

## High Court of Minsterpool (Full Rules) (updated July 2007)

*The High Court for the Land convenes once a year. It is your job as the family Patriarch/Matriarch to ensure that the Court Members remember you, and pass judgments and laws in your favor. But of course, other families in the realm are doing likewise, and the Court is fickle, and most have a short memory. Using bribes, favors, and the occasional blood relative marriage, you gain favor with various members of the Court. And for those members don't favor you, well, time eventually gets the best of them and their relationships. Especially when you can help nudge those relationships apart, or speed up their retirement with a little skullduggery.*

### QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

Contact Scott at [Scott@LEDGaming.com](mailto:Scott@LEDGaming.com).

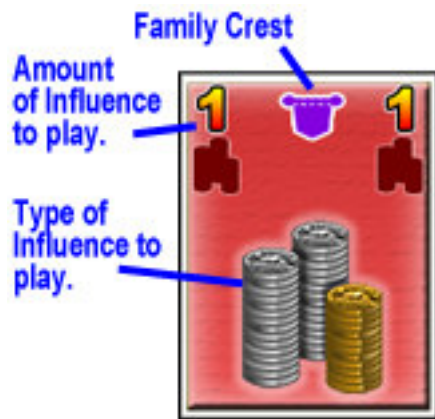
### OBJECT:

Earn Victory Points (VP) by having the most influence on Court Members.

### COMPONENTS:

- 16 Court Member boards.
- 21 Gold VP Medals counters.
- One deck of 18 Action Cards per person.
- 28 Bid Chips.
- Many tokens/glass beads of a particular color for each player.
- Many black Hourglass tokens/glass beads.
- Pad of paper and pencil for keeping score (you provide).

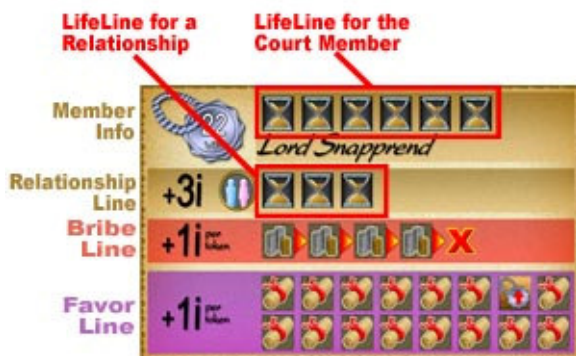
### INFORMATION:



**Action Cards** contain three parts of information.

The Family Crest simply helps divide up the cards evenly amongst players. Each player selects a Family Crest and takes all cards with that icon. Each player starts with the same set of cards.

Cards also show the **Type of Influence** the player can play when playing this card as an Action, and the **Amount of Influence** that is played.



**Court Member Boards** will have up to 4 different areas of information. The top row will always show a **Silver VP Medal** to the left. **Gold VP Medal** counters are placed on top of this area. Also, all Court Members have a LifeLine, shown as a row of **Hourglass** icons, and a Name.

Below this, there can be up to 3 rows of information, showing the different ways a Court Member can be Influenced. They can be influenced by a player starting a **Relationship** between their families, they can be **Bribed**, or they can be offered **Favors**.

Each type of influence works a little bit differently and is explained further in the rules.



Gold VP Medals are placed on the upper left-hand corner of a Court Member board (on top of the Silver Medal icons) to show the current value of VP that a Court Member is worth. As new Court Members are brought into play, higher valued medals are placed on the new members. Also, favors can “upgrade” a Court Member to a higher VP status.

Once the complete stack of Gold VP medals are used, all new Court Members (and upgraded ones) simply use the value of the Silver VP Medal printed on their board.



Bid Chips are used to determine turn order during each round of the game. Also, at the end of the game, each player will be holding one remaining Bid Chip. The VP's shown on the Bronze medal on the remaining Bid Chip will be added to each player's score as a bonus.

#### **SETUP FOR THE GAME:**

Divide up the Action Cards by the Family Crest icon (Banner, Turkey, Turtle, Dashing Robin Hood Hat) in the upper center of the card. Each player selects which Family Crest they want to be and takes that set of cards. Each set of cards is the same.

Additionally, each player takes the 7 Bid Chips that match his Family Crest.

Each player gets a pile of **Influence Tokens** in their favorite color. These are used to mark their influence of Court Members. Black Tokens are used to mark Hourglasses on the Court Members and are set aside.

Stack the Gold VP Medals in order based on the values shown, highest value on the bottom, lowest value on top. Note that there are multiples of the 5, 6 and 7 VP Medals.

Shuffle the Court Member boards and stack them face down. Flip over and place in the center of the table the same amount of Court Members as there are players.

*EXAMPLE: If you have 2 players, you start with 2 Court Members. If you have 3 players, you start with 3 Court Members, etc. up to a maximum of 6.*



From the top of the stack of Gold VP Medals, place one on each Court Member (on the Silver Medal on each board).

**PLAY OF THE GAME:**

The game is played in 6 Rounds. Each Round has five phases.

- Bid for Turn Order.
- Select Actions
- Play Actions
- Award VP
- End of Round

**BID FOR TURN ORDER:**

Each player will select one Bid Chips from the Bid Chips they currently own and keep it hidden in their hand. All players will simultaneously reveal their Bid Chips.

The order in which players will play Action Cards in this round is determined by the Bid value of the Bid Chips. The player with the lowest valued chip will play first, the second lowest value chips plays second, and so on. The player with the highest valued Bid Chip will play last.

At the End of the Round, all played Bid Chips are discarded from play.

**SELECT ACTIONS:**

Each player starts with a hand of 18 Action Cards.

At the start of each round. each player looks at their remaining Action Cards and secretly selects 3 Action Cards from their hand. Remaining cards in their deck are placed to the side.

Since cards are never replenished, and you use 3 cards per round, the 6th Round will use the remaining 3 cards left in each player's hand.

**PLAY ACTIONS:**

Starting with the player who currently has the lowest valued Bid Chip, this player reveals one of his selected Action Cards. This defines what type of Influence the player can place on the Court Member Boards. After playing his Action, the player MAY play another Action Card from his remaining selected cards. Otherwise, the player who has the next lowest Bid Chip goes next (unless of course the player has the highest Bid Chip, which in case the turn order starts over again with the lowest Bid Chip to play next).

Once a player's hand of selected Cards have been played in a Round, he is finished for this phase of the round until all other player's finish playing their Action Cards. However, if a player has at least one card, they MUST play one card when it comes around to their turn.

Action Cards come in four different "flavors" with regards to the type of Influence you can use.

It is possible that there may not be enough places for a player to play the required amount of Influence shown on his Action card. Excess Influence is simply not played; it does not get stored for later use. However, a player MUST play as much Influence as his card instructs him to do.

**Relationship Actions and Influence:**



Relationship Actions let a player place tokens of their color on an empty Relationship circle of any Court Member. The number of tokens to be placed is shown on the Action Card. In the example to the left, the player may "start" up to two Relationships.



**EXAMPLE:** To simply start a Relationship, a player places one of his colored tokens on an empty Relationship circle.

A player's Relationship Action is over when he has placed all of his tokens required by the Action, or if there are no empty Relationship Circles on the Active Court Members.

**Hourglass Actions and Influence:**



Hourglass Actions let a player place Black tokens on the left most empty Hourglass space on any LifeLine on any Court Member. The LifeLine can be a Court Member's LifeLine, or any Relationship LifeLine that has a current active Relationship. The number of tokens to be placed is shown on the Action Card. In the example card to the left, the player can play 3 Hourglass tokens on any LifeLine.

A player does not need to spend all of his Hourglass tokens on one LifeLine. He may "spread them around" across various LifeLines, even across numerous Court Members.

If a Court Member's LifeLine has been completely filled with Hourglass tokens, immediately remove all tokens from that Court Member, and place the Court Member Board in a discard pile. Draw a new replacement Court Member board to take its place. Place a new Gold VP Medal (if there is any available in the stack) on the upper left corner. The player can now continue his turn.

If a Relationship LifeLine has been completely filled with Hourglass tokens, immediately remove the Relationship token from that LifeLine, and clear all Hourglass tokens from that LifeLine. The player can now continue his turn.



**EXAMPLE:** Currently, Lord Snapprend has 3 Hourglass tokens on his LifeLine. If a player places 3 Hourglass Tokens on the Lord, the Lord is forced to "retire." Lord Snapprend is removed from the game, and replaced with a new Court Member.



**EXAMPLE:** Lady Byrnaszic can have two Relationships. If a player plays one more Hourglass on the +3i Relationship (currently "owned" by the Red player), that Relationship ends as that LifeLine has been filled up. All tokens from the +3i Relationship line are removed. A player can then start a new Relationship on that line. It will take 3 more Hourglass tokens on the the +2i Relationship (currently with the Green player) to remove that relationship.

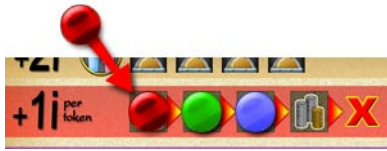
**Bribe Action and Influence:**



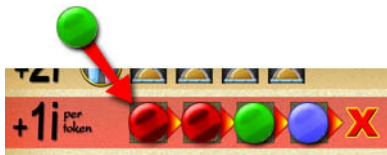
Bribe Actions let a player place tokens of their color on the far left icon in a Bribe line on any Court Member. Any previously played Bribes are slid to the next open icon to the right. If there are no more empty Bribe icons, then the one that "slid off" the last icon is removed from the board. The number of tokens to be placed is shown on the Action Card. In the example card to the left, the player can place 3 tokens on any Bribe lines on any Court Members.

Unlike Hourglass and Favors (discussed below), which are placed on the left-most EMPTY icon in their line, Bribes ALWAYS are placed on the left-most icon, moving all previously placed Bribes over to the right one space.

A player does not need to spend all of his Bribe Actions on one Court Member. He may "spread them around" across various Bribe lines on numerous Court members.



*EXAMPLE: Red wishes to play a Bribe on this Court Member. So the Red, Green, and Blue tokens slide down the Bribe line. Resulting in the image as seen below.*



*However, during the Green player's turn, he also plays a Bribe, pushing all of the previously played Bribes down the line, resulting in the Blue token sitting on the X.*



*The Blue token gets removed from the Bribe line.*

**Favor Action and Influence:**



Favor Actions lets a player place tokens of their color on the Favor line on any Court Member. Placement of Favor Influence on a Favor line always starts on the upper row (if there are multiple rows of Favor icons) on the leftmost open icon. Added Influence are placed on empty icons working from left to right. Once a row is completed, the next Favor influence will be placed on the leftmost icon in the next row down. In the example card to the left, the player can place 6 tokens on any Favor lines on any Court Members.

**Advance VP icon**



If a Favor influence is placed on an Advance VP icon, and the Court Member currently has a Gold VP Medal counter on it, remove the counter, and replace it with the next Gold VP Medal counter from the VP Medal stack.

The player can then continue his turn as normal.

If there are no more Gold VP Medals, then the current VP "rating" of the Court Member is the Silver Medal printed on the Court Member board, and the Advance VP icon is ignored.

A player does not need to spend all of his Favor Actions on one Court Member. He may "spread them around" across various Favor lines on numerous Court members. A player's turn is over when he runs out of Favors to spend, or there are no empty Favor Icons left.



*EXAMPLE: Green has played two Favors, followed by Red, who has played 3 Favors on this Court member. On his turn, Yellow has already played one Favor, and is about to play a second Favor. This Favor is going to be placed on the Advance VP icon (instead of the typical Favor icon). Yellow will then have to "upgrade" this Court Member's Gold VP Medal with the next Gold Medal counter off of the stack.*

**AWARD VICTORY POINTS:**

After all players have played their Action Cards, each Court Member scores VP to the player who has the most Influence. The value of Influence is determined by the numbers on the left side of each line. A Court Member which has one or more players tied for the most Influence awards no VP.

While Relationship Influence is scored once for whoever "owns" that Relationship line, Bribes and Favors are scored for EACH token on those particular lines.



*EXAMPLE: Red has a total of 3 Influence on Lady Byrnasizic, Green has a total of 5, and Blue has a total 2. Green has the most Influence over this Court Member.*

*Green scores the 6 VPs shown on the Gold Medal for having the most Influence on Lady Byrnasizic.*



*EXAMPLE: Blue has a total of 2 Influence, Yellow and Green both have a total of 3. Because of the tie, this Court Member does not score any VP.*

**END OF ROUND:**

At the end of a round, every Court Member LifeLine (both Court Member and Relationship) gets one additional Hourglass token. Also, every Relationship LifeLine that is currently "owned" by a player's token gets one additional Hourglass token. Relationship lines that are empty (they have no Player tokens on them) do not get an Hourglass.

If any Court Member LifeLine becomes full, this Court Member is discarded from the game, and a new replacement Court Member is drawn, with a new Gold VP Medal placed on it (if there is one available from the stack). Any Relationship LifeLine that has become full clears that Relationship.

All Favors are removed from all Court Members. All tokens on Relationships and Bribes remain.

If there are LESS THAN 6 Court Members in play on the table. Draw a new Court Member, and place the next Gold VP Medal from the stack on it (if a Gold VP Medal is available). A new Round of the game begins, with players selecting their next Bid Chip.

**WINNING THE GAME:**

After 6 Rounds have been played, all players reveal their last Bid Chip. The VP value on this chip is added to their VP total. Whoever has the most VP at this point wins the game. In the case of a tie, the player with the LOWEST remaining Bid Chip wins.

### **DESIGNER NOTES and Q and A:**

#### *Quickie strategy information:*

Very early on in the game, people pick up that you want to be the person to play cards last, so you will almost always play only one card per turn. This allows you the best chance of overcoming other player's moves while protecting your own. And then the players ask, "Why in the world would ANYONE want to play two cards per turn?"

Well, in general, YOU WON'T. However, there is one case where "giving up that extra card advantage" does a world of good. It involves creative use of the Hourglass cards.

Hourglasses only real purpose in the game is remove a Court Member that you don't control (and have no chance in controlling), or removing a Relationship (which, once created by another player, it's the ONLY way of removing that control). But if you only play a single card (the Hourglass) to do it, then the next player can take advantage of the new blank Court Member, or blank Relationship.

So, if you successfully play an Hourglass to create a new Court Member, or empty out a Relationship, you really do need to play an immediate Influence card on your same turn to take control of it. Hourglasses are designed to be played with a second card. Use the power to its fullest!

Of course, I still haven't found a reason to play all three cards from your hand at this point...

*Can a player who has played two Action cards on his first round pass a second round, to play his third card on the last round?*

No. A player must play a card on his turn if he has one.

#### *Bid Chips:*

Bid Chips are a late addition. Originally, the turn order of each round was determined by "whoever was in the VP lead goes first, and then the turns go around the table in clockwise fashion." Simple enough, and it penalized the current leader by making him go first.

However, there seemed to be a lot of hand-wringing over the fact that your turn order was based where the point leader was sitting in relation to you. Why should you go second just because your neighbor is in the lead? And true enough, that didn't seem fair.

So turn order could be based on the current rank of all players in the VP race, but how do you determine tie-breakers at all levels then? Or what happens in the case of a three-way tie?

There was some thought about using a true bidding, with discarding action cards, or collected VP or something, system, but for some reason, people don't like that.

And so, we are left with what is currently implemented; a modified bidding system that clears out all the bug-a-boos regarding ties and whatnot. With an added twist that there is a bonus paid to the unplayed, higher valued Bidding Chips.

Due to the unevenness of the VP and Bidding scores between the four players, while fairly balanced, each Family Crest now requires a slightly different bidding strategy, which I think is sort of interesting. And it doesn't affect the core game play at all.