

# THE NATURAL ORDER

## The Laws of Nature - Rules Booklet

The Wuxing philosophy of ancient China describes the world we live in with **five Elements**. They represent relations between natural phenomena and transitioning between different states in an all-encompassing order.

Throughout the history of humankind, our interests have often opposed the will of nature. With great effort, we managed to work the land, forge the iron, bridge the rivers, tame the forests and put out the fires...

However, every pendulum swung will eventually swing back. We have disturbed the **Natural Order**. The forces of nature can - and will - find a way to restore it, unless we learn how to listen to their pleas and **Attune to the Elements**.

In **The Natural Order**, players compete towards being the first to collect a set of five unique Elements:

**Earth** 🌱, **Metal** ⚙️, **Water** 💧, **Wood** 🌲 and **Fire** 🔥.

Each represented by a card with a unique ability, the Elements will help you manipulate cards to seize those useful to you or prevent opponents from doing the same.

## Component List

**35** Element cards (7 sets of five)

**3** Cycle cards and **3** transparent tracker tokens

**6** Reference cards (3x turn order and 3x abilities)

**The Rules & Examples booklet**

# The Goal

The game is played in turns until the moment one of the players/alliances reaches the victory condition:

Lock a complete set of five unique Element cards.

Cards can be Locked by using the abilities of either **Earth** or **Water**, but more on that later (see card ability explanations)!

## Learning to Play?

For your first couple of games it is recommended to play with a lower player count. Simply ignore Attunement and do not use the Cycle cards, Improved abilities or the Realign action.

## Card Placement and Control

When a player is in control of an Element card, there are a couple things to keep in mind.

**Stored cards** <sup>Fig.1.1</sup> are kept in a player's hand. They are always considered to be in random order (e.g. when taking cards from a player's hand).

**Ready cards** <sup>Fig.1.2</sup> are kept face down. They can be used (played) for their ability. Ready cards should not be shuffled or repositioned once placed in the playing area.



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Figure 1: A player's area with one Stored, two Ready and three Locked cards.

Ready and Stored cards can be freely manipulated - taken, given away, discarded, swapped or Locked. They also count towards the player's card limit.

Players should keep their Stored and Ready cards secret. Allies are playing towards a common goal, but must neither share any information on their cards nor discuss their strategies.

Any face up cards are public information.

Besides the cards controlled by players, we also have these:

**Locked cards** <sup>Fig.1.3</sup> count towards the victory condition. They should be placed face up near the solo player or between two allies. These are considered out of play for card abilities. Each newly Locked card should partially cover the previous one so that only the bottom part of each previously locked Element card remains visible.

**The Open** is made up of two cards at the center of the playing area, visible to all players.

**The Deck** is placed next to the Open, cards facing down. It is comprised of multiple sets of five Element cards, depending on the number of players.

**The Discard Pile** is placed nearby too, its cards facing up.

## Element Card Limit

Each player can have up to three Element cards at a time. This includes both Ready and Stored cards. Locked cards do not count towards this limit, despite belonging to a player or an alliance. The exception to this rule is the first turn of the solo player. Only then may they control up to four cards.

A player is allowed to have more than three cards while an action is being resolved. If they complete the action having four or more cards, they must then discard down to the limit of three. This means you could be at the limit of three cards, take an action to get a fourth card, but would then have to discard back down to three once the action is completed.

# Setup

- Construct **the Deck** <sup>Fig. 2.1</sup> by shuffling together multiple sets of five unique Element cards and form alliances according to the number of players.

Number of players:	2	3	4	5	6
Number of sets:	4	5	5	7	7
Alliance formation:	1v1	2v1	2v2	2v2v1	2v2v2

- Establish **the Open** <sup>Fig. 2.2</sup> reveal two cards from the deck and place them face-up next to the deck.
- Leave room for the **discard pile** <sup>Fig. 2.3</sup> nearby.

- Deal three cards from the deck to each player - everyone may re-draw their starting hand once.

- Each player allocates the **three cards** <sup>Fig. 2.4</sup>

- + one to Lock (**Attune** to),
- + one to put face down (**Ready**) in their play area,
- + one to keep in hand (**Store**).

- In a 3 or 5 player game, the player without an ally (**the solo player**) is dealt 3 additional cards. They get to Lock, Ready and Store two cards each. <sup>Fig. 2.5</sup>

**Note:** The solo player starts the game with a card limit of four cards. After their first turn, regular rules (as explained on page 3) apply.

- Determine starting Attunement <sup>Fig. 2.6</sup> of each alliance/player - explained on page 7.

Both allies and the solo player can choose one from the two initially Locked Element cards to Attune to. In a 2-player game, where each player only starts with one Locked card, this isn't necessary.



Figure 2: A three-player game setup with denoted setup steps from 1 to 6.



- **The solo player goes first.** If there is no solo player (*when playing with 2, 4, or 6 players*), decide randomly.
- **Play proceeds clockwise**, alternating between alliances and players within alliances.

# Turn Order

First, refill the Open to two cards.

Then, take three actions, choosing from the following five (*in any order*):


1. **Take a card from the Open** (*into your hand*)
2. **Ready a card from your hand** (*put it face down in your play area*)
3. **Use a Ready card's ability**
  - Flip a card face up, resolve its ability, then discard it.
4. **Reset the Open**
  - Discard any cards there, shuffle the discard pile into the deck and reveal two cards to form the new Open.
5. **Realign your Attunement**
  - Discard a card matching one of your previously Locked Elements. In turn, you may Attune to that Element and reposition the token on the Cycle card accordingly.

**Note:** Cards cannot target themselves, but can target copies of themselves. (e.g. an **Earth**  card can lock another **Earth**  card but not itself.)

**The same action can be chosen multiple times in one turn.**

Usually, the first three actions will be used the most commonly. The Reset and Realign actions will often not even be used by all the players in every game.

To allow for a better flow of play, **all actions should be announced out loud** for all the players to hear - especially when using card abilities. When trying to Lock a card, **ask if anyone wishes to block your attempt**, don't just rush to resolve your ability.

The block ability (**Metal** ) is only used during opponents' turns and does not use up an action.

Whenever the deck is emptied, immediately shuffle all cards in the discard pile to create a new deck.

**Attunement:** The effect of your last locked card on two other Elements (explained on page 7).

# Elements and Attunement

The connections between the Elements form two Cycles.

Whenever a player/alliance Locks a card, they become Attuned to that Element.

When Attuned to an Element:

- The ability of the following Element in the Cycle of Empowerment is **improved**.
- The ability of the following Element in the Cycle of Weakening is **unusable**.



**Example:** Nina uses her Ready Earth card to Lock a Wood card she had in her hand. She is now Attuned to the Wood Element. That means her Fire card's ability is improved, but she will be unable to use the Earth card's ability.

Attunement is **shared by allied players** and tracked on the Cycle card using the provided tokens. Use of improved abilities is optional. Unusable cards can still be Locked.

**A newly Locked card overrides the previous Attunement** when the action that would Lock it is resolved completely (e.g. a single improved ability can Lock two cards, but the Attunement change only takes effect after the action is completed, effectively "skipping" the first card Locked). This also means, **that you will always only be Attuned to one of the Elements.**

If a player accidentally resolves a card's ability that they can't have (because it was weakened), it is advised that you **don't try to undo the action(s)**. Alternatively, you may reverse the incorrect action(s) and resume play from that point.

# Anatomy of an Element Card

1. The weakening Element symbol  
(When Attuned to **Wood** ♣, your **Earth's** ♁ ability is unusable)
2. Attunement effect  
(Locking **Earth** ♁ improves **Metal** ♁ and makes **Water** ♁ unusable)
3. Basic card ability
4. Improved (Empowered) card ability
5. Setup reference - number of players  
(In a 4-player game, you can use all the cards marked 1+, 2+, and 3+)

## Card Abilities

### Earth ♁

#### Basic ability:

Lock one of your cards.

#### Improved ability:

Repeat the basic ability once more as part of the same action.

Empowers: **Metal** ♁

Weakens: **Water** ♁



#### Notes & strategy:



Can be blocked by a Metal card's ability. Blocking only stops one attempt; if you're resolving the improved ability, you can try again right away.



## Metal





### Basic ability:

You may play this card to block an opponent's attempt at using **Earth**  or **Water** .

### Improved ability:

You may immediately resolve the blocked ability, as if you had used it.

**Empowers:** **Water** 

**Weakens:** **Wood** 



### Notes & strategy:

Can only be used when an opponent tries to **Lock** a card – not on your turn. The improved ability gives you the chance to **Lock** a card.




## Water


### Basic ability:

Swap another player's card with one of yours. Lock the obtained card if possible.

### Improved ability:

Repeat the basic ability once more as part of the same action.

**Empowers:** **Wood** 

**Weakens:** **Fire** 

### Notes & strategy:

If you cannot **Lock** the obtained card, the ability is only resolved half-way; the swap is not reversed and the players keep the exchanged cards.


## Wood


### Basic ability:

Draw three cards from the deck. Ready one and discard the others.

### Improved ability:

You may Ready two of the drawn cards.

Empowers: **Fire** 

Weakens: **Earth** 



### Notes & strategy:

Helps you find that specific card. Drawing cards from the deck instead of the Open means that other players won't see them.




## Fire


### Basic ability:

Give a card to another player or take a card from them.

### Improved ability:

You may draw a card from the deck, give a card and take a card.

Empowers: **Earth** 

Weakens: **Metal** 

### Notes & strategy:

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





Given and taken cards are Stored (in the recipient's hand). The improved variant can target two different players (e.g. take from one and give to another).


# Solitary Variant Rules

When playing alone, the player is **trying to Lock as many Element cards as possible, before the deck runs out**. When that happens, they can finish their turn and then the game ends. The core mechanics of a solo game are mostly unchanged, with some exceptions described here. This game mode also works with the modifications from the chapter “Learning to Play?” on page 2. **Player setup is unchanged** (3 cards, one put in each position - Locked, Ready and Stored). The success in a solo game is measured by how many cards the player managed to Lock.


The deck is made up of **only three sets** of five Element cards. The turn order is the same, with one difference; **the Open can hold three cards**. This effectively means that for every three actions taken, the player must refill the Open back to three cards.



**The game will also ‘fight’ against you in two ways:**

- Whenever an **Earth**  or **Water**  card is revealed in the Open (*past the initial setup*), this is considered as an attempt to Lock a card. If possible, you may block the attempt by using a **Metal**  card - as you would to block an opposing player. If the attempt is not blocked, **both the revealed Earth  or Water  card and a card from the top of the deck are discarded**. Then, a new card is revealed to refill the Open, ignoring a potential second **Earth  / Water ** card.

- Any **Metal**  card that is in the Open is used when you attempt to Lock a card. Its ability is resolved exactly as if another player had used it; both cards are discarded and then play may continue.

**There is a slight change to one of the Element abilities, too:**

- The **Fire**  card allows you to take cards from the discard pile.

Cards in the Open also count as those of another player (e.g. you can swap them when playing **Water** , or give a card to the Open when playing **Fire** ). The Open also has a limit of three cards. If the limit is exceeded, the player may choose which card to discard.

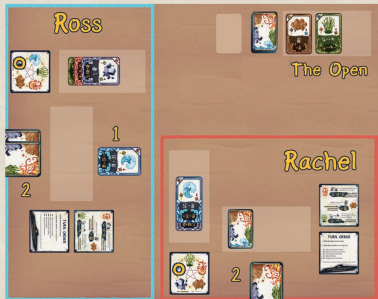
# The Ways of Nature: Detailed Gameplay Examples

## Scenario 1: Empowered Water

2-player game - Ross vs. Rachel

On his turn, Ross announces playing a **Water** ♁ card's ability. Considering his current Attunement, he's allowed to use the improved variant of the action (Ex. 1.1).

Since Rachel does not block, Ross chooses to swap his **Fire** ♁ card with the card in Rachel's hand - **Earth** ♁ (Ex. 1.2).



Example 1



Example 2

The card Ross received (**Earth** ♁) is not yet among his locked Elements and he is able to Lock it (Ex. 2.3).

His **Fire** ♁ card is now in Rachel's hand (Ex. 2.4).

Then, Ross can repeat the ability, because he used the improved variant.

This time, he chooses to swap his **Metal** ♣ card for Rachel's **Wood** ♠ card (Ex. 3.5).

The chosen cards switch positions (Ex. 4.6), but Ross already Locked a **Wood** ♠ card, so he cannot Lock another one.

The Attunement tracker is adjusted to reflect Ross's Locking of an **Earth** ♣ card (Ex. 4.7).



Example 3



Example 4

Ross's used **Water** ♣ card is then discarded (Ex. 4.8) and play proceeds onward.

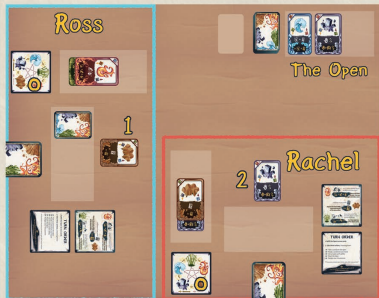
This was the first of the three available actions Ross has on his turn, so he can now perform two more.

## Scenario 2: Empowered Earth vs. Empowered Metal

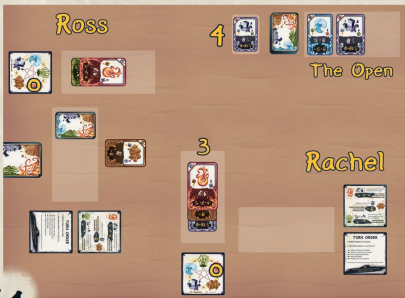
2-player game - Ross vs. Rachel

On his turn, Ross decides to play an Empowered **Earth** ♁ card (Ex. 5.1), but Rachel was prepared and plays **Metal** ♁, blocking his attempt (Ex. 5.2).

Since Rachel is Attuned to **Earth** ♁ her **Metal** ♁ card's ability is also Empowered.




Example 5




Example 6

Rachel therefore interrupts Ross's action and immediately Locks one of her own cards (Ex. 6.3), as if she played the **Earth** ♁ card that Ross used.

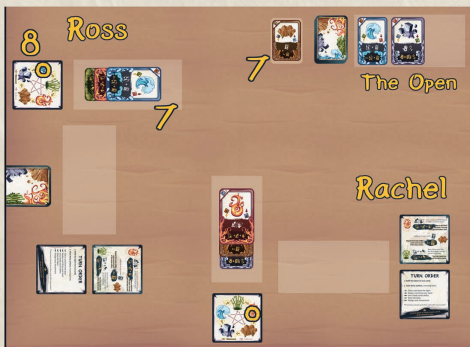
Her **Metal** ♁ card is discarded (Ex. 6.4), the Attunement tracker moved to the **Fire** ♁ space and Ross can continue resolving his action.

Because Ross played the Empowered variant of the **Earth's**  ability (Ex. 7.5), he can now repeat its basic ability once again.




Rachel has no more cards to use and surely won't be able to block Ross's attempt, so he is free to Lock his **Water**  card (Ex. 7.6).



Example 7



Example 8

Ross Locks his **Water**  card and discards the used **Earth**  card (Ex. 8.7), then repositions the Attachment tracker on the spot of the newly Locked Element - **Water**  (Ex. 8.8).

## Scenario 3: Empowered Fire into Water

3-player game - Holmes and Watson vs. Moriarty

*In this example, Moriarty had just finished his turn. Because he already has four elements Locked, Holmes and his ally Watson need to be careful. Especially so, considering the fact that Moriarty can use the improved ability of **Metal** ♣ and could mirror their attempt at Locking a card!*

It is now Holmes' turn and he knows that Moriarty has a **Metal** ♣ card ready to be played (Ex. 9.1).

Holmes therefore decides to go ahead and use his first action to Ready (put face down) his **Fire** 🔥 card (Ex. 9.2).



Example 9



Example 10

Next, as his second action, Holmes uses the Empowered **Fire's** 🔥 ability (Ex. 10.3).

**16** First, this lets him draw a card from the deck (Ex. 10.4).



Then, he uses the second part of the Empowered Fire's ability to take Moriarty's Metal card (Ex. 11.5)

With this, Moriarty won't be able to block an attempt at Locking a card.

Example 11

Example 12



For the third part of the Empowered Fire's ability, Holmes may give one of his cards to another player.

Because he doesn't know any of the other players' hidden cards, he decides to give his Earth card to Watson (Ex. 12.6), his ally.

Example 13

With that, Holmes concludes the second of the three actions on his turn.

The Fire card is discarded (Ex. 13.7) and he can decide on his next move.



For his third and final action of the turn, Holmes decides to play his **Water** ♾️ card (Ex. 14.8).

He decides to swap one of the cards in his hand (**Metal** ♣️) with the card Watson has in his hand (Ex. 14.9) - the same card that was given away in the previous action!



Example 14

The cards (Ex. 14.9) swap positions. Watson takes one card (**Metal** ♣️) into his hand and Holmes receives the other one (**Earth** ♁️).

Since **Earth** ♁️ isn't among their Locked cards yet, they can Lock it immediately.



Example 15

To conclude Holmes' turn, his used **Water** ♾️ card is discarded (Ex. 16.11) and the Attunement tracker is moved to the position of **Earth** ♁️ (Ex. 16.12)

The next player to take their turn will be Moriarty.



Example 16