900 to get new special abilities?

A: No. There is no Winter 1900. You'll have to wait until Winter 1901.

Q: Suppose I capture a new supply center in Fall 1901, and I disband the unit that did it so I can build something else. Do I still own the center?

A: Yes. Capture of centers occurs in Fall (after all retreats); disbanding occurs in Winter.

Q: If Hypnotism occurs, how will it appear on the game reports?

A: The victim will be told that his/her unit was Hypnotized, but not by whom (although if only one neighboring unit is shown as holding, s/he will probably figure it out). Everyone else will see only the order that resulted from the Hypnotism.

Q: When a Ghost becomes invisible, is that the only thing it can do on that turn?

A: No. Like an Invisible Unit, a Ghost can become invisible in addition to carrying out a normal order. If either type of unit turns invisible and moves on the same turn, invisibility happens first.

Q: If I have a Move First unit at space x, and I move x-y, y-z, and have a third unit support x-y so that that move works, can the piece at y go ahead with its move as if it were not dislodged? What if the move y-z involves the use of a special power such as the Jumper?

A: The unit at y will attempt to go through with its move to z, and this is considered a normal move and not a Retreat when determining who gets z. Nevertheless, the unit HAS been dislodged, so it cannot use any special powers except those listed in rule 7. (All powers listed in rule 7 will work in this case, including movement powers that work for both normal movement and Retreats.) If the y-z move fails, the unit will have to Retreat from space y.

Q: If I move a Double Mover from space x to y to z, can I move a second unit to space y on the same turn?

A: No. If this is attempted (and neither move is supported), they bounce and neither unit will move. (The one exception is where both units are Double Movers and y is the second one's end space.)

Note that a Double Move order must name all three spaces. If you just say "F Tri - Ion" I will rule it ambiguous.

Q: How are supports for a Double Move handled?

A: As I said, each of the two parts is adjudicated as if it were the entire move. Thus, each unit giving support may only support one part of the move. Example: If the move is "F Tri-Adr-Ion" then you may support either the first part (F Ven S F Tri-Adr) or the second (F Gre S F Tri-Ion). The support order should show only the Double Mover's starting space and the space into which support is being given. The usual concept of ambiguity applies: "F Gre S F Tri-Adr-Ion" will be allowed because F Gre can give support into Ion, but not into Adr. "F Apu S F Tri-Adr-Ion" is ambiguous because it could give support into either space.

Q: What is reported when a mine destroys a unit?

A: The unit will be listed as blown up by a mine. I will not tell who laid the mine. (The victim will be told whether it was his/her own mine.)

Q: What happens if a Jumper, a Water Walker, Explorer, or Superfleet uses its special power to jump over a space that contains a mine?

A: The mine does not go off. The unit has not "entered" the space containing the mine.

Q: When a unit is disbanded, will its power be revealed?

A: No. However, I will reveal them all at the end of the game.

Q: How will standbys be handled?

A: If a standby is called, s/he will be told the nature of every unit s/he controls. As always, no one will ever be asked to submit orders for more than one position in a game.