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THE LORD OF THE RINGS™

THE CARD GAME

1



THE BLACK RIDERS

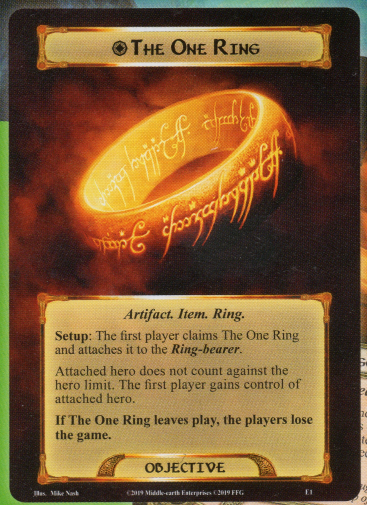
The saga begins

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Every issue of *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game* brings you new cards to add to your collection and new adventures to bring every part of the epic sagas of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to life. We'll also bring you tips on how to get the most out of your cards, and a handy reference to the complete rules of the game that builds as your collection grows.

In fact, the complete collection will take you all the way from Bilbo's first meeting with thirteen hungry Dwarves at Bag End to Frodo at the fires of Mount Doom. And it begins right here…

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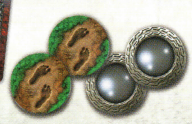
- Strider
- The Hunt for Gollum!
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Coming in Issue 3

- Tom Bombadil!
- The Barrow Wights!
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THE STORY OF THE RING

The One Ring, forged by the Dark Lord, Sauron, in the fires of Mount Doom, granted him dominion over all other Rings of Power and the Ringbearers who wielded them. Armed with this artefact, Sauron launched a war against the Free Peoples, bringing darkness to Middle-earth. This ambition was met with resistance.

The Battle of the Last Alliance

On the slopes of Mount Doom, an army of Elves and Men met the full might of Sauron's armies. Brought low by the elven heroes Gil-galad and Elrond, it was a man who delivered the decisive blow. Isildur, son of King Elendil, cut the Ring from Sauron's hand, at once shattering his power. Sauron had poured much of his own strength into the forging of the ultimate weapon, and without the Ring he could finally be vanquished. Or so it was thought.

Isildur's Bane

Isildur, given the task of destroying the Ring once and for all, instead succumbed to the dark power within it. Instead of casting the Ring into the fires of Mount Doom, he took it for himself. But the Ring was cunning, and answered only to one master. Its evil essence acted as a beacon to dark creatures, and so it was that Isildur's reign was cut short, when he was ambushed by Orcs at Gladden Fields. Fleeing to the River Anduin, Isildur was slain by Orcish arrows, and the Ring slipped from his finger into the water, seemingly lost.



Gollum

Many centuries passed, until, one fateful day, the creature Déagol, one of the peaceful River-Folk, inadvertently pulled the Ring from the riverbed where he was fishing. Corrupted by its pernicious whispers, his cousin Sméagol murdered him for possession of the Ring. Sent into exile for this heinous crime, Sméagol found a cave deep within the Misty Mountains, where he was driven mad by the Ring, and slowly transformed into the cursed creature known as Gollum. There, his life unnaturally extended for five hundred years, Gollum jealously guarded the ring, which he called his 'precious', until one day an intruder stumbled into the cave - a Hobbit, by the name of Bilbo Baggins.

Finding Gollum's ring quite by chance, Bilbo discovered that wearing it granted him invisibility, and by the skin of his teeth he escaped Gollum's clutches.





A Long Expected Party

Bilbo returned home to the peace and tranquillity of the Shire, unable to fathom the true significance of the Ring. Growing old beyond the years of most ordinary Hobbits, Bilbo craved adventure. And so, on the night of his 111th birthday, he left for Rivendell, bequeathing his home, Bag End – and, reluctantly, the Ring of Power – to his nephew Frodo. So it was that the Hobbits, the meekest of all the peoples of Middle-earth, came to hold the fate of the world in their hands.

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

Ever since Bilbo found the Ring, his friend Gandalf the Grey, an old and wise Wizard, had suspected that something was amiss. For years he studied scraps of ancient lore, slowly realising just what evil had been taken to the peaceful Shire. Finally, Gandalf visited Frodo to put his guess to the test.

Before a bemused young Frodo, Gandalf took Bilbo's old ring and threw it into the fire. When he withdrew it, a series of glowing runes appeared on its surface – Elvish script, translated from the Black Speech of Mordor! They read:

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all, and in the darkness bind them.

With his darkest fears confirmed, Gandalf formulated a plan. Frodo, now a Ringbearer like his uncle before him, would have to travel to Rivendell to seek the wise counsel of Master Elrond. Aware that the spies of the enemy were everywhere, Frodo was urged to leave the Shire in secret, so that none might suspect his true motive. At this news, Frodo's loyal friend Samwise Gamgee entered – Sam had been eavesdropping, and had learned the truth about the Ring. Given the danger such knowledge placed him in, Gandalf ordered the nervous Hobbit to accompany Frodo on his quest.

Three is Company

Frodo determined to leave the Shire on his next birthday, and arranged a farewell party. Allowing a rumour to spread that he had run out of money, and had to give up Bag End, he sold the Hobbit-hole and declared that he was moving to Crickhollow in Buckland. Travelling under the alias 'Mr. Underhill', Frodo was at last prepared to leave his home behind for an adventure, as his uncle had done all those years before. Before the day of the party, however, Gandalf received some troubling news, and was forced to leave, promising to catch up to Frodo later. Thankfully, Frodo did not have to bear the burden of the Ring alone: Peregrine Took offered to travel with Frodo and Sam, while their friends Meriadoc Brandybuck and Fatty Bolger went ahead to Crickhollow to make preparations.



Beginning the Adventure

In this first adventure, you will guide the four Hobbits – Frodo Baggins, Sam Gamgee, Merry and Pippin – from Bag End to Bucklebury Ferry, from where Frodo plans to carry on to Crickhollow before beginning the rest of his adventure.

The next few pages provide a guided playthrough of the first adventure. There's no need to learn the rules before you start playing. Instead, we'll introduce them as you play. And there's no need to worry about learning each new rule the first time it comes up, either. The playthrough will give you a feel for how the game works, while offering a closer look at some of the rules and some top tips for success. Then, in future issues, we'll return to look at all the rules in detail in the Rules Reference section, building up your understanding of the game as you go along.

Don't Shuffle Those Cards - Yet!

The first time you play through an adventure, you should play with the cards in the order they come in, allowing you to follow along with the guided playthrough. If you couldn't resist giving them a shuffle – just put them in order of the number printed in the bottom left of the card's border. For this first adventure, you won't need all the cards – take the cards numbered P19 to P43 and put them to one side for now.





The Golden Rule: If You Don't Know, It Doesn't Matter!

You'll see some terms on the cards in your collection which are unfamiliar or haven't been explained yet – don't worry, because if you don't know it doesn't matter! Not all of the rules on every card are needed in every adventure, so we'll introduce these new rules as and when they're needed. If you see something on a card that you don't understand yet, you can just ignore it.

SETTING UP

Now you're ready to play! Here's how to set things up for your first adventure and get ready to lead the heroic little Hobbits on their way out of the Shire…

1. Cut Out the Counters

If you haven't already, carefully cut out the Resource tokens and Progress tokens included on the backing board that came with this issue and put them in two piles off to the side.



Resource token



Progress token

2. Place Your Heroes

You can't start an adventure without heroes, so take your four heroes – Frodo Baggins, Sam Gamgee, Merry and Pippin – and place them face up in a row just in front of you at the edge of the table.

3. Give Frodo the One Ring

Dramatic moment! Card number E1 is the One Ring. Give it to Frodo by sliding it under his hero card.



4. Sort Out the Decks

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game uses two different decks of cards. The player deck (cards, P1 to P18, with the One Ring on the back) and the encounter deck (cards E2 to E12, with the Eye of Sauron on the back). Put both decks ready at the side of the playing area.

5. Draw Your Starting Hand

Draw the top three cards from your player deck and turn the page to begin the adventure…



Starting Hand

BAG END

Your adventure begins at Bag End as Frodo and his companions set out on their way out of the Shire.

Gaining Resources & Drawing Cards

At the start of each turn, before doing anything else, place one resource token next to each of your heroes – this is their resource pool. Then, draw one card from the top of your player deck and add it to your hand. Next, you can play any cards you want from your hand.



Your heroes have only one resource token each at present, but it's still enough to play some cards. You draw Hobbit Pipe and add it to your hand. This card has a cost of 0, so you can play it without spending any resource tokens. It's an attachment card, which means you 'attach' it to one of your characters by placing it underneath the character's card. In this case, let's give it to Pippin.



Playing Cards

When you play a card, there's normally a cost you have to pay in resource tokens, shown at the top left of the card. You also need a resource match, which means that the colour and the symbol of the card you want to play need to match the colour and symbol of the hero that spends the resources. In this case, it's a fiery orange One Ring symbol, which matches Frodo's card, so Frodo can spend resource tokens to play this card, but the other Hobbits couldn't.





After playing cards, it's time to make some progress on your quest. You make progress by having your characters commit their willpower in order to earn Progress tokens. This represents the characters mustering their determination to go on, despite the threats lying in wait ahead of them. You can commit some, none or all of your characters – it's up to you. **To commit a character to the quest, you must exhaust that character (turning the card 90°).** For this first turn of the game, commit Sam Gamgee and Pippin. This means you've still got Frodo and Merry ready to act if something unexpected happens!

Ready and Exhausted

Cards exist in two states – ready (when they're upright) and exhausted (indicated by turning a card 90°). Once a card is exhausted, you can't exhaust it again until next turn, so think carefully before doing it.



Ready



Exhausted

Once you've committed characters to the quest, it's time to find out what threats they will face along the way. This is called *staging*. To do this, turn the top card of the encounter deck over… it's an Evil Crow! An Evil Crow is an enemy card, so you should place it in the staging area. This doesn't mean the Evil Crow is attacking you (not yet anyway) – just that it's in the area and likely to make a nuisance of itself as you proceed on your way. The Evil Crow doesn't cause you any problems, for now…

Now you get to determine how many progress tokens your heroes earn this turn. To do this, you compare the **willpower** of the characters committed to the quest to the total **threat** of the enemies in the staging area. Sam has a willpower of 3, while Pippin has a willpower of 2, for a total of 5. The Evil Crow has a threat of 2. So, 5 (your total willpower) minus 2 (the Evil Crow's threat) gives a final total of 3. You can add three progress tokens to the progress track above. There are three spaces on the progress tracker for Bag End, so your three progress tokens are enough to complete this part of the adventure. You're on your way! Turn the page for the next location on your way…





Green Hill Country

The next stage of the journey takes the Hobbits through Green Hill Country. Alas, danger is not far away…

At the end of each turn, you get to refresh your cards – readying any cards that you exhausted last turn. Then, it's time for another turn, following all the same steps as before.

So, give each of your heroes another resource token then draw another card from your player deck – it's another Frodo's Intuition. Since Frodo now has two resource tokens (and since you have two copies of the card in your hand), it seems like a good idea to play one. Take the two resource tokens from Frodo's pool and put them back in the pile. Place the card beside your heroes as a reminder – each of your heroes gets +1 Willpower (+1 ✪) this turn and you have four Hobbits so you get to draw four more cards! You draw another Halfling Determination and Hobbit Pipe, as well as Common Cause and Grim Resolve.

Since your willpower is so high this turn, it seems like a good time to move on so commit Frodo and Sam to the quest. Next draw a card from the encounter deck. Oh dear – it's a Black Rider…!

Place the Black Rider card in the staging area. Drawing the Black Rider forces you to take a Hide test. You still have Merry and Pippin available, so exhaust them both to commit them to the Hide test. They both have a willpower of 2, with a +1 bonus this turn, for a total of six. Next, discard the top two cards from the encounter deck and add up their threat.

It's an Evil Crow and a Black Rider! Even worse, the Evil Crow already in the staging area adds 1 to the Hide Value of the test, so you have to draw another card. Another Black Rider! (Put these cards in the discard pile, not the staging area.)



Hiding

When you turn over a card with the keyword *Hide* followed by a number (for example, 'Hide 2') you must make a ***Hide test***. A hide test is similar to making progress: you can exhaust any number of characters you like to commit those characters to the Hide test.

Next, discard the top X cards of the encounter deck, where X is equal to the Hide X value. So, if a card says 'Hide 2', as the Black Rider does, discard the top two cards of the encounter deck to make the hide test. Add the total threat of the discarded cards and compare it to the total willpower of the characters committed to the hide test. If the total willpower is greater than or equal to the total threat – success! – you've passed the hide test. If the total threat is greater than the total willpower – bad news…





That's a total threat of 10, compared to Merry and Pippin's willpower of 6. You'll need to play some cards from your hand to pass the Hide test. Merry can spend one resource token to play Halfling Determination on himself, giving him +2 ✪ for a total of 8. Luckily, the Green Hill Country offers the Hobbits plenty of places to hide so they also each get a special +1 [✪] bonus when hiding here, for a final total of 10 – enough to pass the Hide test. Just! (Passing the Hide test also means the Evil Crow in the staging area is discarded.)

After that you just need to check whether you've made any progress in your quest. Frodo and Sam have a total willpower of 7 this turn (thanks to Frodo's Intuition) but there's still a Black Rider in the staging area with a threat of 4.

That means you earn three quest points and can place three progress tokens on the progress track. Just enough to move on from Green Hill Country!

Next, ready all of your characters again and turn the page for the next turn of the adventure.

If you're following the playthrough, this is what things should look like at this point in the adventure.















Bamfurlong

After again evading the Black Riders, the Hobbits travel across the Marish and find themselves at Bamfurlong, home of the notorious Farmer Maggot…

Remember you can ready your exhausted characters at the end of the turn, and then it's time to take your next turn, following all the usual steps. First, give each of your heroes one more resource token. Then, draw a card: it's Farmer Maggot!

It will only require two progress tokens to move on from Bamfurlong, but there's a Black Rider in the staging area so you'll need to commit a few characters to the quest and could do with some help just in case. You can play Hobbit Pipe from your hand attach it to Pippin. Now spend two of Pippin's resource tokens to play Smoke Rings and give both Merry and Pippin +1 ✪ for the turn, then commit them both to the quest.

Time to draw an encounter card. It's Lure of the Ring. This card talks about raising threat, which is a rule we're not using in this first adventure, so you'll have to exhaust the One Ring instead (meaning Frodo can't use it this turn). Even worse, Lure of the Ring has the Surge rule, so you'll have to draw another encounter card. It's Crawling Towards Him, which means you have to make a Hide 2 test.

Surge

Surge is a special rule found on certain encounter cards. When you draw a card with Surge on it, resolve its effects and then draw another encounter card!

Commit Frodo and Sam to the hide test, just in case. Draw the top two cards of the encounter deck: it's an Evil Crow, with a threat of 2, and another Crawling Towards Him, which luckily doesn't have any threat. Frodo and Sam's combined willpower of 5 is easily enough to pass the Hide test. (Remember to discard the Evil Crow and Crawling Towards Him – don't put them in the staging area.)

Now you just need to resolve the quest step and check your progress: Merry and Pippin's combined willpower is 6, against the Black Rider's threat of 4. It's enough to move on towards Bucklebury Ferry…







BUCKLEBURY FERRY

This is the final stage of your first adventure. Make it to Bucklebury Ferry and the Hobbits will be safe (for now). But that may be easier said than done.

Time for another turn. Give each hero a resource token, then draw a card: another Smoke Rings. Now, since you're setting out for Bucklebury Ferry, with Farmer Maggot having offered to take you in his cart, it only seems right to spend all three of Merry's resource tokens to play Farmer Maggot.

Commit Farmer Maggot to the quest straight away. You're going to need to make a lot of progress to get to Bucklebury Ferry, so commit Frodo, Merry and Pippin. (If any Hide tests come up, you'll have to hope Sam can deal with them by himself!) Since you're going to need a lot of willpower either way, spend two resource tokens from Frodo's resource pool to play Frodo's Intuition from your hand (which usefully lets you draw four more cards as well.)

Allies

Farmer Maggot is an ally card. Allies are characters – they're just like heroes, only they don't gain resource tokens and can't play cards. They can, however, commit to quests and hide tests, which makes them very useful for your heroes to have around.

Next, draw a card from the encounter deck: Lure of the Ring. Oh dear! You'll have to exhaust the One Ring, so Frodo won't be able to use it.

Now go ahead and resolve the current step of the quest. Frodo, Merry, Pippin and Farmer Maggot have a total willpower of 10 (with the bonus from Frodo's Intuition) but against the Black Rider's threat of 4, it won't be enough to make it to Bucklebury Ferry. You can spend two of Pippin's resource tokens to play Smoke Rings, giving Merry and Pippin +1 ✪ each, but that's still only eight progress tokens. You'll need one more to escape the Black Riders…

Things are looking grim. Playing Frodo's Intuition allowed you to draw four cards, including Strength of Will, which would put two progress tokens onto Bucklebury Ferry, but you have to exhaust a character with a blue star symbol (✳) to do so, and Pippin is already exhausted. But there's hope! You can play Common Cause, allowing you to exhaust one hero you control to ready another. Exhaust Sam to ready Pippin, then play Strength of Will, and exhaust Merry to place two more progress tokens on Bucklebury Ferry. Success!

Over the Brandywine River

So, that's it – success (well, a narrow escape, at least) in your first adventure and a first look at some of the rules for* The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game. *But where next?

Replaying the Adventure

In this adventure, we've shown you just a few of the rules of the game. In future issues, we'll be introducing new rules, and returning to take a look at those you've already seen in a lot more depth. If you're comfortable with the rules for readying and exhausting characters, playing cards and making progress, you can replay the adventure, but shuffle the player deck first, and see if you can work out your own strategy. For an even greater challenge, shuffle the encounter deck at the start of the game, too (and shuffle the discard pile back into it whenever the encounter deck runs out), but be warned – the Black Riders will present a real challenge indeed.

Merry and Fatty Bolger

In this adventure, Merry sets out with the other Hobbits from Bag End. As you may know, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Merry and Fatty Bolger set off ahead of the others and make their own way to the Bucklebury Ferry and then to Crickhollow. We included Merry in this adventure to make things a bit easier, but if you want to play the adventure again, why not play it without Merry for an additional challenge? Or play it using Fatty Bolger as one of your heroes instead.

The Next Adventure

The Hobbits might have escaped across the Brandywine River and made it to Crickhollow, but much danger lies on the road ahead. We'll be back to look at the next step on the Hobbits' journey in issue 3. In the meantime, though, we'll be meeting a mysterious ranger for next issue's adventure. You can get a taste of what lies in wait for the Hobbits opposite.

A Conspiracy Unmasked

To the Hobbits' relief, Merry was at the ferry to meet them. Waving farewell to Farmer Maggot, the friends made the crossing of the Brandywine River. However, as they made landing, they saw a Black Rider on the bank behind them, snuffling at the air for its prey: the enemy was not far behind.

Merry led Frodo, Sam and Pippin to the house at Crickhollow, where Fatty Bolger waited anxiously. Knowing the danger into which he had led his loyal friends, Frodo prepared himself to tell them truth, but Merry cut him short - the others already knew, and had all along. They had formed a conspiracy of sorts to help Frodo, fully understanding it would be a dangerous quest. Frodo at first insisted that he must go on alone, but his friends would not hear of it. Overcome by the loyalty of his three companions, Frodo revealed his plan, to depart Crickhollow in an unexpected direction, heading for the Old Forest. Fatty Bolger, on the other hand, bravely resolved to remain at Crickhollow, impersonating Frodo lest any Black Riders came looking. As Gandalf had promised to catch up, Fatty swore that he would pass a message to the Wizard should he appear.

A Dark Premonition

Frodo did not rest easy that night in Crickhollow. When he did sleep, he dreamt of a sea of tangled trees, in which creatures crawled and snuffled and searched - searching for him...

Hero Cards & Player Cards

The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game is played using several different type of cards: there are hero cards, representing your heroes on their quest, plus player cards and encounter cards, which each come in a few different types. You can read about hero cards and player cards below.



Hero Cards

Heroes are the main characters that you, as the player, control during the game. Heroes are represented by hero cards and players use them to attack, defend, quest and acquire resources. Each player begins the game with one or more heroes (and not usually more than three) under their control.

Sam Gamgee, card number H2, is an example of a hero card.

Player Cards

Each player has a player deck made up of player cards. During the game, a player draws cards from this deck and spends resources to play those cards, each of which can aid the heroes on their adventure.

There are three types of player card: **ally** cards, **attachment** cards and **event** cards.



Ally Cards

Ally cards represent characters (friends, followers, creatures and hirelings) that assist a player's heroes on the quest.



Attachment Cards

Attachment cards represent weapons, armour, artefacts, equipment, skills and conditions.



Event Cards

Event cards represent actions, spells, and other unexpected twists that might occur during the game.

Encounter Cards



Encounter Cards

During the game, as the players, you play against the encounter deck, made up of encounter cards representing the villains, hazards, places and circumstances that stand between the heroes and the successful completion of their quest.

There are four types of encounter card: **enemy** cards, **treachery** cards **objective** and **location** cards.

Objective Cards

Objective cards represent a range of different elements, each of vital importance to the heroes in their quest, from a sought-after friend or enemy to keys that allow the players to advance to the next stage of the quest or artefacts required to overcome a particular challenge.

The One Ring, card number E1, is an objective card – in fact, it's the most important objective card in the whole game! Unlike most objective cards, you don't shuffle The One Ring into the encounter deck at the beginning of the game. Rather, the Ring-bearer, Frodo Baggins, starts the game carrying it.



Enemy Cards

Enemy cards represent the villains, creatures, monsters and minions that attempt to capture, destroy or mislead the heroes as they pursue their quest. The Black Rider is an enemy card.



Treachery Cards

Treachery cards represent traps, curses, manoeuvres, pitfalls and other surprises the heroes may have to confront during their quest.



Location Cards

Location cards represent the perilous places (and occasionally safe havens) to which the heroes will travel along the way.