



- 2 players
- 30 to 45 minutes
- Ages 10 and up

Greetings! And a warm welcome to Ortus.

One hopes to find you reading this with the beautiful gameboard set up in front of you, a good friend closeby and an eagerness to start.

Sitting down for a game, you and your friend fill the seats of two celebrated warriors. Both Lord now to one of the two ruling Houses and bitter rival of the only person you can call your equal. Each other.

For decades your lives have been closely matched. Seemingly mirrored careers that through struggle and sacrifice have led you both to hold the highest considerable position of power and status. But the ambition that brought you this far will not allow you to sit idle, not as long as your position in this world is still shared.

Having challenged your lifelong rival to a stand off, you lead a band of handpicked warriors to the fabled arena of Ortus, The World's Core. This landmark is believed to have held the very essence that created this world. Here lies the source of the first raging energies that fed the prime elements, from the shaping Waters and guiding Winds to the crafting Fires and nurturing Earth. It is here that the world found its origin. What better place to meet?

Whether the legend holds any truth or not, it cannot be denied that the very ground around The World's Core is teeming with raw energy. It is this energy you must harness and wield to your purpose.

Through your warriors you will strive to best your opponent. Deeply disciplined in one of the elements, from the elusive Winds and twin Fires to the ungraspable Earth and fatal Waters, each warrior takes in the surrounding energy and channels it to fuel their unique strengths.

In this hour the balance of power will finally be upset. Make it in your favor.



## Choose your experience



Ortus can be played in several ways. Before you start, agree with your opponent on:

**Arena.** Decide which arena (side of the board) to play on. For your first game use the same Arena as is used in this rulebook.

**Level.** Newcomers are recommended to play the Apprentice game. More experienced players can start to sink their teeth into the Master game.

**Clean or Dickey?** Ortus can be played clean, without a luck factor. To add some luck, use the dice to determine Attack Power (see variants for more information).

**Handicap.** Experienced player vs novice? Level the playing field by using the Handicap track (see variants).

**Other.** See the variants page for more ways to change your game.

# APPRENTICE GAME

In these first pages you will learn everything you need to know to be able to play Ortus. Once you have a grip on the game's basics and you want to explore it further, you can learn the special rules for each Element in the Master game. Of course, nobody can stop you from diving right in and learning the entire game from the get-go.

## Setup & Components

**Divide the pieces** into the two Houses, Gold and Black. Both players pick a House and place the 8 warriors on their Haven in an order of their choice. In the Apprentice Game, Earth (green) and Water warriors (blue) can both charge. The Wind (yellow) and Fire warriors (red) have a ranged attack, so it is good to mix these up a bit. If this is your first game, you can use the setup shown below.

**Decide by chance who is the starting player.** He places an Energy Marker on the 7 of his Energy track. His opponent places the marker on 14.

**Place the Guides** next to the board and you are ready to start!

### Board anatomy:



Setup where Black is the starting player

### Components:



## Overview

In Ortus, two players fight for the control of Energy Wells. Their warriors, starting in the safety of the Haven, will need to be maneuvered to seize control of these Wells which in turn will provide them with the Energy needed to take positions on the Arena, engage opposing warriors and resist incoming attacks.

### Goal

The first player to take 5 Wells and hold them until the start of his turn will win the game. A second path to victory is leading your Guide to the Core by gaining enough honour. Honour is earned by defeating opposing warriors.

### Rounds

Ortus is played in rounds. A Round has 4 phases:

1. **Collecting** Start your turn collecting Energy.
2. **Maneuvering** Spend a part of this Energy maneuvering your warriors.
3. **Returning** End your turn by returning fallen warriors (the Fallen) to your Haven or Guide.
4. **Defending** Use the Energy remaining from your turn to defend against your opponent's attacks.

## Phase 1. Collecting

At the start of your turn, count how many of your warriors occupy an Energy Well. With no Wells occupied, you will start the round with the basic 14 Energy. For each Well you occupy, advance the Energy marker one glowing tile farther. One Well occupied yields 18 Energy, 2 Wells yield 22 Energy etc.

**If you start your turn occupying 5 Energy Wells, you win the game.**

Remember, the starting player gets only 7 Energy for his first turn. Energy remaining from the previous round will be lost when you start a new turn.

Black starts his turn holding 2 Energy Wells. Placing his Marker on 22, he enters the Maneuvering phase.



## Phase 2. Maneuvering

A part of the collected Energy can now be used to maneuver your warriors. All your warriors on the board may move **once** this turn. Each warrior starting your turn on the Arena may also attack **once**.

The order in which you execute these actions is entirely up to you.

### Moving

To move a warrior, walk it to a free hex. Occupied hexes, the Core and your opponent's Haven are not free and may not be crossed. For every step it took to reach this hex, pay 1 energy by marking it on the Energy track.

There is no limit to the distance your warrior can cross, as long as you have the Energy to pay for it.

### Attacking

Each warrior that starts the turn on the Arena can attack once. Warriors starting in the Haven this turn can not yet attack, only move. All opposing warriors on the Arena can be targeted, but they are safe in the Haven.

When attacking, you spend Energy to cross the distance between your warrior and its target. Every type of attack has its own Power. If you play Ortus Clean the attack Powers (AP) are fixed. When playing Ortus Dicey the die roll determines AP. All examples below are from Ortus Clean.

After every attack, the defending player has a chance to save the targeted warrior by paying Energy equal to the attack's Power. If the defender cannot or will not pay this, the targeted warrior falls and is placed next to the board. This warrior becomes a Fallen.

Warriors can never perform a Charge or Ranged attack on a warrior standing directly adjacent to them. If there is no empty hex between this warrior and its target, it can only Strike.

Black moves his Wind warrior 5 steps, out of the Haven and onto a Well. He pays 5 Energy by marking it on the Energy track. This warrior will be able to attack in Black's next turn.

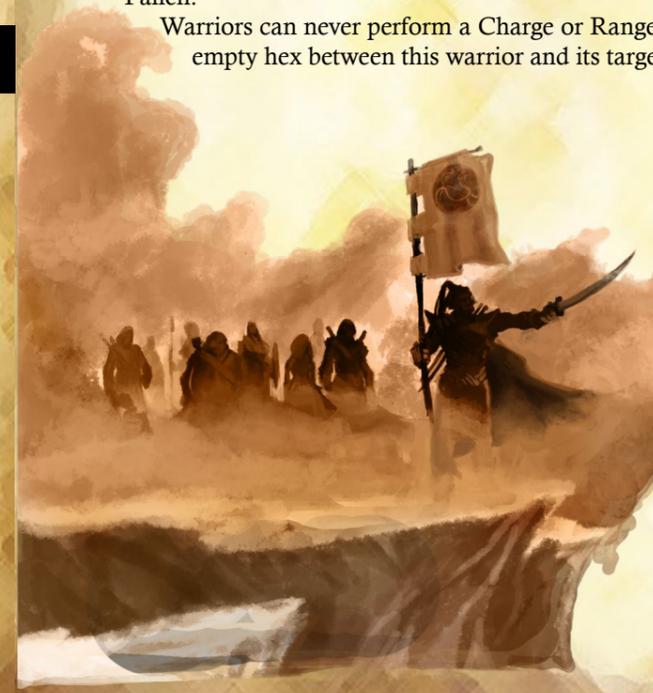


### Charge. Water and Earth warriors (5 AP or )

Charging consumes a warrior's move and attack in one action. Take a Water or Earth warrior on the Arena and move it next to its target. Pay 1 energy for every step.

Charging has a Power of 5, meaning the defending player has to pay 5 Energy to keep the targeted warrior on the board.

Black moves his Earth warrior next to Gold's Fire and pays 3 Energy. Gold must now pay 5 Energy to resist the attack or remove her warrior from the board. This Earth warrior cannot do anything else this turn.



**Range.** Fire and Wind warriors (4 AP or )

Indicate a Wind or Fire warrior, followed by its target. Pay 1 Energy for each empty hex between the two, plus 1 for the hex occupied by the target. These attacks may not cross occupied hexes or the Core, but may go around them. Ranged attacks have a Power of 4.

Since this does not require the warrior itself to move, it may do so before or after this attack. Between moving and attacking other actions, by other warriors, may be performed.

Black's Wind attacks Gold's Earth, paying 3 Energy. Gold can save her Earth warrior by paying 4 Energy. If she doesn't or can't, Earth falls and is removed from the board.



**Strike.** All warriors (3 AP or )

If any warrior starts your turn standing next to an opposing warrior, it may use its attack to Strike. Indicate the warrior and the neighbour it attacks. This costs no Energy and has a Power of 3.



Black's Fire uses its attack to strike Gold's Water and pays no Energy. Gold can pay 3 Energy to save her warrior.

### Honour & the Guide

Every time your opponent removes one of his warrior from the Arena you gain 1 honour. When you gain honour for the first time, place your Guide on any hex of the Haven. For every following honour you earn, move your Guide one step closer to the Core. **When your Guide reaches the Core you directly win the game.** The Guide does not occupy a hex, so it can be crossed over or moved on.



### Phase 3. Returning

End your turn when you want to stop spending Energy on maneuvering. All your Fallen (warriors placed next to the Arena) can now be placed back on the free hexes of your Haven. One of your Fallen may be placed on your Guide, provided it's unoccupied. If a Fallen is placed on the Arena this way, it may attack on your next turn.

### Phase 4. Defending

In your opponent's turn, use the Energy you did not spend in your own turn to defend. Every time your opponent attacks one of your warriors, decide if you block it by paying the appropriate amount of Energy (= the attack's Power) or let it fall and remove it from the Arena.

# MASTER GAME

Once you have played enough Apprentice games to make you feel comfortable with the concept and tactics behind Ortus, you might try taking it a step further by learning the Master rules. Here, every warrior has its own unique character, reflected in the element they are schooled in. Positioning becomes far more important with the introduction of Hexlines, your initial setup in the Haven becomes more strategic and the order in which you execute your attacks must be well thought of. Study the aspects of each element, its strengths and weaknesses and put them to their ultimate use to best your opponent.

### Option

For a gentle introduction to the Master game, you can start by only applying the rules for the Wind warriors and keep the rest as in the Apprentice game. After that you can add the rules for Earth, followed by Water and finally Fire.

In the Master Game, Wind warriors cannot move as in the Apprentice game anymore. Earth, Water and Fire warriors cannot attack as in the Apprentice game anymore.

### Hexlines

In the Master game, all warriors will use Hexlines in different ways for their unique skills. A Hexline is a straight, uninterrupted line between two warriors on the Arena. Hexlines are interrupted by the Core and other warriors, but not by the Guides. Warriors directly neighbouring each other also share a Hexline.

### Defending abilities



Earth and Fire warriors have abilities that are effective during the defending phase. These abilities also use Hexlines, so they are dependent on the position of warriors on the Arena. After every action (move or attack) a situation might change which could result in the loss or gain of these effects. First resolve the action, then see if the passive abilities are affected and move on.

Example: Black's Fire warrior has a Hexline with Black's Wind and Gold's Water warrior. It shares no Hexline with Black's Earth or Water or with Gold's Wind warrior.



# WIND



*'Be wary of those whom have studied the paths of the Wind my son.  
One never knows where the next blow will fall.*

*It's the feeling of an incoming storm. A breath, a rustle, a blow and gone.'*

When using the Wind warrior rules, the starting player may only bring one Wind warrior to the Arena on his first turn.

### Path of the Kite (move)

Wind warriors cannot move as in the Apprentice Game. Instead, they can do a Path of the Kite **once** per turn. To move a Wind warrior, place it at the end of any of its current hexlines where it is stopped by the edge of the Arena, the Core, another warrior or the Haven. Wind warriors cannot stop on any hex on the way. This move costs no Energy.

Path of the Kite also applies to Wind warriors starting in the Haven.



Black can move this Wind warrior to any of the hexes indicated in yellow.

### Road of the Storm (4 AP or )

A ranged attack as in the Apprentice game. Can be done before or after Path of the Kite. Indicate your Wind warrior followed by its target. Pay 1 Energy for each hex from the Wind warrior to its target. This attack has a Power of 4.



# EARTH



*'Only those that have the fullest understanding of Earth's secrets can extract themselves from enemy eyes. Only those with the deepest respect for the raw powers that shaped the mountains can achieve such mighty fist.'*

## Stepping Jaguar (defending phase)

Earth warriors on the Arena are normally covered. While covered, they cannot be the target of any attack (also not by other Earth warriors). Earth warriors reveal opposing Earth warriors when there is a direct Hexline between them. When revealed, all warriors can target the Earth warrior again.

A charge on a revealed Earth warrior may end up blocking the revealing Hexline. If this happens, resolve the charge as normal. If the Earth warrior survives the attack, he is once again covered.



## Raging Bear (6 AP or )

Charge a target with a Power of 6 and pay 2 Energy per hex traveled. Earth warriors still pay 1 Energy per hex for normal movement.



Black spends 8 Energy to charge Gold's Water for 6 AP. He could not attack Gold's Earth because it was covered. Gold decides to save her Water warrior (pays 6 Energy).



By having placed the Earth warrior here, it forms a Hexline with Gold's Earth warrior, revealing it. Black's Wind warrior still has an attack for this turn and could now target Gold's Earth.

# WATER



*'Quiet surface. Patience shows no ripples. Tranquil as the streams that guide me. Then, to strike with the weight of an ocean, drown in my might.'*

## Flow of Crashing Waves (5 → 3 → 1 AP or )

Charge a warrior with a Power of 5. Is the attack blocked? Then Wave stops. If the target falls however, the attack continues in the same direction. If by removing the first target a Hexline opens to a second opposing warrior, it is attacked at range with a Power of 3. This is repeated to a third victim if the second warrior also falls. The Power of the last attack is 1.



Black's Water warrior charges Gold's Fire with a Power of 5.



Gold removes this Fire warrior (breaking the Phoenix on Earth. See; Fire). Now Gold's Earth is attacked at range with a Power of 3.

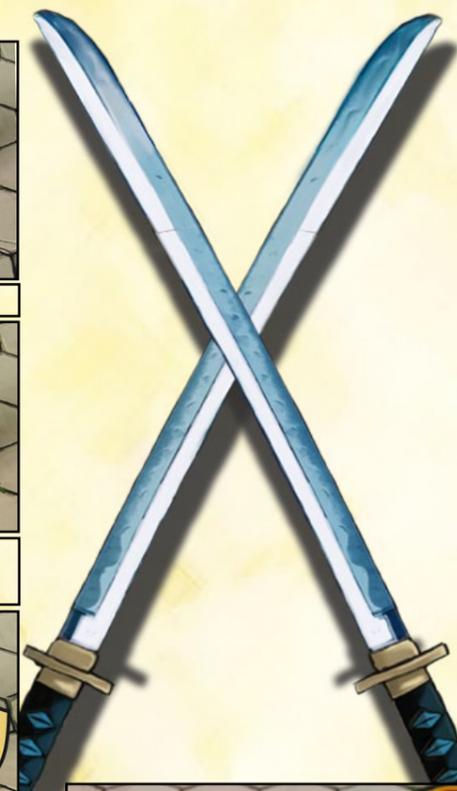


The Earth warrior also falls, so the last Fire is attacked for 1 Power.

## Strike of Six Streams (3 AP multiple or )

Target and charge an opposing warrior. All opposing warriors standing next to Water after this charge are attacked with a Power of 3. The defending player can decide which warrior to save individually.

Notice that a covered Earth warrior can still be victim to each of these attacks as long as it is not the initial target.



Black's Water takes 4 steps to charge Gold's Fire. The Gold player now decides the fate of her Earth, Fire and Water warrior individually.



# FIRE

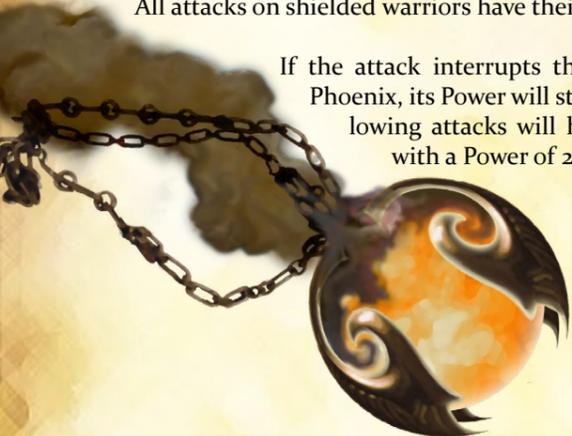
*'Sister Flame, find my prayer.  
Shield our brethren.  
Brother Fire, standing with me. Cleanse our foes.  
In their ashes our glory'*

## The Phoenix (defending phase)

While defending, your warriors that share a Hexline with both your Fire warriors are shielded. Also, when your Fire Warriors share a Hexline between themselves, they are shielded.

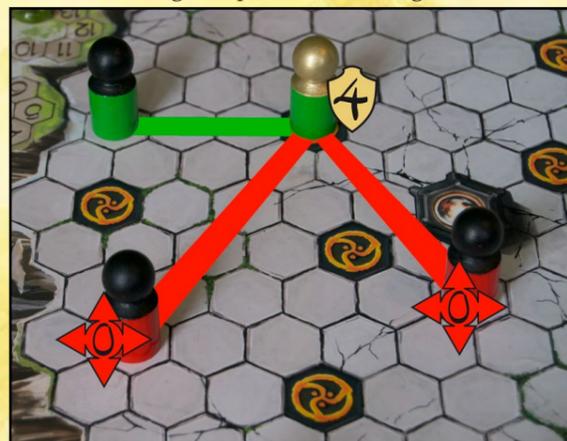
All attacks on shielded warriors have their Power reduced to 2.

If the attack interrupts the Hexline that forms the Phoenix, its Power will still be reduced to 2. Any following attacks will have a normal AP. Attacks with a Power of 2 or less will not change.



## The Dragons (4 or 5)

When both your Fire warriors have a hexline with the same opposing warrior, they can perform The Dragons. Indicate the target and declare the attack. Performing the Dragons costs no Energy and has a Power of 4. It spends the attack of both Fire warriors. Both Fire warriors need a distance of at least 1 empty hex from their target to perform this ranged attack.



Black moves the left Fire warrior 2 steps so that both his Fire warriors have a Hexline with Gold's Earth. This Earth is revealed by Black's Earth warrior.  
Black announces the attack and pays no energy. After this, the right Fire warrior may move still.  
If Black places it back one step a Phoenix is formed between both Fire Warriors, shielding them in the upcoming defence phase.



Black's Water warrior charges a Water of Gold. Because the Fire warriors formed a Phoenix with this Water warrior, Gold can block this attack for 2 Energy. The Phoenix Hexline is now broken, so a following attack on this Water warrior will have its full Power again.

## Variants

The following variants can change the game or simply alter one aspect. You can combine any or all rules as you so wish.

### Dicey Ortus

For the Apprentice game, use the dark blue (Charge), the light blue (Strike) and the yellow die (Ranged). After paying the Energy for the attack, roll the appropriate die. The number that is rolled is the attack's Power (AP). In the Apprentice Game, ignore the extra numbers and symbols, those are used in the Master Game.

Flow of Crashing Waves (dark blue die):



subtract from the AP of the previous target

AP on targeted warrior

Targeted warrior gets charged for 6 AP. If this warrior falls, the next warrior in the Hexline gets attacked for 3 (6 - 3).  
A third target would get an AP of 0.

Strike of Six Streams (light blue die):



AP on additional warriors

AP on targeted warrior

Targeted warrior gets charged for 4 AP. Every additional warrior adjacent to the Water warrior gets attacked for 2 AP.  
Always clearly state which warrior you target.

### Chess clock

Play with a chess clock. Tip: if you don't own one, there are a lot of chess clock apps for smartphones. Give each player 20 minutes (or whatever you can agree on). If a player runs out of time before any of the victory conditions are met, his opponent wins the game.

Tap the clock when:

- you end the Return phase and hand the turn over to your opponent.
- you have performed an attack (and paid the Energy).
- you have made the decision to block an attack or let a warrior fall (defense phase).

### Handicapping

When both players have a significant difference in skill, you can level the playing field by using the Handicap board provided. Place the Handicap board over the counting trail of the least experienced player. Start with the Handicap II board. If this player starts to win some games, you can flip the board over to Handicap I. Keep playing like this until both players are about equally skilled.

### Bid for first player

Decide by chance who is the first player. The player who would go second may claim first turn by lowering his starting Energy to any number below 7. After this, the first player has again a chance to take first turn by going lower than his opponent's bid. Continue until someone folds.

For instance: Adrian challenged Beau to a game. Beau 'won' first turn. Adrian thinks he has a better chance if he goes first so he claims 6 Energy. Beau does not want to give up first turn and claims 5 Energy. For Adrian, 4 Energy is too low, so he folds. Beau starts with 5 Energy and Adrian is second with 14 as normal.

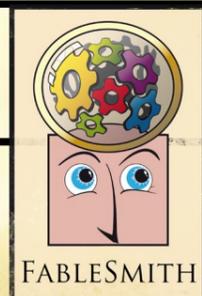
### Other Arena

Simply flip the board to reveal the alternative Arena to play on. The exact same rules apply here.

Game design by: Joost Das

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FABLESMITH

# Quick Rules Overview

## Apprentice Game

### Victory

Start your turn occupying 5 Energy Wells.  
Gain 8 honour and move your Guide to the Core.

### A round

#### Phase 1. Collecting Energy

Number of Wells your warriors occupy	Energy this round
0	14
1	18
2	22
3	25
4	28
5	victory

#### Phase 2. Maneuver your warriors

Pay 1 Energy for each hex travelled when moving, charging or ranged.

Warriors start the turn	Available action
in the Haven	one move
on the Arena	one move & one attack
as a Fallen	none

Attack Type	Note	Clean AP	Dacey AP
Charge	uses move and attack	5	
Range	can be done before or after move	4	
Strike	only when starting the turn next to the target.	3	

Charge or Range can only be performed on a target that is at least one hex seperated from the attacking warrior.

When your opponent does not block an attack, the target falls and you gain 1 honour.

#### Phase 3. Returning the Fallen (ends your turn)

Take all your Fallen and place them on the Haven or Guide.

### Guide

First honour: place the Guide on a hex of the Haven  
Next 7 honour: move the Guide towards the Core

#### Phase 4. Defend your warriors

Pay Energy (left from your own turn) equal to the Power of the incoming attacks to block and save your warriors.

Warriors that are not defended fall and are placed on the side of the arena. They become the Fallen.

## Master Game

Wind warriors cannot move as in the Apprentice game anymore.  
Earth, Water and Fire warriors cannot attack as in the Apprentice game.

### Hexline.

A straight line from one warrior to another warrior.

## Wind



The starting player may only move one Wind warrior on his first turn.

**Path of the Kite:** Move your Wind warrior to the end of one of his Hexlines (stopped by the Core, a Haven, warriors or the Arena's edge). This move costs no Energy.

**Storm's Road:** Ranged attack for 4 attack Power.

## Earth



**Stepping Jaguar:** Earth warriors cannot be targeted for an attack unless they are revealed by an opposing Earth warrior that has a direct hexline with him.

**Raging Bear:** Charge attack with an Power of 6. Pay 2 Energy per hex travelled when charging.

## Water



**Flow of Crashing waves:** Charge an opposing warrior for 5 AP. If the target falls, the attack continues in the same direction for 2 less AP.

**Strike of Six Streams:** Charge an opposing warrior for 3 AP.

All other warriors that are now adjacent to the Water warrior are also attacked for 3.

## Fire



**The Phoenix:** All warriors that both your Fire warriors have a hexline with (or both Fire warriors have a hexline with each other) are shielded by The Phoenix. Each attack initiated against shielded warriors has its AP reduced to 2.

**The Dragons:** Attack a warrior where both your Fire warriors have a hexline with. This attack costs no Energy and has a Power of 4.