



Initiative Break Basic Rules 1.0

Document contains only basic rule text for reference. All artwork, storyline, lore, character bios, maps etc.. are found in the print edition rulebook that comes with the Initiative Break Starter Set.

Copyright © 2026 Joshua Ross. All rights reserved. Initiative Break was conceived, designed, written, prototyped, and developed by Joshua Ross using a combination of traditional and digital creative tools, including graphic design software and AI-assisted artwork generation. All original lore, worldbuilding, fiction, gameplay systems, and written content contained within this publication are the intellectual property of Joshua Ross unless otherwise noted. Much of the game's design, iteration, and playtesting was carried out during an active military deployment aboard a warship, where long watches and steel corridors became the unlikely forge of its creation.

SECTION 1 — What Is Initiative Break?

Initiative Break is a fast-paced tactical combat card game inspired by JRPG battle systems. *It blends:*

- Interactive turn order manipulation
- Resource management
- Timing-based power spikes
- Cinematic Break Arts
- Installable Sigils that grant elemental abilities

The battlefield is not a grid or a map — it is the Initiative Track, a constantly shifting timeline where the order of actions determines everything. This is not a game about simply dealing damage. It is a game about when you act, not just what you do.

You will command a team of Characters, each equipped with a Keystone and a unique set of abilities. You'll build a deck of Techniques, Sigils, Events, and Support Characters to shape your strategy.

You can play:

- Player vs. Player competitive (1v1, 2v2 even 4v4 or an 8 player free-for-all)
- Solo against Challenge Cards
- Cooperative with multiple players vs Challenge Cards and merciless bosses

Every mode uses the same core rules!

SECTION 2 — Components

To play Initiative Break, each player assembles a team of characters and a deck. The battlefield is the Initiative Track: a line of all Characters in play showing their order of turns respective of each other. This isn't a static element, however, but the central concept of the game. In order to win you will need to interact with the Initiative Track, moving your Characters up in the order and your enemies back. Change the order and rewrite the fight.

You will need:

- 4 Character Cards (per player in PvP and solo; variable in coop and multiplayer)
- 4 Keystones (one assigned to each Character)
- A 32–40 card deck (including)
 - Sigil Cards
 - Technique Cards
 - Event Cards
 - Support Character Cards
- Challenge Cards (for solo/coop)
- Six-sided Die (for solo/coop and campaign)
- Tokens for Charge, Status Effects, and HP tracking

- The Round Marker

2.1 Character Cards

Each Character card represents a hero under your control. *Characters have:*

- Initiative (bolt) — determines how early they act
- Speed (feather) — determines how far they move after acting
- HP (heart) — their health
- Two Sigil Types — the elemental categories they can install
- Three attacks:
 - Basic Attack
 - Advanced Attack
 - Break Art

Characters are unique — you cannot include duplicates of the same Character (same name and title) on your team.

All Characters have a point value which is essentially an indication of their relative strength and utility. The point value is displayed as pips in the upper left corner of the card. When assembling a traditional 4 Character team, your total point value should not exceed 12 points.

2.2 Keystones

Before the game begins, each Character is assigned a Keystone. No two Characters on the same team may use the same Keystone. *A Keystone grants:*

- A passive ability that is always active
- A Sigil-type ability that can be used during the Character's activation

Keystones refine or change a Character's identity and playstyle, allowing you to customize your team's strategy.

2.3 Sigils

Sigils are elemental fragments installed into a Character's Keystone. Installing a Sigil takes one full activation and places the Sigil in play permanently (unless replaced). *Each Sigil grants:*

- A free "on install" usage of its Sigil Ability
- A repeatable Sigil Ability that can be used once per activation for its printed discard cost.

Characters may only install Sigils matching the two elemental affinities printed on their card. A Character may have up to 2 Sigils installed at a time. To install a new Sigil beyond this limit, you must discard an existing one.

Sigil types include:

- * Fire Sigils — Aggressive Sigils focused on direct damage, Burn effects, and explosive finishing power.
- * Water Sigils — Control-oriented Sigils that heal allies, manipulate Initiative, and disrupt enemy positioning.
- * Earth Sigils — Defensive Sigils that provide Guard,

durability, and battlefield stabilization.

* Arcane Sigils — Tactical Sigils that generate Charge, manipulate Status Effects, and enable advanced combinations.

* Wind Sigils — Unstable Sigils centered around Initiative disruption, movement effects, and chaotic battlefield manipulation.

2.4 Technique Cards

Techniques are powerful maneuvers that a Character can perform during their activation. They typically require discarding cards from your hand as an additional cost.

Techniques are typically stronger than Basic or Advanced Attacks and provide a lot of situational value. Many techniques allow for manipulation of the Initiative Track.

2.5 Support Characters

Support Characters are persistent allies who remain in play until defeated. *They have:*

- An on-play effect
- A passive effect
- An HP value

Support Characters can be targeted by attacks, Sigil Abilities, and card effects. If their HP reaches zero, they are discarded. You may only include one copy of each Support Character in your deck.

2.6 Event Cards

Events represent tactical maneuvers, battlefield shifts, or story-driven moments. They resolve immediately when played and are then discarded. Some Events have discard costs; others are free.

Event cards typically offer utility rather than damage and may interact with core game mechanics or status effects.

2.7 Deck Construction

A legal deck follows these rules:

- 32–40 cards for standard play
- No Character or Keystone cards (chosen separately)
- Max 2 copies of any Technique, Sigil or non-signature Event
- Max 1 copy of any Support Character
- Signature cards: max 1 copy
- Your 4 Characters may not exceed 12 total points (shown as hash marks on the card)

Deckbuilding is where you shape your strategy — aggressive, control-oriented, combo-focused, or reactive.

2.8 Hand & Draw Rules

- You draw 5 cards at the start of the game.
- You may take one mulligan, returning all cards to your

deck, shuffling, and drawing 5 new ones.

- Maximum hand size is 5.
 - If an effect would draw you past 5, you simply do not draw.
- At the start of each of your Character's activations, if you have fewer than 5 cards, draw 1 card.
- If you must draw and cannot, you lose the game.

You may discard a card as a free action during any of your Character's activations.

2.9 Setting Up the Battlefield

1. Each player reveals their 4 Characters.
2. Assign one Keystone to each Character.
3. Shuffle your deck.
4. Place all Characters (and Challenge Cards, if applicable) on the Initiative Track, ordered from lowest Initiative (left) to highest Initiative (right).
 - Ties are broken by Speed then by HP (lowest first).
 - If still tied, players decide by agreement.
5. Place the Round Marker at the far right of the track.
6. Draw your opening hand of 5 cards.
7. Take your mulligan if desired.

The leftmost Character is now the Active Character and will take the first turn.

SECTION 3 — YOUR FIRST GAME: TURN STRUCTURE & FLOW OF PLAY

Initiative Break is built around a simple rhythm: the leftmost Character acts, then moves right, and the next Character becomes active. Everything else — Charge, Sigils, Break Arts, timing windows — flows from this core loop.

This section walks you through what actually happens during a turn, how the Initiative Track shifts, and how the Round Marker accelerates the game.

3.1 The Initiative Track — The Battlefield of Time and Opportunity

The Initiative Track is a single line of positions stretching from left (acts first) to right (acts last). Characters and Challenge Cards are placed on it in order of Initiative, lowest to highest. The leftmost Character is always the Active Character and is said to be performing their activation.

After a Character completes their chosen action for their activation, they move right by a number of spaces equal to their Speed. Lower Speed means a faster Character (because they move fewer spaces away from the active character position and return to the far-left sooner).

Example: A Character with Speed 4 will act more frequently than a Character with Speed 8.

If a Character would move past the far right end of the track, they simply stop at the end.

Many of the game's most potent strategies rely on changing order characters are in on the Initiative Track.

3.2 The Activation Sequence

Every Character's turn follows the same six steps:

1. Status Check Step

Resolve any Status Effects affecting the Active Character. Burn deals damage. Stun skips the turn. Guard reduces incoming damage. Status Effects always resolve before anything else.

2. Start of Activation Window Step

Some abilities trigger here. If nothing triggers, proceed.

3. Draw Step

If you have fewer than 5 cards in hand, draw 1 card. If you must draw and cannot, you lose.

4. Action Step

The Active Character performs one action:

- Basic Attack
- Advanced Attack (pay 1 Charge)
- Break Art (if at 3 Charge)
- Play a Technique (discard cost varies)
- Play an Event (discard cost varies)
- Play a Support Character
- Install a Sigil
- Activate a Sigil (costs 1 Charge)
- Activate a Keystone Ability (counts as a Sigil and costs 1 Charge)
- Pass

This is the heart of the turn.

5. End of Activation Window Step

Some abilities trigger here.

6. Movement Step

The Character moves right by their Speed. This determines when they will act again.

3.3 Movement Step Explained

After completing their activation, a character will move back (to the right) on the Initiative Track equal to their Speed Stat.

Example: Kaede just finished her activation and will move back her speed, 4. Her new position is to the right of Alaric. Ember moves into the active position and all characters slide down. The order is now Ember > Lyra > Rowan > Alaric > Kaede.

3.4 Move Up & Move Back — Manipulating Timing

Many abilities alter turn order by instructing a Character to Move Up (left) or Move Back (right).

Inactive Characters

Resolve movement immediately:

- Move Up X → shift left X spaces

- Move Back X → shift right X spaces
- Cannot Move Up into the Active slot
- Cannot Move Back past the far right
- Out-of-Round Characters cannot be moved

Active Characters

Active Characters resolve Move Up/Back after their normal Speed movement:

1. Move right by Speed
2. Apply Move Up/Move Back

Example: If an Active Character with Speed 3 is affected by "Move Up 1," they:

- Move right 3 spaces
- Then move left 1 space

This system is the tactical core of Initiative Break — controlling when you act is often more important than what you do.

3.5 The Round Marker — Time Accelerates

At the far right of the Initiative Track sits the Round Marker (RM). *After every activation:*

1. The Active Character moves right by Speed
2. Then the Round Marker moves left one space

Any Character the RM passes becomes Out of Round:

- Cannot be activated again this round
- Cannot Move Up or Move Back
- May still be targeted normally

When the RM reaches the far left:

- The round ends
- The RM resets to the far right
- "Once per round" effects reset
- The Character immediately right of the RM becomes the new Active Character

If at any time a Character, during normal movement following activation or reacting to Move Back effects, would pass the Round Marker, they are placed at the **FAR RIGHT INSTEAD** (end of Initiative Track).

As Characters are eliminated, the RM has less distance to travel — rounds accelerate, mimicking the collapse of time under Flux pressure within an anomaly.

3.6 Time Collapse — The Final Crescendo

When the number of remaining Characters is equal to or less than the lowest Speed among them, the Round Marker is removed. This is Time Collapse.

During Time Collapse:

- There are no rounds
- Round-based effects can trigger 1 final time during Time Collapse but will never reset
- Characters continue activating in Initiative order
- The game becomes a rapid-fire sequence of turns

- The battle continues until one side is eliminated

Time Collapse is the dramatic endgame — fast, brutal, and decisive.

3.7 Charge, Break Arts, and Initiative Break

Gaining Charge

A Character gains 1 Charge each time they perform a Basic Attack. Some cards and abilities also grant Charge. A Character may have up to 3 Charge.

Break Arts (during your activation)

If a Character has 3 Charge, they may perform their Break Art as their action. This consumes all 3 Charge. After resolving the Break Art, they move right by Speed as normal.

Initiative Break (at ANY time)

A Character with 3 Charge may instead declare an Initiative Break:

- Can be declared at any time, even during another Character's turn
- The Character immediately moves to the far left
- Performs their Break Art
- Then moves to the far right
- This is not a normal activation
 - No draw
 - No start/end triggers
 - Ignores Speed
 - Ignores Round Marker

If multiple Initiative Breaks are declared:

- The last declared resolves first
- If simultaneous, highest Speed resolves first
- If the Character is defeated before resolving, the Break is canceled

Initiative Breaks are the game's "super moves" — powerful, cinematic, and capable of completely reshaping the game in progress!

3.8 Targeting, Damage, and Status Effects

Unless otherwise specified, attacks and abilities may target:

- An opposing Character or Support Character.
- A Challenge Card
- Enemy refers to any/all cards opposed to current player
- Ally refers to any/all cards on same side as current player.

If an effect deals damage and applies a Status Effect, both must target the same unit unless otherwise stated.

Example: "Deal 3 damage. Apply Weaken." → Both effects must target the same Character.

Example: "Deal 2 damage. Target ally Move up 1." The damage affects 1 target and the "Move up" another.

Example: "Deal 3 damage to all enemies. Apply Weaken." The damage and Weaken are affecting 'all enemies'.

SECTION 4 — ACTIONS, ATTACKS, AND CARD PLAY

Every activation in Initiative Break gives the Active Character one action. This section explains each.

4.1 Basic Attack — The Foundation of Combat

A Basic Attack is the simplest action a Character can take. It deals the damage listed on the Character card and requires no discard, no Charge, and no special conditions. But Basic Attacks are more important than they look, *because*:

- They generate 1 Charge
- They are the safest, most reliable action
- They keep your hand intact
- They set up Break Arts

Basic Attacks are the engine that fuels your most powerful plays.

4.2 Advanced Attack — Power at a Cost

An Advanced Attack is a stronger ability than the Basic Attack. *It requires:*

- Spending 1 Charge from the active character
- Then performing the Advanced Attack printed on your Character card

Advanced Attacks usually deal more damage or apply a Status Effect.

They do not generate Charge unless the card specifically says so.

4.3 Break Arts — Your Character's Signature Move

Break Arts are powerful, cinematic abilities unique to each Character. They require 3 Charge *and can be used in two ways:*

A. As your action during your activation

- Spend all 3 Charge
- Perform the Break Art
- Move right by Speed as normal

B. As an Initiative Break (interrupt)

Explained fully in Section 3.7, but in short:

- Can be used at any time
- Jump to the far left
- Perform the Break Art

- Move to the far right

- Ignore Speed, ignore Round Marker

Break Arts are your biggest, flashiest plays — and timing them well is the heart of Initiative Break strategy.

4.4 Techniques — High-Impact Maneuvers

Technique cards represent special attacks or maneuvers. *They:*

- Are played during your Character's activation
- Require discarding cards equal to their printed cost
- Are generally stronger than Basic or Advanced Attacks
- Often manipulate the Initiative Track or apply Status Effects

Techniques are your tactical tools — flexible, powerful, and hand-intensive.

Example: A Technique might read: "Discard 2 cards: Move Up 2. Deal 2 damage to any target." This lets you reposition aggressively and strike.

4.5 Sigils — Elemental Keystone Fragments

Sigils are elemental fragments installed into a Character's Keystone that grant repeatable abilities.

Installing a Sigil:

- Takes your entire activation
- Installs the Sigil onto yourself or an Ally with a matching Sigil type
- Immediately resolves the Sigil's Discard 1 effect at no cost
- Leaves the Sigil in play until removed or replaced

Characters may only install Sigils matching the two symbols printed on their card. A Character may have up to 2 Sigils installed, but only 1 Sigil of each type shown on their card. To install a new Sigil beyond this limit, discard an installed Sigil first.

Using a Sigil Ability:

- Installed Sigils may be activated once per activation
- Activating a Sigil requires discarding cards equal to the desired effect tier
- The free activation during installation always resolves only the Discard 1 effect

Sigils are your spell system — persistent, elemental, and combo-focused.

4.6 Keystone Abilities — Your Character's Customization Option

Each Keystone grants:

- A passive effect
 - A Sigil-type ability that has no additional cost to use
- Keystone abilities are treated exactly like Sigil abilities:
- They are used during your Character's activation
 - They count as that Character's action

Keystones define your Character's role — tanky, aggressive, supportive, or disruptive.

4.7 Support Characters — Persistent Allies

Support Characters are played during your activation. *They:*

- Enter play with an on-play effect
- Remain in play with a passive effect
- Have HP and can be attacked
- Are discarded when reduced to 0 HP

Support Characters give your team ongoing advantages — healing, damage boosts, card filtering, or Initiative manipulation.

You may only include one copy of each Support Character in your deck.

4.8 Event Cards — One-Time Tactical Effects

Events resolve immediately when played and are then discarded. *They may:*

- Manipulate the Initiative Track
- Apply Status Effects
- Heal or provide a benefit
- Provide utility or tempo swings

Some Events require discarding cards; others are free. Events are your "tactical tricks" — fast, flexible, and often game-changing. Event cards interact with different game mechanics but seldom do damage (that is what Techniques are for).

4.9 Passing

A Character may choose to pass their turn. This is rare, but sometimes correct when:

SECTION 5 — STATUS EFFECTS

Status Effects are temporary conditions that modify how a Character behaves on their next activation or the next time they deal or receive damage. They are one of the core tactical layers of Initiative Break — simple to learn, but incredibly impactful.

5.1 How Status Effects Work

A Status Effect is applied by an attack, Sigil, Technique, Event, or Challenge Card. *Unless the card says otherwise:*

- You may apply a Status Effect to any Character or Challenge Card.
- If an effect deals damage and applies a Status Effect, both must target the same unit unless otherwise specified.
- Status Effects always resolve at the start of the afflicted Character's next activation unless noted otherwise (Guard, Insight, Weaken)
- After a Status Effect triggers, it is removed.

Status Effects are designed to be simple, predictable, and easy to track — but devastating when timed well.

5.2 The Status Effects

Burn

Effect: At the start of the afflicted Character's next activation, they take 1 damage, then Burn is removed.

Burn is a slow, reliable way to chip down enemies or finish off weakened targets.

Example: A Character with 1 HP remaining is Burned. When their next activation begins, Burn deals 1 damage and they are defeated before they can act.

Insight

Effect: The next time the afflicted Character deals damage, they deal +1 damage, then Insight is removed.

Insight is a setup effect — you apply it now to boost your next attack.

Example: A Character with Insight uses a Basic Attack that normally deals 2 damage. It now deals 3 damage instead.

Guard

Effect: The next time the afflicted Character would take damage, they take half damage

(rounded down) instead, then Guard is removed.

Guard is your defensive buffer — perfect for surviving a big hit or stalling for time.

Example: A Character with Guard is hit for 5 damage. They take 2 damage instead ($5 \div 2 = 2.5 \rightarrow$ rounded down to 2).

Mute

Effect: On their next activation, *the afflicted Character cannot:*

- Use Sigil Abilities
- Use Keystone Abilities
- Install Sigils

After that activation, Mute is removed.

Mute shuts down spellcasting and elemental abilities — ideal for disrupting Sigil-heavy strategies.

Example: A Character with two powerful Sigils installed is Muted. On their next turn, they cannot use either Sigil nor their Keystone ability.

Seal

Effect: On their next activation, *the afflicted Character cannot:*

- Use Basic Attacks
- Use Advanced Attacks
- Use Break Arts
- Use Technique Cards

- Declare an Initiative Break until after that activation
- After that activation, Seal is removed.

Seal is one of the most restrictive Status Effect — it shuts down nearly all offensive options.

Example: A Character with 3 Charge is Sealed. They cannot use their Break Art on their next activation, nor can they declare an Initiative Break until after that activation ends.

Weaken

Effect: The next time the afflicted Character takes damage, they take +2 additional damage, then Weaken is removed.

Weaken is a damage amplifier — perfect for setting up big combos.

Example: A Character with Weaken is hit for 3 damage. They take 5 damage instead.

Stun

Effect: The afflicted Character misses their next activation. *When their turn comes up:*

- They skip their action
- They immediately move right by their Speed
- Stun is removed

Stun is one of the strongest control tools in the game — it denies both action and positioning.

Example: A Character with Speed 5 is Stunned. When their turn arrives, they skip their action and move right 5 spaces.

Cleanse

Effect: Removes Status Effects.

- Cleanse (named) removes a specific Status Effect.
- Cleanse (unnamed) removes one Status Effect of your choice.
- Cleanse All removes all Status Effects, both harmful and beneficial.

Cleanse is your answer to debilitating conditions like Stun or Seal.

Heal

Effect: Restores the listed amount of HP to the target. Unless otherwise specified, *Heal targets:*

- The Active Character, or
- Any legal target of the player's choice

Healing is straightforward — but timing it before a big hit can swing the entire battle.

5.3 Status Effects and Timing Windows

Status Effects always resolve at the start of the afflicted Character's activation unless it is an effect that is triggered by damage given or received. *This means:*

- Burn triggers before drawing a card

- Stun triggers before any action
- Seal and Mute restrict the action step
- Insight and Weaken wait for the next instance of damage
- Guard waits for the next instance of incoming damage

This consistent timing makes Status Effects easy to track and predictable in play.

SECTION 6 — CHALLENGE CARDS (SOLO & COOPERATIVE MODE)

Fight Aberrations and Constructs born from the Flux. Face off against deadly

ASPECT Tier opponents who will require all of your strategy and planning to overcome.

Initiative Break can be played not only head-to-head, but also solo or cooperatively against powerful AI-driven enemies called Challenge Cards.

Challenge Cards represent:

- Aberrants — mutated creatures twisted by Flux
- Constructs — artificial guardians or machines
- Aspects — elite agents of the Amethyst Order
- Some Aspects have more than one Phase — multi-stage, cinematic encounters

They use the same Initiative Track as players, follow simple activation rules, and create a fast, tense PvE experience.

This section explains how Challenge Cards work, how they activate, and how to run solo/coop mode smoothly.

6.1 What Are Challenge Cards?

Challenge Cards are enemies controlled by the game itself. *They:*

- Have Initiative, Speed, and HP, just like Characters
- Are placed on the Initiative Track
- Take turns using their printed abilities
- Can be targeted by attacks, Sigils, and card effects
- Are eliminated when their HP reaches 0

Challenge Cards follow the same core rules as Characters unless their card text says otherwise. *They are designed to be:*

- Predictable enough to run smoothly
- Dangerous enough to feel like real threats
- Flexible enough to support solo or cooperative play.

6.2 Types of Challenge Cards

Aberrants

Twisted creatures born from Flux anomalies. They form the regular tier of threat and are deadly dangerous in numbers.

Constructs

Mechanical or magical creations. They occupy a band of danger above Aberrant but below...

Aspects

Agents of the Amethyst Order or other terrifying boss-tier encounter. They are fast, intelligent, and often use Sigil-like abilities.

Icons

Icons are the true boss encounters of Initiative Break. They are horrifying opponents that:

- Change behavior mid-fight
- Spawn minions
- Alter the Initiative Track
- Trigger special effects when damaged

A fight against a multi-phase Icon is the centerpiece of solo/coop mode.

6.3 Setting Up a Solo or Coop Game

1. Choose your Characters (4 for solo; variable for coop).
2. Build your deck normally.
3. Select the Challenge Cards for the encounter.
4. Place all Characters and Challenge Cards on the Initiative Track in order of Initiative, lowest to highest.
5. Ties are broken by Speed, then HP and then by letters in the name.
6. Place the Round Marker at the far right.
7. Begin play as normal.

Challenge Cards follow the same Initiative Track rules as Characters.

6.4 How Challenge Cards Activate

When a Challenge Card becomes the Active Character, it performs the action printed on its card. Challenge Cards do not draw cards, install Sigils, or use Charge unless explicitly stated.

A typical Challenge Card activation includes:

- Resolving status effects present on the Challenge Card
- Reading the passive ability text to keep it in mind
- Check Charge quantity. If at 3 Charge, the Challenge Card will use its BREAK ART

during that activation

- Checking the trigger condition for special behavior during that activation

- If the BREAK ART or TRIGGER do not change the behavior of the card, 1d6 is rolled

and the number rolled corresponds to the action that the Challenge Card will take

- If the Challenge Card has a BREAK ART printed on its card, it gains 1 Charge at the

beginning during the End of Activation Window Step

After resolving its printed ability, the Challenge Card:

- Moves right by its Speed
- Then the Round Marker moves left as normal

Challenge Cards follow all standard rules unless their card text overrides them.

6.5 Targeting Rules for Challenge Cards

Challenge Cards always target the player Character with lowest HP, unless their card specifies otherwise.

If multiple Characters are equally valid targets:

- Target the Character with the lowest HP
- If still tied, target the Character with the lowest Initiative
- If still tied, the Character that will act soonest on the Initiative Track

Support Characters may be targeted if the Challenge Card's text allows it.

6.6 Status Effects and Challenge Cards

Challenge Cards:

- Can apply Status Effects
- Can receive Status Effects
- Resolve Status Effects exactly like Characters

This keeps PvE consistent with PvP.

6.7 Eliminating Challenge Cards

When a Challenge Card's HP reaches 0:

- It is removed from the Initiative Track
- Any "on death" effects trigger
- The Round Marker continues to accelerate as normal

If all Challenge Cards are eliminated, the players win.

6.8 Rivals - Using Character Cards as Challenge Cards

In Solo and Co-Op play, unused Player Characters may be fielded as **Rival** Challenge Cards representing enemy operatives, rogue agents, corrupted timelines, or opposing factions encountered during the campaign. *They follow these rules:*

- Rivals use their normal Character card.
- They are treated as Challenge Cards for all game effects.
- Each Rival is assigned a random Keystone while setting up the battle.
- Rivals gain charge each time that they use their basic attack.
- Rivals do not consume Charge to use their Advanced Attack nor Keystone Sigil Ability.
- You may include Rivals in a campaign, treat them as Construct Tier for difficulty scaling.

When a Rival Challenge Card activates:

1. Resolve any Status Effects

2. Roll 1d6:

1–3 Use printed Basic Attack

3 Use Keystone's Sigil Ability

5 Use printed Advanced Attack

6 Use Break Art if 3 Charge

accumulated. Otherwise use Advanced Attack.

3. After attacking, Rival Challenge Card moves back by their Speed as normal.

For beneficial Sigil Abilities, Rivals, by default, target the next Challenge Card in Initiative Order unless otherwise specified.

6.9 Cooperative Mode

In cooperative mode:

- The four characters are split between the players, for example 2 each. For each character under a player's control, their Maximum Deck Size is modified to conform to 10 cards per character controlled.
- All players share a turn order on the Initiative Track
- Players may coordinate actions, Sigils, and Break Arts
- Challenge Cards, unless otherwise specified, will target the player character with the lowest HP. If tied, they will target the player character next on the initiative track.

Coop mode is fast, chaotic, and extremely fun — especially against Icons.

SECTION 7 — CAMPAIGN MODE (GENERAL RULES)

Link your battles into a persistent narrative or recreate the events of the Initiative Break story line! Campaign Mode transforms Initiative Break into a story-driven adventure. You will face a sequence of battles, make meaningful decisions, and carry the consequences of each encounter into the next.

This section explains the system of Campaign Mode. The specific campaign included in this book — The First Closure — appears in Section xx.

7.1 Persistent Elements

Campaign Mode is persistent. *The following elements carry over from one battle to the next:*

- Characters — You choose 4 Characters at the start of the campaign.
- keystones — Assigned at the start and remain fixed.
- Installed Sigils — Remain installed unless removed by card effects.
- HP Totals — Characters do not fully heal between battles.
- Injuries — Persist until removed.
- Deck — Your deck remains unchanged unless you gain new cards.
- Charge Carryover — Each surviving Character who ended the previous battle with 1+ Charge begins the next battle with 1 Charge.
- Unused Flux Surge Tokens

7.2 Recovery Between Battles

After each victory:

- All Characters restore **4 HP**

- All Status Effects are removed

- Support Characters return to your deck

Characters defeated during the battle begin the next battle at **half HP** and gain **1 Injury**.

7.3 Rewards

After each victory, choose **one** reward from the following:

- Heal 5 HP to any one Character

- Install 1 Sigil from your deck

- Gain 1 Flux Surge Token

After each victorious battle, each surviving Character gains XP:

- Normal battle: +1 XP

- Elite battle: +2 XP

Characters who were defeated or who sat out via Rehabilitation Protocol gain 0 XP. When a Character reaches 3 XP, they immediately gain 1 Advancement and reset to 0 XP.

Advancement Options:

- Increase Max HP by +2

- Increase all damage you deal by +1. This damage bonus applies to attacks, abilities and card effects that originate with the character with the enhanced damage.

7.4 Flux Surge Tokens

Flux Surge Tokens are earned after each victorious battle and represent a light-weight campaign resource. Flux Surge Tokens may be used in a battle during any one of your Character's activations. *When spent, choose one:*

- Draw 1 card

- Heal all Characters 1 HP

- Heal the active Character 3 HP

7.5 Injuries

When a Character is reduced to 0 HP:

- They are defeated for the rest of the battle

- They begin the next battle at **half HP**

- They gain **1 Injury** (-1 Max HP permanently)

- Injuries may be removed via Rehabilitation Protocol.

7.6 Rehabilitation Protocol

Beginning after the first battle, players may choose to have one Character sit out a battle. You enter the battle with 3 Characters. *The sitting Character:*

- Fully heals to max HP

- Removes 1 Injury

- Gains 0 XP

Characters who fight gain XP normally.

Reward: If the battle where a Character was sitting out

due to Rehabilitation Protocol is won, the player receives 2 Flux Surge Tokens instead of 1.

7.7 Elite Encounters

Before a battle begins, players may declare it an *Elite Encounter*. This adds the following modifiers to all Challenge Cards in the battle:

- +2 HP

- +1 damage

Elite Reward: If the Elite Encounter is won, the player chooses an additional reward and Characters that survived the battle gain 2 XP rather than 1XP.

7.8 Encounter Size Limits

To preserve Initiative Track clarity and pacing:

Player Characters: Normally 4

Exception: 3 Characters under Rehabilitation Protocol
Challenge Cards per Battle: 3–6

Total Units Present: Never exceeds 10

7.9 Battle Modifiers

Before each battle of a Campaign (except the first), roll 2d6 twice:

- Once on the Instant Effects Table

- Once on the Persistent Effects Table

These modifiers increase replayability and create unique battle conditions.

7.10 Campaign Types

There are two ways to play Campaign Mode:

1. Story Campaigns

Authored, narrative-driven campaigns with unique scenarios, branching paths, and scripted encounters. The Starter Set includes "The First Closure". Campaign.

2. Generic Campaigns

Players may create their own campaigns using any Challenge Cards they own.

7.11 Building a Generic Campaign

A Generic Campaign consists of between 6 and 10 battles and conforms to all the Campaign Rules found in this section. A player may choose which Challenge Cards to include freely or even shuffle their entire collection and choose at random. There is no right or wrong way to play! *Suggested difficulty curve for battles:*

1. (3) Aberrants

2. (4-5) Aberrants

3. (2-3) Aberrants, (1) Constructs

4. (2) Aberrants, (2) Constructs

5. (1) Aspect, (2) Aberrants, (1) Construct

6. (1) Icon, (1-2) Aberrants

7. (2) Aspects, (2) Aberrants

8. (2) Aspects, (1) Construct, (1) Aberrant

9. (1) Icon, (2-4) Constructs

10. (1) Icon, (1) Aspect, (2) Constructs

Players may rearrange or customize battles as long as they follow encounter limits.

SECTION 8 — MULTIPLAYER MODES

Play Initiative Break with friends — cooperatively or competitively. Initiative Break supports a wide range of multiplayer experiences. Whether you want to team up against Challenge Cards or battle another party in a tactical duel, the Initiative Track naturally supports multiple players.

This section explains both cooperative and competitive multiplayer.

8.1 — Cooperative Mode (2–4 Players)

Work together to overcome the anomaly. Cooperative Mode allows 2–4 players to fight Challenge Cards as a team. All Characters share the Initiative Track, and players coordinate their actions to survive escalating threats.

Team Composition & Deck Sizes

2 Players

- 2 Characters each
- 20-card decks

3 Players

Choose one:

- 1 Character each (15-card decks), or
- One player controls 2 Characters (20-card deck) and the others use 1 Character each and 15-card decks

4 Players

- 1 Character each
- 15-card decks

Deck sizes scale with how many Characters a player controls, keeping the game balanced and fast.

All Characters — regardless of team — are placed on the Initiative Track in order of Initiative. The leftmost Character always takes the next turn. Players may discuss strategy freely, but the controller of the Active Character makes the final decisions.

Challenge Card targeting works the same as all player Characters regardless of which player controls them are considered the same.

8.2 — Multiplayer Duel and Battle (2–8 Players)

Multiplayer Duel Mode turns Initiative Break into a team-based skirmish game. You can play:

- 2v2
- 1v3
- 3v3
- 4v4
- 2v2v2v2
- Or even free-for-all variants

The maximum encounter size on the Initiative Track should not exceed 10 Characters. Within that limitation, players can control 1-4 Characters, and be split amongst however many teams are desired. The maximum Deck size scales with the quantity of Characters controlled by the player but the hand size always remains the same.

Deck Size Scaling

- 1 Character controlled → 15-card deck
- 2 Characters controlled → 20-card deck
- 3 Characters controlled → 30-card deck
- 4 Characters controlled → 40-card deck

This keeps card flow consistent across all formats. Turn order follows the Initiative Track exactly as in standard play. You may target any opposing Character unless a card says otherwise.

Area-of-effect attacks hit all legal targets, regardless of team. Beneficial status effects that are applied to "all allies" will effect the Characters of another player if they happen to be on the same team.

The last player or team to have Characters remaining on the Initiative Track

The mechanics behind Initiative Break were designed in such a way that there are many permutations of play that can be tried and enjoyed.

8.3 Multiplayer Character Cost

In a traditional 4 Character Party in Initiative Break, the player is free to choose the Characters on their team providing they do not exceed 12 points in total.

In multiplayer modes where players control fewer than 4 Characters, the following points limits are imposed:

- 4 Characters, **12 point cap**
- 3 Characters, **9 point cap**
- 2 Characters, **7 point cap**
- 1 Characters, **4 point cap**

8.4 Mixed Match-ups

For extra challenge, chaos or just a change of pace, Challenge cards can be inserted into matches between human players. For game pacing reasons, no more than 10 Characters/Challenge Cards should be on the Initiative Track. This will allow for games such as player vs player with neutral third party involved following Challenge Card targeting logic (which would not differentiate between any of the player Characters)