

Commands & Colors Ancients

The Exciting Ancients Battlefield Game

Introduction

[Commands & Colors Ancients](#) is a board game designed by Richard Borg and published by [GMT Games, LLC](#). GMT Games holds the copyrights to the images and other game related materials contained in this module and they are used with their permission. This module is intended for the use of those who own a copy of the game and wish to play with opponents via the internet or find it convenient to use the module for solitaire play.

Starting a Game

To start a game, select File > Scenarios and choose one of the pre-set scenarios from the official sets listed or select New Setup to create your own scenario. You can also use the Scenario Chooser to find a scenario from the full catalogue which includes many fan-developed scenarios from [CommandsandColors.net](#). After you make your selection, a window will prompt you to choose your side to play. You may choose to be either Player 1 or Player 2, which will assign you a particular window to hold your hand of command cards. From module version 4.2, Player 1 is aligned to the top Army and Player 2 to the bottom Army. Epic games also allow Field General roles. To play a solo game, see the Solitaire section below.

The pre-set scenarios have all the terrain hexes and army units on the board. Scenario setup is included in the Notes window which is accessed by clicking the “scroll” button. Some scenarios have special rules and, occasionally, some associated instructions for playing the scenario with the Vassal module.

Each module window has zoom buttons on the toolbars that allow you to increase/decrease the scale of the board for best viewing on your system. When at less than full magnification, you can mouse-over zoom the individual pieces and cards to see them better.

Several features can be customised to your requirements. See Preferences...Game Options¹. Also, review the Help... drop down menu, including the Module Hotkeys which provides useful shortcuts.



The “on turn” side is indicated by an hourglass icon to the left of that side’s board edge. As some scenarios have a variable Move First rule, before game start “Move First” can be toggled from this icon, or by pressing F12.



To start a game, the “Move First” player presses the Deal Cards button that will be active in their hand window. This action deals any required cards to both sides and the game is now ready to start.

¹ The *Preferences* menu item is renamed *Settings* on later versions of MacOS.

Cards

It is not necessary to shuffle the draw deck before drawing cards, as it is set to automatically shuffle. Each player has a window that holds their cards. Only the player of that side may open and view this window. These windows are opened by clicking on that side's button on the toolbar.

Buttons in the hand window ease the process of drawing cards and another will reset the board for a new turn. Furthermore, buttons on the main toolbar will complete a card draw and end turn in one action; this is the recommended way of ending a turn. All draw buttons will check for special end turn conditions. Alternatively, cards can be dragged into hand and the deck re-shuffled by a right-click command on the discard pile.

Some command cards refer to specific right or left flanks. As the board is static, each preset scenario has tags on the game board map that indicate which board edge belongs to which army. The army whose name appears at the top of the map has its flanks reversed from the appearance on the screen, i.e. the right side of the map is that army's left flank and the left side of the map is its right flank.

It is suggested that command cards be played to the board for your opponent to place on the discard pile, giving them time to read the card. Cards can be dragged to the board but it is better to use the right-click commands to play a card. Your opponent will simply need to click on a played card to discard it.

Ordering

To order a unit, you can right-click the unit and select *Order Unit* from the menu. It will be given a shaded base to designate that it is ordered. The same procedure will remove the highlight from a previously ordered unit. A unit that is moved will also automatically be given this indicator. Moving units will generate movement trails, so units that move multiple hexes should be moved to each hex one at a time to give them a proper movement trail. The end turn procedure will automatically remove these marks and trails.

Combat

For indicating which units are battling, you can right click on the attacker and select the Attacker Marker from the menu (yellow circle) and right click on the target unit and select the Target Marker from the menu (red circle), which places these marker onto each unit, prior to rolling the battle dice.

A line of sight thread is provided, activated by clicking the LoS button on the right side of the control panel. The board will fade out and you place one end of the thread by left-clicking on a hex then, holding down the left-click button, move the pointer to the target hex and release. It will show a red thread and a range in hexes. Simply click the board to release the thread.

There is a "no battle" marker (blue circle with 'tick') that can be used to indicate when a unit cannot battle because of movement or terrain restrictions. It can be accessed from the right

click menu. This same marker can be used to indicate units that have completed their battling on a given turn. The Attacker marker can be turned into a "battled" marker via its right click menu for this purpose.







The Target marker can be turned into an Evade marker (green circle with an arrow), via its right click menu, to indicate when a unit will evade.

Prior to rolling battle dice for a close combat attack, the attacking player should ask his opponent if the target unit will Evade, if allowed by the rules.

Note: Ordering and placing combat markers can be done just by using left-click. This feature is restricted to player roles who would normally do the action. Also, the Attacker marker will usually automatically clear or change to "battled" as appropriate. For this purpose, the module interprets a dice roll as a confirmed combat.

When First Strike is played during a combat, the hourglass icon will grey out and a "First Strike replacement draw reminder" icon/button will appear on the opposite side of the board. At turn end, the First Strike player's card must be replaced first (e.g. by clicking on the icon).

Battle dice are rolled by clicking the appropriate button on the main toolbar. There are buttons that will roll from 1 to 10 battle dice at once. The board game has special dice with images on each face; the module presents images of these die faces and a summary of rolls in the chat log, using the following abbreviations:

-  Light symbol (green circle) = **LIT**
-  Medium symbol (blue triangle) = **MED**
-  Heavy symbol (red square) = **HVY**
-  Banner symbol = **BAN**
-  Leader symbol = **LDR**
-  Crossed Swords symbol = **XSW**

When units suffer hits, the owning player registers this by right-clicking the unit and selecting *Take Hit* from the menu. Each time this is done it will reduce the unit's strength by 1. If a unit is rallied and regains hits, select *Rally* from the right-click menu to increase its strength. Hotkeys allow an owning side to accept multiple hits in one go (Ctrl+1-Ctrl+6).



When one or more hits are applied to a unit that is stacked with a Leader, a Leader Check is prompted. The passive player may click on n

Leaders will stack on top of units to which they are attached. Leaders have a Detach command (Alt+D) to help separate the two pieces. The module will automatically detach a

stacked leader in the event that the unit or leader piece needs to be removed from the board.

To view terrain or a special block beneath a leader or unit, hold your pointer over the piece. If unit zoom is enabled, you must point on a visible part of the terrain or special block in order to view that piece. Mouse-over zoom options can be configured to taste in Preferences...Game Options.

Below the draw deck are two Victory Tracks. They are used to track the number of victory banners each player has earned. When a unit is eliminated, the owning player places it on his opponent's victory track. There is no need to apply hits if a unit is eliminated; placing it on the Victory Track is enough. You can get rid of the resulting movement trail by right-clicking the unit moved to the track and selecting *Order Unit*, or let the end of turn do this automatically. If a scenario awards banners for things other than eliminating units, banners can be dragged from the *Terrain > Markers* window to the victory track.

Epic Games

The Epic format is identical with the addition of Epic card play controls. Cards are played to one of three play slots, with the center slot doubling up as the Army card slot. For cards in hand, play choices allowed by the card appear on the card's right-click context menus. These are greyed out when a card play option is already taken (adjoining sections ordered by a Field 2 or Field 3 card being left to the player to catch, along with the effect of Initiative die rolls).

As with the standard game, Draw & End turn buttons are greyed out until a card is played or an initiative die is rolled. For the ultra-edge case of a player with only two First Strike cards left in hand and no initiative die rolls, the turn can be ended by drawing one or two cards into the active side's hand, followed by an end turn button.

When ending the turn, take care to choose the correct number of cards to deal out (1 or 2). To aid you, refer to the scenario notes to determine the side's maximum command size. Mouse-over the side's Command Size display (card icon with a number, next to Army name) to see the exact number of cards that the player has in hand. As a further aid, the display changes color when that side's command size is less or greater than its starting Command Size.

PBEM

To speed turnaround for PBEM players, the module allows a player to draw cards and end turn on behalf of the other side. To achieve this, use the Draw Card & End Turn button or First Strike replacement draw icon as you would normally when it was your draw. This feature assumes that players are following the principle that play of First Strike invalidates the rest of the log, or at least the card draw. The module will accommodate allowing the original card draws to proceed but in this case, as with other versions and C&C modules, any new draw must be delayed until the logged draws have completed.

Users who keep a large number of log files may notice an impact on storage (e.g. free cloud storage with low limits). Removing old log files or making use of Vassal's ability to Fast Forward and Append to an existing log file will reduce the file space taken up, see Tools... dropdown from the module's application toolbar.

Solitaire

The module offers three ways to play solitaire games: simulating an opposed game using the conventional rules and two solo variants (GMT's [CDG Solo System](#) and Richard Borg's "[Power of Three](#)" rules). The Help dropdown menu includes rules for both special variants.

To start a solo game, create a game and connect as "Solitaire"; the default setup uses the CDG Solo System. This can be changed in Preferences...Game Options to "Power of Three". Alternatively, automatic Solo game start can be disabled. Switching to Solitaire from another role never starts a game. In the latter case, you can start a solo rules game by selecting your desired solo variant from the "Game Options" toolbar menu, shown here:



The solo variants use the GMT CDG Solo System player mats. Starting a solo variant automatically sets up the mats and deals initial hands for the game. Card play and drawing is automated through right-click commands and toolbar buttons. Cards are maintained in columns A-E per the rules for the solo variant in use. Cards should be kept separated and organised in the appropriate card column until played or discarded. For both normal and Epic format games, only one card is played per turn.

To play the CDG Solo System variant, at the start of each turn, roll the Fate Die in the active side's window; the result is displayed and designated cards are automatically revealed (e.g. result may require manual card flip(s)). End turn is performed as normal (button on main toolbar or press F12).



“Power of Three” uses the same mat. The heading is changed and cards are dealt / flipped in accordance with Power of Three rules; the Fate Roll is available but not required.



To adjust Command Size for Special Scenario Rules, use the Max Hand Size marker to the new command Size. The marker can be moved one space at a time. In CDG Solo System mode, this movement triggers the appropriate change to cards in hand.²

The “First Strike?” button is available in both solo modes and provides an alternative (unofficial) method of deciding on playing a First Strike card. The optional feature complements the standard solo rules with fog of war for attacks where the player wants to approximate the jeopardy of close combat in normal play. With this feature; play of the First Strike card is decided randomly and cannot be predicted from the opponent’s face up hand. When this action is selected, any *face up* First Strike is first returned to the draw deck and a replacement drawn before a First Strike is played if in hand.

Contact

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² Support for skipped card slot refills (as in Lake Trasimenus, Hellespont, Brindisi Raid and Phyle scenarios) approximates to the published rule, as no doubled-up card slot will be re-filled with a second card, rather than just specific slots. This avoids the need for special configuration and allows the rule to be applied to custom scenarios whenever required by a Command Size change.