

A small, stylized dragon head logo is positioned between the words 'DRAGONS' and 'OF'. It has a green body, yellow horns, and a red tongue.

DRAGONS
OF
ETCHINSTONE

Rulebook

Etchinstone, the last great nation under the wide reaches of Valorfall, is under grave threat of a kind no one saw coming. Four ancient dragons have seized control of pivotal strongholds in every direction--North, South, East and West. It's up to you, the strongest of the rare Ether Mages, to make the perilous quest to each of these strongholds, defeat the dragons, and bring peace back to
Etchinstone.

In Dragons of Etchinstone, you, the brave Ether Mage, must work your way through four Regions and a challenging final encounter against one of the four dragons. You'll use your Action cards to manage dangerous Journeys and formidable Enemies. Defeat them, and your reward is XP, which you can use to upgrade your action cards. Defeat or narrow victories against Journeys results in losing time, which may force you to face the dragon before you feel ready. Defeat or narrow victories against Enemies results in taking damage, which forces you to downgrade your Action cards and weakens your power.

Designer: Joe Klipfel

Players: 1

Playtime: 30 min

Components: 18 cards

HOW TO WIN

Defeat the Final Journey and the Dragon.

HOW TO LOSE

Lose to the Final Journey or get killed by the Dragon.

QUICK CONCEPTS

Deck - The stack of Action cards in your left hand.

Reference Card - The top card of the deck.

Unused Card - The leftover card you did not play this turn.

Discard - Discarding a card means moving it to the back of the deck.

ACTION CARD ANATOMY



- A. Card level
- B. Card name
- C. Upgrade cost
- D. Initiative value
- E. Boost value
- F. Neutral Action

- G. Ether Action (this is a Red Ether Action)
- H. Armor value (this card has 1 Neutral Armor)
- I. Encounter icon and value
- J. Circumstance (this card doesn't have one)

REGION CARD ANATOMY



- A. Region Number (1-4)
- B. Region Name
- C. Enemy HP
- D. Enemy Ability (this is a Ranged enemy)
- E. Enemy Initiative
- F. Enemy Attack
- G. Enemy Armor
- H. Enemy XP reward
- I. Journey XP reward
- J. Journey MP
- K. Journey Time Penalty
- L. Journey Peril (this is a Steep journey)

SETUP

1. Orient all action cards to Level 2 and shuffle them. This is the **deck**.
2. Choose which dragon you want to face. Orient the Final Encounter card so this dragon is on top and place it in the back of the deck.
3. Orient the Region card to the first Region and place it behind the Final Encounter card so that half of card sticks out the top of the deck.

NOTE: After you complete Region 4, you'll set up for the Final Encounter instead. Position the Final Encounter card behind the Region card, with your chosen dragon opponent sticking out the top.

Etchinstone is played in two **Eras**, the **Region Era** and the **Dragon Era**. There are 4 Regions to play through, and 1 dragon.

REGION ERA

The Region Era is broken into 4 Regions. In each Region, you'll make your way through the deck once. A Region is made up of **Encounters**. An Encounter is a challenge that shows up that you must play cards from your hand to deal with. There are two types of Encounters, **Journeys** and **Enemies**. Both are composed of similar **Phases**.

Before your first encounter in each Region, draw 4 cards from the top of the deck into your right hand.

ENCOUNTER PHASES

1. Challenge Phase
2. Action Phase
3. Penalty Phase
4. Upgrade Phase
5. Cleanup Phase

1. Challenge Phase

After drawing up your hand, look at the Encounter icon of the Reference card. It tells you whether you face an Enemy () or a Journey (). The number next to the icon tells you which of the 4 Enemies/Journeys you will face, counting from left to right.

Circumstances

Check the Circumstance area on the Reference card. Circumstances, if present, modify the current encounter in some way.

Journey circumstances:

 **Night Travel** - Reduce your booster by your Initiative (to a minimum of zero).

 **Storm** - Take as much damage as you do time penalty this encounter.

Enemy circumstances:



Hazardous Environment - Lose 1 time every time you take damage this combat. This could be up to twice—once for Initial Damage and once for Combat Damage.



Ambush - If you take Initial damage, take 2x Initial damage.

Go Another Way (Optional)

At the end of the Challenge Phase, before moving to the Action Phase, you may optionally choose to Go Another Way. This involves 2 steps.

Step 1: Discard one card of your choice from your hand.

Step 2: Discard the Reference card.

After these steps, DO NOT draw another card to refill your hand to 4 cards. You must instead play the next encounter with a 3-card hand.

You may optionally choose to Go Another Way once more before moving to the Action Phase. Note that this brings you down to a 2-card hand. You must choose one of your cards to be the Leader. The other card can be either a booster or an element. If you choose it to be the booster, you do not have an element and must resolve the Neutral action of the Leader (and your base Initiative is zero).

There is no limit to how many times you can Go Another Way in a given Region. You are, however, limited to only Going Another Way twice during each Challenge Phase.

2. ACTION PHASE

In the Action phase, you play cards from your hand and then calculate the results of the current encounter. We'll talk about playing cards first, and then move to how to calculate the results of the encounter.

Action Sets

The 3 cards you play during an encounter are collectively called an **Action Set**. Each card is used for a different role: the **Leader**, the **Element** and the **Booster**. The 4th card in your hand is the Unused Card.

The **Leader** determines which Action you play for the encounter. There are two Actions on each Action Card, a **Neutral Action** and an **Ether Action**. The Ether Action is typically a more powerful version of the Neutral Action. If the color of the Element in your Action Set matches the color of the Ether Action of your Leader, you **must** resolve the Ether Action. If the Element's color does not match the Leader's Ether Action's color, you **must** resolve the Neutral Action.

Actions are one of two types: **Move** () or **Attack** (). Move is used against Journeys and Attack is used against Enemies. Some Actions have a "/" with both the Move and Attack icons, which means you may choose which type of action to resolve. *You may always choose to play a Move or an Attack Action for its opposite action type as a value of 1.*

The **Element** card determines two things for the Encounter: the element infused, and your **Initiative** (). The element infused is the color of the Element card's background. As explained above, this color determines whether you resolve the Neutral or Ether Action on the Leader.

Your Initiative for the encounter is the initiative value on your chosen Element card. In Enemy encounters, you'll compare your Initiative to the Enemy's. Higher initiatives are faster. If the Enemy's initiative is faster than your initiative, you must take its **Initial Damage**. Initial Damage is equal to the enemy's attack value (enemy damage is totaled and saved until the Penalty Phase). If you tie Initiative with the enemy, you win Initiative. You may or may not need to also add Combat Damage (explained later) to your total damage taken.

Finally, choose one card to be the **Booster**. You'll use the Booster's Boost Value to increase either your Action or your Initiative. For example, if your Booster's Boost Value is 3, you could either choose to increase your Action from 5 Move to 8 Move, or increase your Initiative from 7 to 10. Boosters don't care what color the element is or what type of Action you played.

Calculating Encounter Results

For Enemy Encounters

If you lost initiative, you must take Initial Damage. Mentally add the monster's attack value to the total damage you must take for the encounter. No need if you won Initiative.

Enemy Armor

Before comparing your Attack to the Enemy's HP (), subtract any applicable Armor () the enemy has from your Attack. Most enemies have Armor of at least one color. Only Armor of the same color as your Ether Attack reduces your attack (neutral attacks are unaffected by armor).

Enemy Encounter Outcomes

Next, compare your net Attack with the enemy's HP. There are 3 possible outcomes.

1. Complete Victory. If your Attack meets or exceeds the enemy's HP, collect the enemy's XP () without taking Combat Damage.

2. Narrow Victory. If your Attack is equal to or greater than half the enemy's HP rounded up, but less than their total HP, you still collect the enemy's XP reward (), but you must also take **Combat Damage**. Combat Damage is equal to the enemy's attack value.

3. Loss. This is when your Attack is less than half the enemy's HP rounded up. You do not get to collect the enemy's XP, and you must also take **Combat Damage**.

Enemy Abilities

Some enemies have extra icons below their HP. These are enemy abilities. They have different effects on the encounter.



Poison - For each time you take damage in the combat, you must take 1 damage into your next hand immediately after drawing it. If there were not enough cards left in the deck for another encounter this region, take the poison damage into your current hand instead of the next one.



Ranged - Ranged enemies deal their initial damage automatically, regardless of if you won initiative. You may, however, ignore the Ranged ability if you choose to discard the Unused Card this encounter. Note that you do not have to discard this card until the Cleanup Phase.



Slow - You can use Move Actions against slow enemies as if they were Attack Actions.



Freeze - If enemies with the Freeze ability deal initial damage to you, you must discard the Unused Card after the encounter.

For Journey Encounters



Journeys have MP (Move Points) () instead of HP, but MP functions pretty much the same as HP. MP is the number value you are trying to beat with your Move Action in order to complete the Journey. Initiative does not matter when facing Journeys.

If you fail against Journeys, you don't take damage. Instead, you must **lose time**. Losing time means discarding cards from the top of the deck.

Journey Encounter Outcomes

Compare your total Move with the journey's MP. There are 3 possible outcomes.

1. Complete Victory. If your Move meets or exceeds the journey's MP, collect the journey's XP () without losing time.

2. Narrow Victory. If your Move is equal to or greater than half the journey's MP rounded up but less than its total MP, you still collect the journey's XP, but you must also lose time equal to the Journey's time penalty ()

3. Loss. If your Move is less than half the journey's MP rounded up, you do not get to collect the journey's XP, and you must also take its time penalty.

Journey Bonuses

Journey MP icons () are each one of the 4 colors. If you play an Ether Move that is the same color as the journey's MP icon, you get a bonus: You can add the Boost Value of the Unused Card to your Move value. So essentially you get two Boosters if you use the right Move Action color. Neutral Move Actions do not give journey bonuses.

Journey Perils

Some Journeys have Perils that make them more challenging. Perils are represented by extra icons underneath the Journey's XP.



Steep - Increase the MP of Steep journeys by the Boost Value of the Unused Card.



Treacherous - If you fail to attain a Complete Victory against Treacherous journeys, take 1 damage in addition to its time penalty.

Fuse Cards (Optional)

In either type of encounter, you can optionally choose to Fuse 2 cards to create a new card with a different background color. Only cards with matching background colors may be fused together. To fuse cards, choose two cards of the same background color. Slide one of these cards behind the other. The one you slid behind, the bottom card, essentially disappears. It is still in your hand but is not the Unused Card. The top of the two cards is still active and maintains all its action values, etc., but you may choose a new background color for it. Typically a Fused card is used as the Element to get an Element color that is more useful for you.

You may only Fuse cards once per Encounter. In the Cleanup Phase, when you discard cards, you must discard both the Fused cards. In other words, you discard all 4 cards from your hand if you Fused cards during the Encounter.

3. PENALTY PHASE

After calculating the results of the current encounter, move to the Penalty Phase. This is where you must resolve any damage or time penalties you sustained during the encounter.

Resolving Damage

You must **downgrade** Action Cards to take damage. Downgrading cards means rotating or flipping the card to make it one level lower. You must downgrade cards that are in your hand. You can choose from among any of the 4 cards in your hand, not just the 3 you used for your Action Set. **You can only downgrade each card once when taking damage.** You could not, for example, downgrade a card from level 3 to level 2, and then again from level 2 to level 1 in the same encounter.

Action Card Armor

All action cards have an **armor value** and **armor type** in the upper right portion of the card. The armor value tells you how much damage the card soaks up when it is downgraded. *For example, if after an enemy encounter you must take 2 damage, downgrading a card with 2 armor soaks up all 2 of the damage, so you do not need to downgrade any additional cards.*

All Action Card Armor is of a certain type. It may be one of the 4 colors or Neutral (black). Neutral armor is straightforward. No matter what type of damage it is soaking, it is able to soak damage equal to its value. Color armor has advantages against damage of its own color. Color armor can soak twice as much damage of its own color as other colors. Color armor acts like Neutral armor for off-color attacks.

For example, say you are facing an enemy that has a Blue attack type, and you end up taking 4 damage. Now comes the Penalty Phase when you must resolve this damage. You have in your hand an Action Card with 2 Blue armor. Great! Because the armor is blue, it can soak up twice as much damage against blue attacks, so it can soak all 4 of that blue damage from the enemy. You downgrade the card and all of the damage has been resolved.

Sometimes it will be necessary to spread damage across multiple cards. You can choose to do this if you want to, too. For example, you might have a level 4 card that you worked hard to upgrade and want to avoid downgrading if possible. Even though this card might be able to soak up all the necessary damage with 1 downgrade, you might choose to downgrade two other cards that have lesser armor values instead.

Even if a card could soak more damage than is applied to it, you still must downgrade the card. For example, if you must take 1 yellow damage and you apply that to a card with 2 yellow armor, you must still downgrade that card, even though it could have soaked a lot more yellow attack if needed.

Level 1 cards cannot be downgraded (1 is the lowest level), but they can still soak damage—if you are willing to **trash** the card. If you assign damage to a level 1 card, you must trash it, meaning remove it from the game for the rest of the game. Put trashed cards between the Region card and Final Encounter card to separate them from the rest of the deck.

Remember, you cannot downgrade a card more than once in the penalty phase. If you cannot soak all the damage

necessary with the 4 cards in your hand, you are **knocked out**. When knocked out, you must downgrade all 4 of your cards and discard them. In addition, you must lose a turn. This means before drawing your next hand, you must discard 4 cards from the top of the deck. Then you can proceed as normal.

Resolving Time Penalties

Time penalties are simpler to resolve than damage. If you must take a journey's time penalty, discard X cards from the top of the deck, where X equals the value of the journey's time penalty.

If you must take a time penalty but ran out of cards in the deck to discard, take 1 damage into the cards currently in your hand for every 1 time penalty you could not take.

4. UPGRADE PHASE

If you earned any XP during an encounter, you get to spend it to upgrade Action Cards (increase their level) during the Upgrade Phase. You can only upgrade cards that are in your hand. The upgrade cost of an Action Card is located on the upper left portion of the card, along with an icon telling you whether to flip or rotate the card to upgrade it.

For example, say you earned 4 XP from an encounter. You have a level 2 Action Card you want to upgrade to level 3. You look at the upgrade cost in the upper left of the card and see it is 3 XP. You decide to spend the XP and flip the card to level 3.

Unlike downgrading, there is no limit to how many times you can upgrade a single card after an encounter. You could take a

card all the way from level 1 to level 4 if you had enough XP. You can distribute XP how you want.

IMPORTANT: You cannot upgrade cards that you downgraded during the Penalty Phase. So if you have a particular card you want to spend your XP on, make sure you assign damage to cards other than that one during the Penalty Phase.

It is legal to upgrade the Unused Card as long as it follows the rule that it had not been downgraded in the Penalty Phase.

5. CLEANUP PHASE

There are two steps in the cleanup phase.

1. Discard your Action Set.

Unless you must discard your unused card from some effect like Freeze or Ranged, you only have to discard the 3 cards used in your Action Set after an encounter. The Unused Card remains in your hand and is one of the 4 cards for your next hand.

2. Draw your next hand.

Typically, this means drawing 3 cards to create a hand of 4, since you keep the Unused Card from last round in your hand. If you for some reason had to discard your entire hand after the last encounter, draw 4 cards to get to a hand of 4.

After the Cleanup Phase, start again at the Challenge Phase and repeat until you reach End of Region.

END OF REGION

When during the Cleanup Phase you draw up your hand and there are not enough cards to complete another encounter, it is the end of the current Region. Even if you were able to draw up to a hand of 4 cards, if there is not a card left on top of the deck to be the Reference card, it's still the end of the region.

Flip or rotate the Region card to progress to the next Region. Shuffle your action cards, careful to keep them oriented the same way they are currently so you don't change which level your cards are on. Put the Final Encounter card in back and the Region card behind it, sticking out the top so the encounters are visible. Draw your starting hand of 4 cards and proceed with the Encounter Phases once again.

When you get to the end of Region 4, the Region Era is complete. Move to the Dragon Era (see next page).

THE DRAGON ERA

DRAGON CARD ANATOMY



A. Dragon name

B. Final Journey MP. There are 3 MP tiers. This is the lowest MP tier.

C. Final Journey Time Penalty. This is the highest tier's Time Penalty.

D. Final Enemy Initiative, Initial Damage, and Armor. This dragon has both Gray and Blue Armor.

E. Final Enemy HP. There are 3 HP tiers. This is the lowest-tier HP.

F. Final Enemy Combat Damage. This is the lowest tier's combat damage.

SETUP

Setup for the Dragon Era is similar to setting up for a Region. Shuffle your Action Cards, ensuring you don't accidentally change the orientation of any cards so they stay on their current levels. Then place the Region card in back and place

the Final Encounter behind it, with your chosen dragon sticking out the top.

The Dragon Era is completed in two steps. You must face a Final Journey, and then the Final Enemy. These are found on the Final Encounter. You can ignore the Encounter Icon on the Reference card for the Dragon Era.

STEP 1: THE FINAL JOURNEY

After setting up for the Dragon Era, draw a hand of 7 cards off the top of the deck. Look at the top portion of the Dragon Card to see the 3 MP tiers (lowest to highest from left to right). Each tier has an MP value and an associated time penalty value.

Use your 7 cards to create two Action Sets of 3 cards each (you will have 1 Unused Card). Then add the Move generated from your two Action Sets together, and compare the grand total to the MP values of the Final Journey's MP tiers.

Based on which MP tier you are able to reach, you must take the associated time penalty. You will always take some amount of time penalty, even if you are able to generate enough Move to reach the highest MP tier. If you are not able to reach the MP value of the lowest MP tier, you lose the game immediately. You do not get to move on to the Final Enemy.

If you use an Ether Move in either of your Action Sets that is the same color as the Final Journey's MP icon, you still get the Journey Bonus. But you may only get 1 Journey Bonus in the Final Journey, even if the color of both your Actions matches.

Find which MP tier you reached and look at its corresponding Time Penalty. Discard that many cards from the top of the

deck. After discarding all 7 cards from your hand, move on to the Final Enemy step.

Regroup (Optional)

After drawing your 7-card hand for the Final Journey, you may optionally choose to Regroup before proceeding. Regrouping involves two steps.

Step 1: Discard one card from your hand.

Step 2: Shuffle the remaining cards from your hand and put them to the back of the deck, behind all other Action Cards but in front of the Region and Final Encounter cards.

After completing those two steps, once again draw up a hand of 7 cards from the top of the deck for the Final Journey and proceed with the normal sequence for completing the Final Journey. You may only Regroup once per game.

STEP 2: THE FINAL ENEMY

To prepare for the Final Enemy, draw all remaining cards in the deck into your hand. This should give you a hand ranging from 5 to 8 cards, depending on how well you did against the Final Journey (and whether you Regrouped). The Final Enemy works pretty similar to the Final Journey.

Use your final hand of cards to create two Action Sets to attack the Final Enemy. If you have just 5 cards in your hand, you must still create two Action Sets, but one of them must go without a Booster or Element. If you have 7 or 8 cards in your hand, you will have one or more Unused Cards.

Add the Attack values from your two Action Sets together to get a grand total Attack. Also add the initiative values of your two Action Sets together to get a grand total Initiative. As with Region enemy encounters, you can choose to use an Action Set's Booster to increase either the Action Set's Initiative or its Action value.

Unlike enemy encounters in the Region Era, the Dragon has a special Initial Damage value. This is found on the Dragon's image, along with its Initiative and Armor values. If you lose Initiative to the dragon, you must take its Initial Damage, but as with Region encounters, you do not take this damage immediately; save it until the end to total it up with any Combat Damage you must take.

If the dragon has Armor of the same color as an Ether Attack, you only need to subtract the armor for each unique color of Attack you do. For example, if the Dragon has Red Armor, and both your Action Sets produced Red Ether Attacks, you only must subtract the dragon's Red Armor once from your total attack. If, however, the dragon has both Red and Blue Armor, and your two Action Sets produced one Red and one Blue Ether Attack, you'd have to subtract the dragon's armor from each attack respectively.

Once you have determined if you must take the dragon's Initial Damage and have found your net Attack (by subtracting the dragon's applicable armor), you are ready to see which HP tier you have achieved. There are 3 tiers of HP for the dragon, each with an associated Attack value. Depending on which HP tier you are able to achieve, you must take the associated damage. Every tier has at least some damage you must take, even if you

complete the highest HP tier. The more Attack you are able to deal against the dragon, the less damage you will have to take.

Now take the total damage it into your hand (Combat Damage plus Initial Damage if necessary). You are allowed to use all cards in your hand to soak the damage, even if you have a 7-card hand. As with other encounters, you are only allowed to downgrade each Action Card once.

If you are able to soak all the damage you need to from the dragon without getting knocked out, you win the game! If you have downgraded all the cards in your hand and would still have had to take more damage, you lose the game. It was a valiant effort to make it this far. But yeah, Etchinstone is doomed. Try not to beat yourself up about it.

NOTE: You may Fuse cards during the Final Encounters, but only once per encounter.

SCORING

You can play Dragons of Etchinstone as simply a win-or-lose game, but if you want to tally up your score you can. You only score if you are able to win. If you lose, your score is 0.

After soaking all the necessary damage from the Dragon, add up the value of the levels of all your Action Cards (e.g., a level 3 card is 3 points). This total is your final score.

DIFFICULTY SETTINGS

For an easier or more challenging game, try the following adjustments. After setting all Action Cards to level 2 and shuffling the deck, but before starting the game, draw the top 5 cards. Then complete the following instructions for different difficulty levels. After that, shuffle the deck once more and begin the game as normal.

Casual - Choose 4 of the cards to upgrade to level 3.

Easy - Choose 2 of the cards to upgrade to level 3.

Normal - No changes. Keep all cards on level 2.

Hard - Choose 2 cards to downgrade to level 1.

Impossible - Downgrade all 5 cards to level 1.

Don't Even Try It – Draw 7 cards instead and downgrade all to level 1.

VARIANTS

Play with one or both of these variants for a greater challenge.

1) **Cavalier** – You may not fuse cards.

2) **Glass Cannon** – Color armor provides just +1 armor for the corresponding color rather than double the armor value.

CREDITS

Thank you to game-icons.net for providing iconography.