The Rules of TAC

By Brawlbox & Timwi

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Summary

TAC is a game for 4 players made up of two teams of 2 players each. Team partners sit diagonally opposite each other at the table. Each player strives to help themselves and their team partner while hindering the opposing team.

Players play cards in a clockwise turn order. Most cards allow a piece to move forward a specific number of steps, while others have special functions. The goal is for a team to move all eight of their pieces into their homes. The first team to achieve this goal wins the game.

Elements of the Board

Starting location

Home

Base

Place for the discard pile

Track
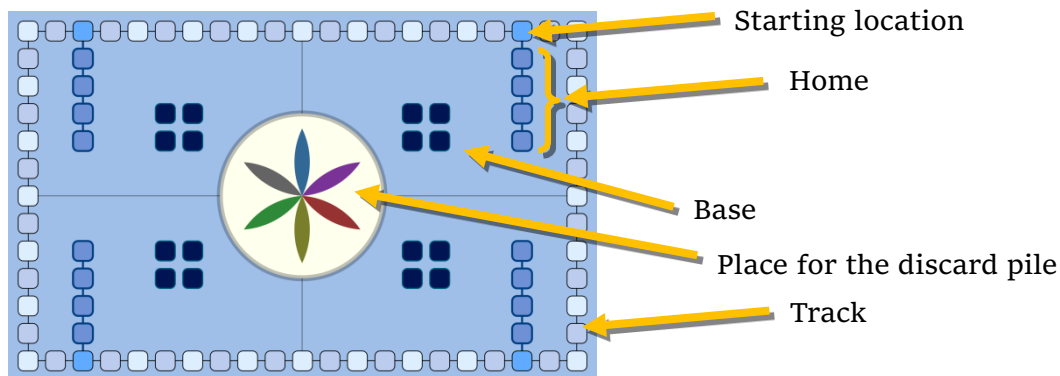
Advanced TAC

This tabletop version includes several new power cards, and a rearrangement of the secondary functions to different numbers. There is a setting on the shuffler to play the static version of TAC.

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Preparation

Each player controls four pieces of a colour. These pieces start out in their respective players' bases.

Shuffle the deck of 104 cards. Determine a starting player, who will be the first dealer. (The person playing the first card will be the player sitting clockwise from the dealer.)

Start of a Round

The round begins with three steps:

1.   The dealer deals 5 cards to each player. (By convention, the dealer then places the remaining pile in front of the next player — both to indicate that this player will play the first card, and to indicate that this player will be the dealer in the next round.)

2.   Each player flips the thumbs-up/down token in front of them to indicate whether they hold an exit card in their hand (not which one, and not how many; only whether they have at least one exit card or not).

3.   Each player exchanges a card with their team partner. Players are not allowed to look at the card given to them by their team partner until after they have given away theirs. (Players do not update their thumbs-up/down tokens after exchanging cards.)

This is the only game-related communication allowed; players must not reveal anything about the cards in their hands, nor their plan or strategy, nor their intentions behind the choice of card they exchanged.

After that, players play cards in a clockwise turn order beginning with the player left of the dealer. All the cards are played away; players do not draw new cards during the round. After the last card is played, the discard pile is removed; it does not spill over into the next round. Then a new round starts with a new set of 5 cards per player.

After four rounds, the pile will be down to 24 cards. At this point, the dealer deals 6 cards to each player and a slightly longer round is played. After that round, all the played cards are shuffled into a new deck and dealing continues with 5 cards per player.

Piece Movement

First off, the only ways for a piece to leave the base are playing an exit card, playing a TAC on an exit card, having your opponent play an Angel on you, or playing a Mirror and hoping the next player plays an exit.

Once a piece is on the track, an ordinary numbered card allows a player to move it forward (clockwise) that many steps, but only if no other piece is in the way. Pieces are not allowed to jump over each other. If all of a player's pieces are blocked by another piece in front of them, higher-numbered cards are not valid.

If a piece lands exactly on a location already occupied by another piece, that piece is captured (returned to its base).

A piece may move into its home if it is a suitable distance away. Steps cannot be forfeited; if the number is too high and there are not enough spaces inside the home, the piece cannot move into the home and may have to walk past it.

A piece standing on the starting location may move into its home only if it has moved since it last left the base. When a piece leaves its base, it turns a darker colour to indicate that it cannot enter its home directly. Once off the starting location, it returns to its original colour to indicate that it may enter its home.

Once a piece reaches the end of its home (there are no more unoccupied spaces in front of it), and the move that resulted in this wasn't undone by a subsequent TAC card, that piece is permanently locked in and cannot be moved anymore (not even by a single-step card). A piece also cannot use a backwards card to walk back out of its home once inside.

Number Cards

- If there is only a number display on the card, then the chosen piece moves this many spaces exactly without jumping over other pieces.

- If there is a backwards symbol on the card, then the chosen piece must move backwards instead, including moving backwards into your home.

- If the card states it is in "1-step moves", then the following moves for pieces are possible:

  7 separate
  1-step moves

  o Splitting the 1-steps between different pieces. For example, if the card is a 7, then you could move one piece 3 spaces, and another piece 4 spaces.

  o In the position where an obstructive piece would be in the way, preventing the movement of the

chosen piece, in the case of 1-step moves, the obstructive piece is taken (it is easier to think of these kinds of situations as n 1 moves, where n is the number on the card i.e., 6 or 7).

- o If there is an unlocked piece in your home, you may move the piece backwards or forwards with any of the 1-step moves. When doing this, you cannot move a piece out of your home. Once the piece is locked, it can no longer be moved after the turn is finished.

- If the card has a diamond symbol, the function of telling the next player to discard is available. If the card is not valid (because of the current player not having a piece on the track), then both functions of this card are invalid, including the discard function.

- If the card has a forward-facing arrow symbol, this means the card is an 'exit' card. This allows for a secondary function of being able to move a piece from your base to your starting location.

Valid Play

The following icons determine the validity of the card based on the quantity and control of the pieces on the track:

- A single-coloured drone indicates that there must be at least 1 piece that you control on the track.

- A coloured drone and a grey drone indicate that there must be at least 1 piece that you control and at least 1 other piece on the track.

- 2 coloured drones with a slash indicate that there must be at least 1 piece that you control, or at least 1 piece your partner controls on the track.
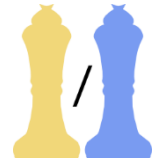
Additionally, a card is only valid to play if its function can be executed (e.g., a Trickster is only valid if there are at least two pieces on the track; a TAC is not valid as the first card in a round; etc.).

In general, if a player holds a card they can validly play, they must play it, even if it results in an undesirable move. For example, a player may have to walk past their home; they may have to capture one of their own or their teammate's pieces; or they may be forced to play a power card at a time when it helps the opposing team. Valid card functions cannot be forfeited. Similarly, if a played card has one valid and one invalid function, the valid one must be taken (for example, if a discard card is played, but no pieces can move the required steps because they are all blocked by another piece, the discard card's discard function must be invoked).

The only exception to the above is when a player invokes the discard function, and the next player holds a TAC card. In this situation, the player may play the TAC card to use the discard card for themselves, but they are not forced to; they may instead discard any other card, or indeed the TAC card if they so wish.

If a player holds no valid cards, they must discard a card of their choice without executing its function. Note, however, that such a discarded card still counts as a played card for the purposes of the TAC card.

Finishing

Once a player has moved all their pieces into their home, they continue to play with their team partner's pieces. All card functions that would affect their pieces now affect their team partner's pieces, including the Angel's. This switchover is allowed to happen in the middle of executing a single-step card.

When a team's last piece enters the home, the next player still has an opportunity to counter the move with a TAC card. If they hold no such card, or playing the card would be invalid because they cannot use the previous card for their own purposes, the team wins.

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Trickster

- You can swap the positions of any two pieces on the track.

- This card is invalid if:

  o There is only one piece on the track.

  o The player who plays the card has no pieces they control on the track.

- The trickster card is special in that there are 7 of them in the deck.

- If tethered pieces are swapped, they swap as normal.

- If only one of tethered pieces swaps, the other tethered piece swaps with the location of the same distance away from the resultant location. If another piece is in that location, it swaps as well.

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TAC

- You must undo the previous player's move and use their card as your own.

- The card is only valid to play if you can make valid use of the previous card.

- When you are being told to discard a card, you can either TAC the card and make your own use of it, or choose to discard the TAC.

- The TAC card is special in that there are 4 of them in the deck.

- In the situation where two TACs are played on top of each other, this undoes the undoing of the first TAC. The resulting move would be that the original move is restored, and the player who played the second TAC can use that card also.

Angel

- If the next player has any pieces in their base, move one of them to its starting location. This will capture any piece on said starting location.

- In the case where the next player has no pieces in their base, move one of the next player's pieces forwards 1 or 13 spaces. You must choose a valid option if any are available.

Auditor

- Until the end of the current round, all players play with their cards revealed.

Carousel

- If the next player plays a number card, every piece on the track simultaneously moves the number of spaces according to that number card.

- If the next player plays a number card with a secondary function, the secondary function cannot be used.

- These pieces may not enter their homes this way.

- Number cards are considered valid for the next player.

- If the next card is a Noble or Witch, the powers of both cards are combined.

- If the next card is a Devil, Jester or Tailor, the power of the Carousel card is carried to the next card.

Cleric

- You can either:

  - o Move a piece you control from the track into your base and replace it with a piece from your partner's base.

  - o Move a piece your partner controls from the track into their base and replace it with a piece from your base.

  - o If you control the same pieces are your partner and have a piece you control on the track, move it into its base and back out.

- This card is invalid if you can't do any of the above actions.

Comet

- Move a piece of your choice forward in steps of 16 spaces until it reaches an unoccupied space.

- The piece may jump over other pieces in the process but may not capture any.

- This card cannot be used to move a piece into its home.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

Cupid

- Move two pieces that have no pieces between them one space towards each other simultaneously.

- If the pieces are only one or two spaces away from each other, both pieces are captured.

- If there are only two pieces on the track, choose which direction the pieces move.

- This card is invalid if:

  o There is only one piece on the track.

  o The player who plays the card has no pieces they control on the track.

Curse

- If the next player plays a number card, its numerical value is halved (rounded down).

- If the next player plays a card with a secondary function, for example a 1 with an exit function, then they may use the exit function with no effect from the Curse card.

Devil

- You must look at the next player's hand and play their turn on their behalf with a card of your choice, including any decisions made using that card.

- If you choose to play a TAC card, that player gets to use the Devil on the player after.

- If you choose to play a Jester card, the function of the Jester card is executed, and then the player who played the Devil continues to play with the new hand.

Fairy

- Move a piece of your choice to the starting location closest to that piece.

- If the closest starting location is ambiguous, choose which one it goes to.

- If there is a piece on the resulting location, it is captured.

- If the piece is already on a starting location, it is considered to have not moved, meaning if it is dark, it stays dark.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

Ghost

- If the next player moves a piece, that piece is considered the only piece on the board for the duration of their turn.

- The piece moved cannot end where another piece is located.

Gnome

- Pick any piece on the track.

- Move every other piece on the track one space away from it simultaneously.

- If a piece's movement direction is ambiguous, it does not move.

- All pieces that collide are captured.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

Jester

- All players give their cards to the player to their right. Then, the player who played the Jester takes another turn (with their new hand).

- If a TAC card is played on the Jester card, the TAC will affect the card underneath it instead.

- If the Jester card is played on a Mirror card, the Mirror affects the next card instead, if any.

King

- The next time all players have the same number of cards in their hands, everyone discards all their cards and the round ends.

- If a TAC card is played on the King card, the TAC will affect the card underneath it instead.

- If the King card is played on a Mirror card and the mirrored King would have normally ended the round, the round ends immediately.

Magnet

- Choose one of the pieces you control on the track. Move the piece directly in front and the piece directly behind half of the distance towards your select piece (rounded down).

- If there is only one other piece on the track, it is your choice if it is considered before or after the chosen piece.

- This card is invalid if:

  o There is only one piece on the track.

  o The player who plays the card has no pieces they control on the track.

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Marshal

- Move a piece on the track one space in front of the first piece after it.

- If your piece is alone on the track, move it forwards one space.

- This card cannot be used to enter the home.

- If the chosen piece is tethered, whichever piece in the tether that reaches a piece first is the piece that decides the resultant location.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

Mirror

- The next player chooses their next card to play. You must execute their card's function if possible.

- Then, the next player then uses their card's function as normal if possible.

- The card played on the Mirror card has an order of validity which is as follows:

    o If the card is valid for the player who played the Mirror card and the next player.

    o If the card is valid for only the player who played the Mirror card.

    o If the card is valid for only the next player.

    o If the card is invalid for both players.

Noble

- Move a piece of your choice to the equivalent location on the opposite edge of the board, or the opposite position on the same edge.

- Any other piece in the resulting location is captured.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

Nurse

- All pieces on their starting locations that are dark become light.

Oracle

- Exchange one card with your partner.

- If a TAC card is played on the Oracle card, the TAC will affect the card underneath it instead.

Paladin

- Move all the pieces on the track to the next piece's position.

- If your piece is alone on the track, it swaps with itself.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

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Phage

- Another player of your choice discards a card and takes the Phage.

- If a TAC card is played on a discarded Phage card, then the TAC card is given to the player of choice instead of the Phage.

Porter

- Move all the next player's pieces in their home up until they are all locked in.

- If they are already locked in, then move up the pieces in your own home.

- If there are no pieces in the next player's home, then move up the pieces in your own home.

Reaper

- Move one of your own pieces on the track back to your base.

- If there is any other piece left on the track, move a piece of your choice on the track to its base.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

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Scapegoat

- Choose an opponent's piece on the track. The next player that captures a piece captures the chose piece instead and moves their piece to the chosen piece's previous location.

- The effect terminates at the end of the round.

- If a single-step card was used to capture, continue using the remaining moves after the previous actions have occurred. A single-step card is only valid if the remaining steps can be used after the capture.

- If the chosen piece captures another piece, it captures itself.

- In the event of there being multiple Scapegoats, whichever piece was chosen first is captured first.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

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Tailor

- If the next player plays a number card, add, or subtract 1 from its value after they've played their card (your choice).

- If one of the options is invalid, you must choose a valid option.

- If the next card is a Witch, the powers of both cards are combined.

- If the next card is a Devil, Jester or Carousel, the power of the Tailor card is carried to the next card.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

- If the next player plays a card with a secondary function, the current player must choose to add or subtract before the next player uses the card. The secondary function may then be used instead of the primary function.

Tether

- Choose any two pieces on the track. Any move affecting one piece affects the other equally. Number moves must be valid for both.

- The tether breaks at the end of the round, or if one piece is moved to its home or base.

- A tether can be broken if the pieces move in opposite directions simultaneously, for example if a Gnome or Magnet affects both pieces.

- This card is invalid if:

    o There is only one piece on the track.

    o The player who plays the card has no pieces they control on the track.

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Warrior

- Move one of the pieces you control on the track forwards until it reaches a piece and capture it.

- If your piece is alone on the track, it captures itself.

- If there are only tethered pieces are on the track, the chosen piece captures itself and the other piece moves a full revolution of the track.

- If the chosen piece is tethered, whichever piece in the tether that reaches a piece first is the piece that decides the resultant location.

- This card requires a piece controlled by the player on the track.

Witch

- The next player's movements of pieces are reversed (forwards becomes backwards and vice versa).

- If the next player plays a card with a secondary function, for example a 1 with an exit function, then they may use the exit function with no effect from the Witch card.