

Dûhr™

The Lesser Houses



A Game of
Social Combat



Contents

1. Game Overview	
Components	1
Backstory	1
Summary	1
2. Card Types	
House Cards*	2
Conspiracy Cards	2
Event Cards	2
Suspicion and Scandal Cards	2
Agenda Cards	2
3. The Basics	
Terminology	3
Core Rules	3
4. Game Setup	4
5. How to Play	
Game Objective	4
Turn Structure	4
House Actions	5
6. Favor and Disfavor	5
Playing Favored	6
Losing Favor	6
Playing Disfavored	6
Regaining Favor	6
7. Conspiracies	6
Revealing a Conspiracy	7
Conspiracy Benefits	7
8. Vilified Houses	
Becoming Vilified	7
Playing Vilified	8
Returning from Villainy	8
9. End of the Game	
Calculating Scores	8
Scoring Agendas	9
Determining the Winner	9
10. Strategy Tips	9

Credits

Game Design	Jim Felli
Cover Illustration	Jonathan Guzi
Page Backgrounds	Jonathan Guzi
House Illustrations	Reza Afshar
Editing	Dustin Schwartz
	Kristie Krone
	Amy Svendsen
Everything Else	Jim Felli

Playtesters

C. Andersen	J. Hayth	D. Radtke
J. Andersen	M. Jones	O. Reece
P. Blum	B. Kavalal	C. Sommers
C. Carlson	C. Klutzke	M. Strebing
J. Carlson	C. Krone	B. Svendsen
N. Cerda	A. Lambeth	D. Thurot
T. Chance	B. Maloney	A. Weismantel
M. Crane	S. McAhren	D. Weismantel
A. Dummer	B. Miller	Z. Weismantel
B. Everly	W. Miller	C. Williams
Z. Felli	V. Nieto	Z. VanderElzen

**House abilities are described in detail on the back cover of this booklet.*

Dûhr™

The Lesser Houses

1. Game Overview

Components

In addition to this rulebook, the game includes:

6 House cards	60 Suspicion cards	6 Event cards
6 Conspiracy cards	24 Scandal cards	12 Agenda cards

Backstory

The monolithic city-state of Dûhr is at once a crucible of emerging and forgotten cultures, a cynosure of commerce, and a titan of military might. Its Great and Lesser Houses rise and fall with the whims of its Family Royal, the Sovereign House Kythidûhr. Amidst the festivals of summer, House Kythidûhr announced its intent to elevate one of Dûhr's Lesser Houses to Great House status. By autumn's frosts, the Lesser Houses were deeply embroiled in a fierce battle for the coveted title. Not with soldiers, for that would waste blood and gold, but with the most insidious of political weapons: suspicion and scandal. They attacked each other with aspersions and calumny, well devised and craftily exploited, designed to erode the social standing of their rival Houses and thereby remove them from contention.

Summary

Dûhr™: The Lesser Houses accommodates **4 to 6 players**. Each player is the master of a Lesser House of Dûhr, vying for Great House status. Players take turns using cards in their hand to trigger **events**, place **suspicious** and **scandals** on each other's House, or activate their own House's unique **ability** to affect cards already placed. The accumulation of suspicion and scandal cards on a House card erodes the populace's **favor** for that House by raising suggestions of wrongdoing or embroiling it in scandals that incite public outrage.

All Houses begin the game without any suspicions or scandals and favored by the people of Dûhr. When a House accumulates a combined total of 5 suspicion and/or scandal cards, that House falls into **disfavor** with the populace. If a disfavored House ever has 3 or more revealed scandal cards, the House becomes **vilified**. The game ends immediately when the number of favored Houses remaining is 1 or none. Whoever has the highest score at that point wins the game. It is possible for a disfavored or vilified House to outscore a favored House and win the game!

2. Card Types

House Cards

Your **House card** shows your House's **name**, **color** and **sigil**, and unique **ability**. House abilities are explained in detail on the **back cover of this booklet**. Each House card has a color side and a black-and-white side.

Conspiracy Cards

Your **conspiracy card** identifies a House in play where you have special agents working on your behalf. Having your agents in a rival House gives you access to that House's ability (*provided that both your House and the rival House have standing*). Having your agents in your own House allows you to use your ability on **concealed cards**.

Event Cards

There are 6 **event cards** in the deck: **Betrayal**, **Blackmail**, **Collaborators**, **Espionage**, **Informants**, and **Intrigue**. Each event card has a unique and powerful effect that is carried out immediately when the card is played.

Suspicion and Scandal Cards

Suspicion cards are matched to specific Houses, as indicated by the color, sigil, and House name on the card. Playing a suspicion card on a House undermines public trust in the House, pushes it toward disfavor, and reduces the player's score by 1 point. **Scandal cards** are black and are not matched to specific Houses. Playing a scandal card on a House defames the House, pushes it toward disfavor and vilification, and reduces the player's score by 2 points.

Agenda Cards

Your **agenda card** specifies a secret goal that you are trying to achieve and the bonus points you will be awarded for success. White agendas focus on individual Houses and are easier to achieve. Black agendas focus on multiple Houses and are more difficult to achieve.



3. The Basics

Terminology *** These are really important terms! ***

- Card Count** The total number of cards currently on a House is its **card count**. This includes all suspicions and scandals, whether revealed or concealed.
- Concealed** Cards that are face down are **concealed**. Concealed suspicion and scandal cards on a House count toward its card count, but they **will not reduce** that player's score. Flipping a revealed card face down conceals it.
- Revealed** Cards that are face up are **revealed**. Revealed suspicion and scandal cards on a House count toward its card count and **will reduce** that player's score. Flipping a concealed card face up reveals it.
- Favored** A House with a card count lower than 5 is **favored** by the populace of Dúhr. Favored Houses have standing.
- Disfavored** A House with a card count of exactly 5 and fewer than 3 revealed scandals is **disfavored** by the populace of Dúhr. Disfavored Houses have standing.
- Vilified** A House becomes **vilified** when it has a card count of exactly 5 **and at least 3 revealed scandals**. Vilified Houses do not have standing.
- Standing** Houses that are **not vilified** have **standing** and are **standing Houses**.

Core Rules *** These rules always apply, without exception! ***

1. A House's accumulated suspicion and scandal cards should be clearly displayed on the table next to the House card.
2. A House may not have a card count higher than 5. New cards may not be played on or moved to a House that already has a card count of 5.
3. Cards played from your hand or brought into play by other means are played on Houses face up (*i.e., revealed*).
4. Cards played from your hand or moved from one House to another may not replace existing cards on a House card.
5. Players may not use the abilities of vilified Houses.
6. Discarded suspicion cards and event cards are put in the **discard pile**, face up; discarded scandal cards are returned to the **Web of Scandal**, face up.

4. Game Setup

1. Give each player 1 random **House card**. This is the player's House.
2. Shuffle only the **conspiracy cards** that correspond to the Houses to be used in the game and randomly deal 1 to each player, face down. Each player may look at their conspiracy card, but must keep it concealed for now.
3. Deal each player **1 random black** and **1 random white agenda card**, face down. Players look at the 2 cards, choose 1 to keep, and return the other to the box. Players keep their agendas concealed until scoring at the end of the game. (*It will be easier if you only use the white agenda cards for your first few games.*)
4. Give each player 1 **scandal card**, then put the remaining scandal cards face up in a stack in the center. This stack is known as the **Web of Scandal**.
5. Select the sets of **suspicion cards** (*10x each*) that match the Houses to be used in the game. Give each player **2 suspicion cards that match their House**, then shuffle the remaining suspicion cards from the selected sets together with the **6 event cards**. Place this stack, known as the **Web of Suspicion**, face down in the center. Leave room nearby for a **discard pile**. (*When the Web of Suspicion runs out, shuffle the discard pile to make a new Web of Suspicion.*)
6. Deal 4 cards from the Web of Suspicion to each player, face down. These cards, with the scandal and suspicion cards dealt earlier, make up each player's **7 card starting hand**. Players should keep their hands hidden from their opponents.
7. Choose a player who will go first. After that, play proceeds clockwise.

5. How to Play

Game Objective

Players want to **maximize their point total**. Point scoring is described on page 8.

Turn Structure

There are 2 phases to your turn: an **Action Phase** followed by an **Acquire Phase**. Completing your Acquire Phase ends your turn.

Action Phase: In this phase, you execute your plans and cast aspersions on your rivals. You **must** perform 1 of 5 possible **House Actions**. If you cannot perform any of the 5 House Actions, you must discard a card from your hand (*if you have any*) as your action.

Acquire Phase: In this phase, you gather dirt on your rivals by adding cards to your hand from the Web of Suspicion. If you have no cards in your hand, draw **2 cards**. Otherwise, you may either draw **1 card** or discard 1 card from your hand to draw **2 cards**.

House Actions

You must perform 1 of these 5 **House Actions** during your Action Phase.

1. **Raise a suspicion.** Take a suspicion card from your hand and play it on the matching favored House card (e.g., a *House Silgaro* suspicion card may only be played on *House Silgaro*).
2. **Create a scandal.** Take a scandal card from your hand and play it on any favored House card (i.e., not a *disfavored* or *vilified* House).
3. **Trigger an event.** Play an event card from your hand, carry out the event, then discard the event card.
4. **Use an ability.** Take a suspicion card from your hand that matches your own House, and discard it to **activate the ability** of your House. The House abilities are noted on the bottom right on the color side of the House card and described in detail on the back of this booklet.
5. **Make a masterstroke.** Take any **pair** of matching suspicion cards from your hand, and discard them to do 1 of the following 6 masterstrokes:
 - Reveal a concealed card on any House card (*turn it face up*).
 - Remove and discard a revealed scandal card from any House card.
 - Put a scandal card from the Web of Scandal on any favored House card.
 - **Negate the effect** of an event card (*after the event card is played*).
 - **Negate the effect** of a House ability (*after the ability is activated*).
 - **Negate the effect** of any other masterstroke (*including a negation*).

NOTE: Masterstrokes to **negate effects** may be played out of turn.

6. Favor and Disfavor

Favored Houses enjoy the love, support, and backing of Dûhr's populace. The people readily believe their claims and accusations. This gives players with favored Houses additional options on their turn and the ability to freely utilize all the suspicion and scandal cards in their hand (see p. 6). **Disfavored Houses** are disliked and distrusted by Dûhr's residents. The people do not readily believe their allegations and often ignore the aspersions they cast. This is reflected by limiting the cards that players with disfavored Houses may use on their turn (see p. 6).



Disfavored

Favored

Playing as a Favored House

Players with favored Houses display their House cards vertically on the table, with the color side face up. If your House is favored, you have *2 extra options* available to you during your Action Phase that disfavored Houses do not:

- **Reveal conspiracy:** You may flip your conspiracy card face up. This does not count as an action but may only be done during your Action Phase (*at any time during the phase*). This is a **reveal by choice** (see p. 7).
- **Second action:** You may, but are not required to, take a second **House Action** during your Action Phase. (*The downside to taking a second action is that it reduces your hand size.*)

Losing Favor

A House instantly loses favor when its **card count equals 5**. Each time a player's House **loses favor**, flip over their conspiracy card (*if the card was revealed, conceal it; if it was concealed, reveal it*). The House will continue play as a disfavored House if it has fewer than **3 revealed scandals**, otherwise it will become vilified (see p. 7).

Playing as a Disfavored House

Players with disfavored Houses display their House card horizontally on the table, with the color side face up. If your House is disfavored on your turn and you have 3 or more cards in hand, you must draw **2 cards at random** from your hand and set the rest aside. Those 2 cards will be your **entire hand** for your turn (*including your Acquire Phase*). At the end of your turn, retrieve the cards you set aside to fill out your remaining hand. You may then use all your cards as appropriate until your next turn, regardless of whether or not you regain favor (*e.g., trades, masterstokes*).

Regaining Favor from Disfavor

A disfavored House instantly regains favor if its card count is **reduced below 5**. Rotate the House card to a vertical orientation, color side up. The House will continue play as a favored House (*e.g., you may get a second play option*). Do not flip a player's conspiracy card when their House regains favor; **conspiracy cards only flip automatically when a House loses favor**.

7. Conspiracies

Each player has special operatives working secretly in the House shown on their conspiracy card. These operatives offer players additional advantages in game play. It is possible for a player to have their operatives in their own House (see p. 7).

Revealing a Conspiracy

A conspiracy is **revealed** when a player's conspiracy card is turned face up, and remains revealed as long as the card remains face up. Revealing a conspiracy always creates a scandal, the target of which depends on how the conspiracy was revealed. A conspiracy may be revealed **by choice** or **by consequence**.

- **Reveal by choice:** If your House is favored, you may choose to reveal your conspiracy during your Action Phase. *This is a free play and does not count as a House Action.* Simply flip your conspiracy card face up to reveal it. Then you must take a scandal card from the Web of Scandal and play it on **your own House card**. (*You may choose to reveal your conspiracy, but you can never choose to conceal your conspiracy this way.*)
- **Reveal by consequence:** If your conspiracy is revealed as a consequence of an event card or as the result of your House losing favor, take a scandal card from the Web of Scandal and play it **on the House card shown on your conspiracy card**. If that House card already has 5 cards on it, **replace** 1 of their revealed suspicion cards with the scandal card. (*If that House has no revealed suspicion cards, replace a concealed card instead.*) Discard any replaced card.

Conspiracy Benefits

While your conspiracy is **revealed** and both your House and the House shown on your conspiracy card have **standing**, you may use that House's ability as well as your own House ability. Activating either ability is a **House Action** and requires playing a suspicion card that matches the House (*e.g., if House Lycosia is revealed on House Balistrad's conspiracy card, the House Balistrad player could play a House Lycosia suspicion card to use House Lycosia's ability*). If your revealed conspiracy card depicts your own House and your House has standing, you may use your House ability on **concealed cards**: Balistrad and Kardosa may flip over concealed cards, Usari may change concealed cards into revealed suspicions or scandals, Deluras and Lycosia may move concealed cards, and Silgaro may pick up concealed cards.

8. Vilified Houses

Becoming Vilified

Vilified Houses are shunned and feared by Dûhr's inhabitants. A House becomes **vilified** when its card count **equals 5 and 3 or more** of those cards are **revealed scandals**. When a House becomes vilified, that player discards their entire hand of cards and becomes a **villain**. Villains keep their agenda card and display their House card on the table **vertically** with its black-and-white side face up.

Playing as a Vilified House

Villains cannot hold or use cards and do not get an Action or Acquire Phase, but they may continue to make deals with other players. On their turn, a villain must perform their choice of 1 of 3 **Villainous Acts**: **defame**, **expose**, or **scandalize**.



Defame. Take a scandal card from the Web of Scandal and use it to replace a revealed suspicion card on any House (*discard the replaced suspicion card*).



Expose. Reveal a concealed card on any House (*turn it face up*).



Scandalize. Take a scandal card from the Web of Scandal and play it on any favored House.

Villainous Acts are not House abilities and may not be negated by masterstroke. A villain's score increases with the number of villains in play (*see below*), so it behooves them to vilify as many Houses as possible.

Returning From Villainy

If the card count on a vilified House is **reduced below 5**, the House immediately regains standing and continues play as a favored House. Place the House card in a vertical orientation, color side up. If the card count on a vilified House is **5** but the number of revealed scandal cards is **reduced below 3**, the House immediately regains standing and continues play as a disfavored House. Place the House card in a horizontal orientation, color side up. Players immediately draw a new hand of **1 card** from the Web of Suspicion when their House regains standing (*and may, of course, make deals with other players to get more cards prior to their next turn*).

9. End of the Game

The game ends when the number of **favored Houses** remaining is **1 or none** at the conclusion of a House Action (*after all triggered consequences of that action have resolved*). Players then determine their scores based on their House's status and the number and type of revealed cards on their House (*see table*). Concealed cards do not count against your score. Villains include themselves when counting the number of villains.

House Status	How to Calculate Your Score
Favored	10 - [1 per suspicion] - [2 per scandal]
Disfavored	9 - [1 per suspicion] - [2 per scandal]
Vilified	2 + [1 per villain]

e.g., You end up disfavored with 3 suspicions, 1 scandal, and 1 concealed card on your House. Your score is $9 - 3 - 2 - 0 = 4$ points (*before any agenda points*).

Scoring Agendas

After scores are calculated, players reveal their agendas and add to their score any bonus points earned for accomplishing their agenda. Each agenda specifies a unique condition that must be met at the end of the game in order for the player to get the listed bonus points.

Determining the Winner

The player with the highest total score wins! In the event of ties, favored Houses win ties with disfavored Houses and standing Houses win ties with vilified Houses. (*You may also use campaign scoring, where the winner is the player with the highest cumulative score across 3 games.*)

- **If a favored House wins...** the House Royal elevates the Lesser House favored by the populace of Dûhr to Great House status.
- **If a disfavored House wins...** the House Royal forms an alliance with the politically accomplished albeit publicly disfavored Lesser House and elevates it to Great House status.
- **If one or more villains win...** the Family Royal is overthrown and a new Family is elevated to power under the control of the villain(s).

10. Strategy Tips

This is a game of strategy that is well served by **clever deal making** and **shameless table talk**. Lie, cajole, wheedle, make and break deals! It adds Machiavellian intrigue to the game when players start trading cards and bartering their abilities.

Don't be afraid to unleash your creativity when making deals with other players. It's simple and direct to make *quid pro quo* deals for the use of House abilities (*e.g., I'll use mine on you if you use yours on me*), but there are no rules against making deals that exchange a desired action for a look at your conspiracy or agenda card, or perhaps 1 or more cards from your hand. You may even find it advantageous to simply give a player a card from your hand if they agree to use it in a manner consistent with your desires. Players may make deals at any time (*even out of turn*), regardless of whether their House is favored, disfavored, or vilified. That said, there is nothing in the rules that obligates anyone to honor the deals they make. The only cards you may give away or trade as part of a deal are cards in your hand (*you cannot trade your conspiracy, agenda, or House card*).

When all is said and done, this is a game about social interaction and political combat. Have at it as you will!

House Abilities...



House Deluras

A House Bardic



Shift Suspicion: Remove a *revealed* suspicion card* from **any** House and place it on **any favored** House (*the suspicion does not need to match the House*).



House Usari

A House Apothic



Convert Indignity: Replace a *revealed* suspicion card* on **any** House with a scandal card from the Web of Scandal -OR- replace a *revealed* scandal card* on **any** House with the top suspicion card from the Web of Suspicion (*the suspicion card does not need to match the House*). In either case, discard the replaced suspicion or scandal card.

* You may use your ability on a concealed card if your House has standing and matches the House shown on your revealed conspiracy card.



House Lycosia

A House Assassin



Shift Scandal: Remove a *revealed* scandal card* from **any** House and place it on **any favored** House.



House Balistrad

A House Mercantile



Conceal Scandal: Flip over a *revealed* scandal card* on **any** House (*this conceals the card*).



House Kardosa

A House Mercenary



Conceal Suspicion: Flip over a *revealed* suspicion card* on **any** House (*this conceals the card*).



House Silgaro

A House Votary



Rescind Suspicion: Remove a *revealed* suspicion card* from **any** House and put that card into your hand, then immediately discard a card.

Taking a Turn

Favored House[§]

1. Take an action.
 - Raise suspicion
 - Create scandal
 - Trigger event
 - Use ability
 - Masterstroke
2. May take a 2nd action.
3. Draw 1 card or discard 1 card and draw 2 cards.†

[§] You may reveal your conspiracy card.

[†] Draw two cards if you have no cards in hand.

Disfavored House

- Use at most **2 cards** (drawn at **random**) from your hand.
1. Take an action.
 - Raise suspicion
 - Create scandal
 - Trigger event
 - Use ability
 - Masterstroke
 2. Draw 1 card or discard 1 card and draw 2 cards.†

Oilified House

- Choose A, B, or C:
- A. Reveal a concealed card on **any** House.
 - B. Take a card from the Web of Scandal to play on **any favored** House.
 - C. Take a card from the Web of Scandal and use it to replace a *revealed* suspicion card on **any** House.