

LEGATUS

LEGATUS — HOW TO PLAY

LEGATUS is a two-player strategy game based on chess, enhanced with Orders that introduce battlefield tactics, deception, reinforcements, and command decisions. Pieces move according to normal chess rules unless an Order says otherwise. Your objective is simple: checkmate the enemy King.

1. PREPARE THE BATTLEFIELD

EACH PLAYER RECEIVES

- One chess army
- 3 Order cards

YOU ALSO NEED

- Chess board
- Order deck
- Shield tokens
- Trap tokens
- Barricade tokens

1. Shuffle the Order deck and place it face down beside the board.
2. Deal 3 Orders to each commander.
3. Choose who commands White.

The game now begins with Deployment.

2. PHASE I — DEPLOYMENT

Unlike chess, LEGATUS has no fixed starting formation. Each commander builds their own army formation before the battle begins.

1. White places the King anywhere on the first rank; Black places the King anywhere on the eighth rank.
2. Players alternate placing one piece at a time.
3. Every new piece must be placed on an empty position next to one of your own pieces already on the board.
4. Pieces may connect horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.
5. No placement may leave your King in check.
6. Continue until every piece has been deployed — then the Battle begins.

3. PHASE II — BATTLE

White takes the first turn. Each turn follows the same sequence.

MOVE

Move one piece using normal chess movement. Your move must be legal and may not leave your King in check.

PLAY AN ORDER — OPTIONAL

You may play one Order from your hand. Follow the instructions on the card completely before continuing. Some Orders have special timing and may be played outside this step.

REINFORCE

One Order is dealt to you automatically from the top of the draw pile — there is no draw choice to make. You never hold more than 5 Orders; while your hand is full, no new Order arrives.

END TURN

Ongoing effects tick down and expire at the end of the duration written on the card. Your turn then ends.

4. ORDER TIMING

Orders belong to four strategic categories — Tactics, Espionage, Logistics and Command — and the symbol on a card tells you when it may be played. If an Order contradicts a normal rule, the Order takes priority for that effect.

► ORDER

Play during the Play an Order step of your turn.

⚡ REACTION

Play immediately when the condition on the card occurs, including during your opponent's turn. Resolve the Reaction, then continue the interrupted turn.

⌚ FREE ACTION

Play during your turn when its condition is met. It does not use your normal Order action.

⌚ ONGOING

The effect remains active for the duration written on the card.

∞ PERMANENT

The effect remains active for the rest of the game unless another effect removes it.

5. BATTLEFIELD TOKENS

Some Orders place tokens on pieces or positions.

SHIELD

Attach a Shield to one of your pieces; it moves with the piece and prevents the next capture of that piece. Remove it once it blocks a capture. A piece may have only one Shield, and some Orders explicitly ignore Shields.

TRAP

Place a Trap on an empty position. The first enemy piece entering that position is captured, then the Trap is removed. A King is not captured by a Trap — instead the King removes it. Traps may be hidden or visible depending on the game mode.

BARRICADE

Place a Barricade on an empty position. Pieces cannot move onto it or through it, though Knights may jump over it. It remains until removed by an Order or another effect, and only one Barricade may occupy a position.

6. IMPORTANT TERMS

CAPTURE

Remove a piece from the board.

POSITION

One square on the board.

NEXT TO

Any of the eight surrounding positions.

BASE RANK

The rank where your King was deployed.

SECOND RANK

The rank directly in front of your base rank.

RECRUIT

Place a new piece onto the board.

RETURN

Place one of your captured pieces back onto the board.

PROMOTE

Replace a Pawn with another piece.

CONTROL

Treat another piece as your own for the duration of the effect.

SACRIFICE

Remove one of your own Pawns to pay an Order's cost.

If you cannot pay an Order's required cost, you cannot play it.

7. RESOLVING ORDERS & THE DECK

- Always follow the exact instructions written on the card.
- If an Order contradicts the rulebook, the Order takes priority.
- If multiple effects happen at the same time, resolve the active player's effects, then the opponent's.
- If only part of an Order can be completed, resolve as much as legally possible unless the card says otherwise.
- An Order may never leave a King in an illegal state unless the card explicitly resolves that situation.

THE ORDER DECK

Used Orders go into the discard pile unless stated otherwise. When the draw pile is empty, shuffle the discard pile into a new draw pile and continue playing.

BATTLEFIELD EXHAUSTION

In this optional mode, remove the top 5 cards from each newly shuffled deck without revealing them. They stay out of the game, gradually reducing the available Orders.

8. WINNING THE GAME

You win by putting the enemy King in checkmate. Normal chess rules for check and checkmate apply unless an Order explicitly changes the situation, and the game ends immediately when a King is checkmated.

QUICK REFERENCE

YOUR TURN

1. Move

Move one piece using normal chess movement. Your move must be legal and may not leave your King in check.

2. Play an Order — optional

You may play one Order from your hand. Follow the instructions on the card completely before continuing. Some Orders have special timing and may be played outside this step.

3. Reinforce

One Order is dealt to you automatically from the top of the draw pile — there is no draw choice to make. You never hold more than 5 Orders; while your hand is full, no new Order arrives.

4. End turn

Ongoing effects tick down and expire at the end of the duration written on the card. Your turn then ends.

4. ORDER TIMING

► **Order** — Play during the Play an Order step of your turn.

⚡ **Reaction** — Play immediately when the condition on the card occurs, including during your opponent's turn. Resolve the Reaction, then continue the interrupted turn.

↻ **Free Action** — Play during your turn when its condition is met. It does not use your normal Order action.

⌚ **Ongoing** — The effect remains active for the duration written on the card.

∞ **Permanent** — The effect remains active for the rest of the game unless another effect removes it.

5. BATTLEFIELD TOKENS

Shield — Attach a Shield to one of your pieces; it moves with the piece and prevents the next capture of that piece. Remove it once it blocks a capture. A piece may have only one Shield, and some Orders explicitly ignore Shields.

Trap — Place a Trap on an empty position. The first enemy piece entering that position is captured, then the Trap is removed. A King is not captured by a Trap — instead the King removes it. Traps may be hidden or visible depending on the game mode.

Barricade — Place a Barricade on an empty position. Pieces cannot move onto it or through it, though Knights may jump over it. It remains until removed by an Order or another effect, and only one Barricade may occupy a position.

FIRST GAME TIPS

- Build a formation that gives your important pieces room to move.
- Do not copy a standard chess opening automatically — Deployment is part of your strategy.
- Count the Orders your opponent is holding — a full hand means no reinforcement this turn.
- Use Shields to protect important pieces, and Barricades or Traps to control key positions.
- You do not need to play an Order every turn. Keeping the right card for later is often stronger.

Move. Issue your Order. Adapt. Checkmate.