JOHN D CLAIR

CUSTOM HEROES™

カスタムヒーローズ



RULEBOOK

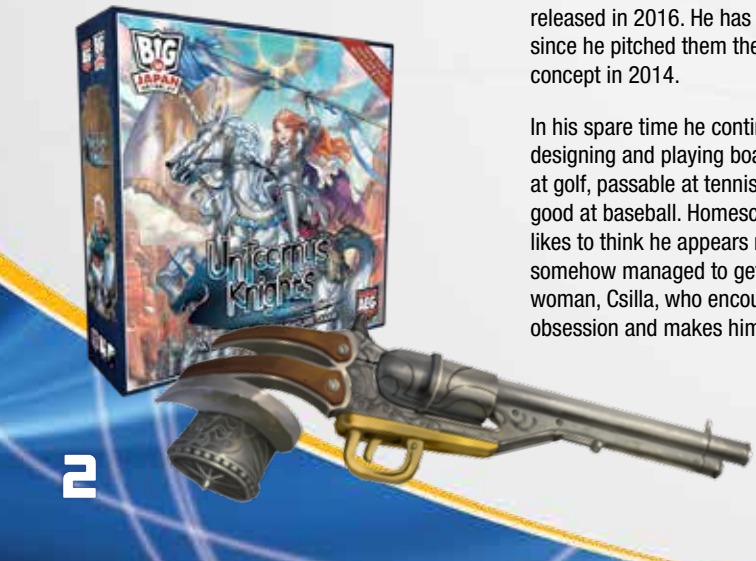
A game by John D. Clair,
for 2 to 6 players, ages 14 and up.



AEG's Big In Japan line brings the best of Japanese game design and innovation to the world. Games including Unicornus Knights, Sakura Arms, Love Letter, Sail to India, and more have all come out in the line. However, now there is a twist!

Custom Heroes is a game that AEG has developed using our Card Crafting System™, but is based on the classic Japanese game "Daifugo". While it does not feature a Japanese designer, it is definitely Big in Japan!

Also look for Unicornus Knights!



ABOUT THE GAME DESIGNER

John is an urban board game nerd who frequently masquerades as a tough outdoorsman by backpacking over the Sierra Nevada mountains or bicycling across the United States. Enjoying the sunshine and great people, he lives in Los Angeles and designs board games all of the time and does data analytics some of the time. John invented the Card Crafting System™ that is used in *Custom Heroes* and first seen in *Mystic Vale* which was released in 2016. He has worked closely with AEG since he pitched them the original card crafting concept in 2014.

In his spare time he continues obsessively designing and playing board games. He is terrible at golf, passable at tennis, and used to be pretty good at baseball. Homeschooled as a youth he likes to think he appears normal in public and has somehow managed to get engaged to a wonderful woman, Csilla, who encourages his board game obsession and makes him happy.

IN THE BOX

- 60 Character Cards
- 84 Card Advancements
- 80 Card Sleeves
- 76 Victory Point Tokens
- 36 Power Tokens
- 6 Player Screens
- 1 Card Advancement Bag
- 1 Rulebook

WHAT IS CARD CRAFTING?

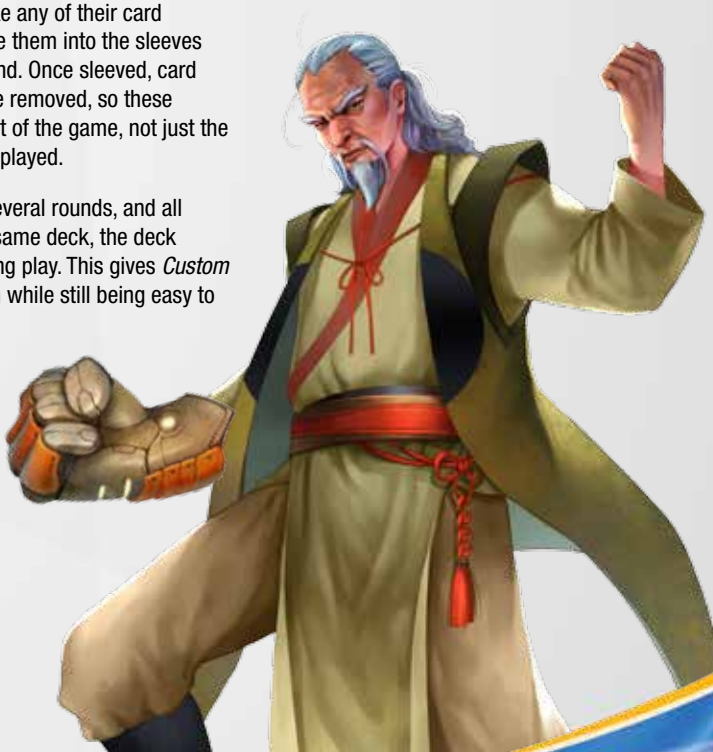
Custom Heroes uses AEG's Card Crafting System™, which means that players modify their cards as the game goes along.

During the game players have a private selection of card advancements to choose from. While playing, players can take any of their card advancements and slide them into the sleeves of any cards in their hand. Once sleeved, card advancement cannot be removed, so these changes last for the rest of the game, not just the trick on which they are played.

Since the game lasts several rounds, and all players draw from the same deck, the deck constantly evolves during play. This gives *Custom Heroes* incredible depth while still being easy to learn.

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OVERVIEW

Custom Heroes is a new twist on a trick-taking game. Outmaneuver your opponents by using the power of card crafting to change the cards as the game goes on.

GAME PLAY SUMMARY

At its heart, Custom Heroes is a trick-taking / card-shedding game, played in several rounds. At the start of each trick, one player leads, playing one or more cards with matching values. Other players can follow the lead, playing an equal number of cards with matching values that meet or exceed those played previously. The last player to play wins the trick, and leads the next trick. Players continue playing tricks until only one player has cards left. This ends the round.

HOW TO WIN THE GAME

Each round, your goal is to get rid of all your cards before the other players get rid of their cards. The sooner you get rid of your cards, the more victory points you score. To win the game, you must have at least 10 victory points, and then win a round by being the first to get rid of all your cards. You may adjust this number (10) up or down for shorter or longer games, as desired.

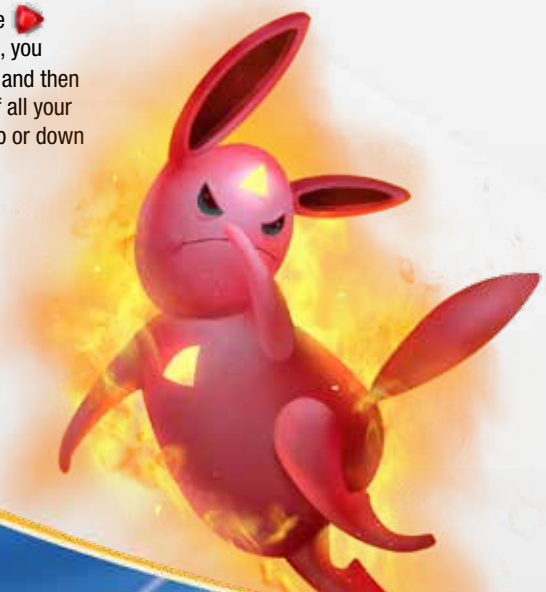
BASIC CHARACTER CARD ANATOMY

These are the cards that you play with. At the beginning of the game, they are all very simple.



1. Card Value

This is the card's value (before modifiers from card advancements).



CARD ADVANCEMENT ANATOMY

Card advancements can be inserted into the sleeve of a basic character card, altering it.





1. Aura (Reset the Card Value)

This resets the number printed on the card to a different value.

2. Items (Modify the Card Value)

This adjusts the card's value up or down. It permanently changes the value of the card. These modifiers, once sleeved, are not optional.

3. Buddies/Ascended Form (Add a Special Ability)

Some card advancements give the card a special ability when played (3A). To activate this special ability, you must spend tokens as indicated on the card (3B). See Special Abilities and Power Tokens on page page 11 for more.

4. Category

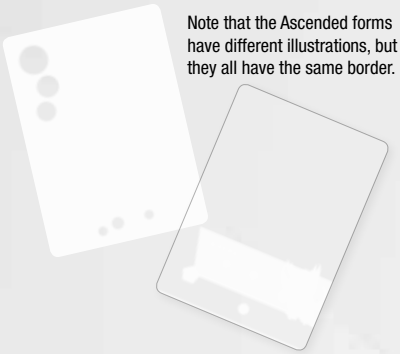
Each Card Advancement has a power gem color: Blue for right hand items, red for left hand items, yellow for buddies and ascended forms, or green for auras. A card can only have one card advancement of each gem type.



UNPACKING THE BOX

Once you have opened everything, sleeve all 60 of the basic character cards. Extra sleeves are included in case a sleeve needs to be replaced.

Search the card advancements for six each of ASCENDED FORM and KODORA (pictured below) and set them aside.



Note that the Ascended forms have different illustrations, but they all have the same border.

Shuffle the remaining card advancements and place them in the card advancement bag.

PROTECTIVE COVERINGS



To protect the card advancements during the printing process, the front of each card advancement has a clear plastic film placed over its surface. You can remove this by peeling it off, starting at one corner.

The film does not hinder game play, so we suggest that you play a few games of Custom Heroes with the film in place. The edge of the film loosens with use, making it easier to remove.

AVOID THE HEAT

The clear plastic cards of Custom Heroes are susceptible to warping under extreme heat. We advise that you do not store Custom Heroes in places subject to higher temperatures, such as a closed car, or un-climvate controlled rooms.



SETTING UP A GAME

Gather a full set of basic character cards (values 1-10) for each player in the game.
These cards make up the entire deck that is used for the game; return any excess cards to the box.

EXAMPLE

For a 5-player game, use 50 basic character cards; leaving one set of 1–10 value basic character cards unused in the box.

Give each player the following:

- **A player screen.** This screen hides your personal card advancements, and provides a handy scoring reference as well.
- **An ASCENDED FORM and KODORA** card advancement, placed behind the player screens. Return any remaining ASCENDED FORM and KODORA card advancements to the box. Do not place them in the card advancement bag.
- **1 victory point** token, placed in front of the player screens. The quantity of victory points each player has is always public knowledge.
- **2 power** tokens, placed behind the player screens. The quantity of power tokens eachplayer has is always hidden.
- **1 random card advancement** drawn from the bag, placed behind the player screens. Card advancements that players have are kept secret until used.

You are ready to begin. The player who most recently dressed up in costume starts the first trick.

TWO-PLAYER GAMES

The setup for two-player games has a few changes:

- Use 3 full sets of 1–10 value character cards instead of just 2 sets.
- Each player gets 3 random card advancements, not 1.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Custom Heroes plays over a series of rounds. Each round has an Upkeep Phase, and a Main Phase, and a Scoring Phase. Whenever a plyer runs out of cards in the Main Phase, that player can complete their own scoring.

UPKEEP PHASE

The Upkeep Phase is the start of a new round. Shuffle the deck and deal 10 cards face down to each player (15 cards in a two-player game). Players may now look at their cards. Once everyone has inspected their cards, players declare whether they wish to use the effects of any or all KODORA cards they have (see "Kodora" on page 14). Note that you won't have enough to use a KODORA effect during the first Upkeep Phase.

MAIN PHASE

The Main Phase is where most of the action happens. Each Main Phase is played over the course of several tricks in which players take turns playing cards or passing. Each trick has a winner who then begins the next trick. Continue playing tricks until only one player has cards left, at which point the Main Phase concludes.

Each trick, the player who begins the trick plays a set of one or more cards, all with matching numeric values, placing them in a communal pile. Players then continue playing cards, proceeding clockwise around the table in turn. When it's your turn, you must either play cards from your hand or pass. If you pass, you may still play cards later in the trick if desired.

Turns continue around the table until all players consecutively pass or are skipped and the turn returns to the last player to have played cards. That player wins the trick, and becomes starting player for the next trick. If the player who won the trick is now out of cards, the next player to the left starts the next trick instead. The following rules apply when playing cards:

- Immediately before playing cards, you may sleeve advancements from behind your screen into those cards to modify them. See page 10 for full rules.
- The quantity of cards played does not change until the trick is over (e.g., if the first player leads 3 cards with a value of 1, all other plays in that trick must be exactly 3 cards). The sole exception is for Ascended cards; see page 12.
- The cards played must all be the same value (e.g., all 3s or all 7s, not a mix of 3s and 7s).
- The value of the cards must be equal to or greater than the last set of cards played (e.g., if the last player played four 5s, the next play must be four matching cards with a value of 5 or greater).
- If you play cards with a value equal to the last cards played this trick, then the player to your left is skipped and immediately loses their turn. That player can play again later that trick if the turn goes all the way around the table.
- You can always pass, even if you could play cards (passing is often in your best strategic interest). If you pass, you may still play cards later in the trick if desired.
- As the game progresses, you may end up playing a card with a special ability. (See page 11 for full rules regarding special abilities).

Once you run out of cards in your hand, you are finished with that round. Proceed to the Scoring Phase while the other players continue the Main Phase. In the Scoring Phase, you get a bonus based on your finish (the first player out gets the 1st-place bonus, etc.). When only one player has cards left, the round ends and that player also proceeds to the Scoring Phase.

PLAYING CARDS IN A TWO-PLAYER GAME

In a two-player game, the numeric value of the cards played must be greater than the last value played this trick; they cannot be equal. Also note that rules applicable to two-player games, such as no skipping due to duplicate plays, do not apply to a 3+ player game when the round is down to only two players. Thus when there are only two players left in a 3+ player game, they can skip the other remaining player by playing a matching set, thus clearing the cards and starting anew.

SCORING PHASE

- **If you are the first player to finish a round by playing your last card, and you already have 10 or more before collecting for this scoring phase, then you win the game.**

Otherwise, all players score benefits as detailed below. When you play your last card, check the placing reference table on the back of your player screen and gain the reward associated with where you finished the round. Place in front of your player screen. Place behind your player screen. Draw card advancements ( ) randomly from the bag and place them behind your screen.

	6			5			4			3			2		
PLACE															
1st	5		1	5		1	5		1	5		1	4		2
2nd	4	1	1	3	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	2	*-1	1	2
3rd	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	*-1	2	3			
4th	2	2	2	1	2	2	*-1	2	3						
5th	1	2	3	*-1	2	3									
6th	*-1	3	3												

*Reset to 9 if you have 10+ .

EXAMPLE

You are playing a 4-player game, and came in third this round. You get get 1 , 2 , and you draw 2 card advancements blindly from the bag.

If you came in last place in the round, and after scoring you still have 10 or more , discard until you have exactly 9 total .

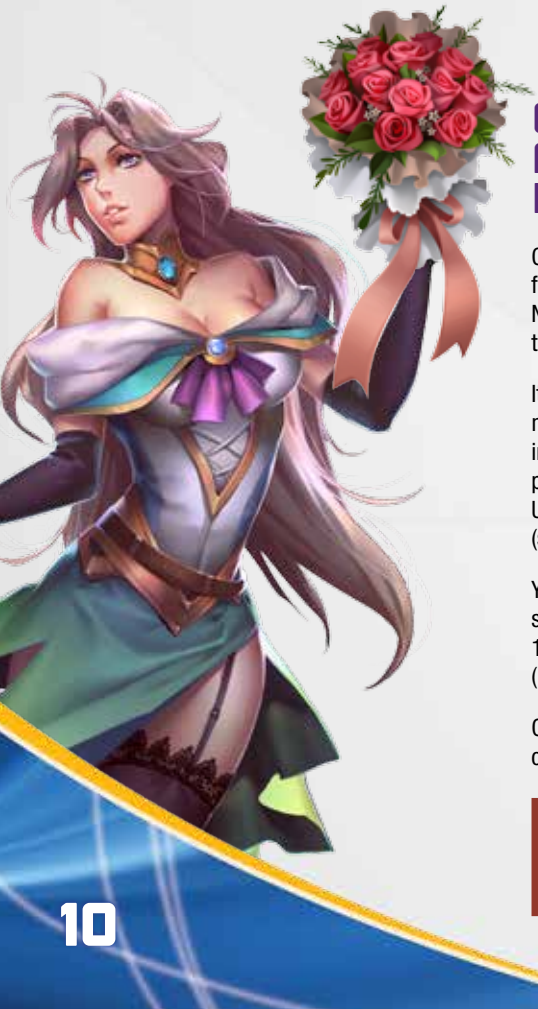
Once all players have scored, collect all the cards (without removing card advancements), shuffle them, and begin a new round. The player who came in last place this round becomes starting player of the first trick of the next round.

SUDDEN DEATH 7TH ROUND

At the end of six rounds, if no player has yet won outright, the game proceeds to sudden death. If the player who won the 6th round has more victory points than every other player (no ties), that player immediately wins. Otherwise, the player who won the 6th round, and the player (or players, if tied) with the most victory points face off in a final round. No other players participate. Shuffle the entire deck, without removing any cards.

Deal ten cards to each player (fifteen in a two-player final). Set the unused cards aside without revealing them. Play a normal hand (note that with two-player finals, card values must exceed previous plays). The player who placed worst in the sixth round starts the first trick.

The winner of the sudden death round wins the game regardless of points.



CARD ADVANCEMENTS AND POWER TOKENS

Card advancements are designed to slide in front of a basic character card and modify it. No advancement can be played by itself; it needs to be sleeved into a basic character card first.

It costs nothing to sleeve a card. You can sleeve as many card advancements as you like into cards in your hand at the start of your turn (before you play). You may also sleeve Kodora cards during the Upkeep Phase if you wish to use the Kodora ability (see its entry, following).

You can sleeve multiple card advancements into a single card, however no card can have more than 1 advancement of any given gem color. (, , &)

Once sleeved on a card, that advancement stays on that card for the remainder of the game.

> **Remember**, whenever you gain a card advancement, place it behind your screen. It remains secret until you use it.

RESET VALUES AND MODIFIERS

Card advancements that overlay the value of a basic character card replace the number printed on the card with this new value. Card advancements with positive or negative modifiers below the card's base value adjust the card's value up or down. It permanently changes the value of the card. These modifiers, once sleeved, are not optional.







***All of these cards have a value of 6.**

Modifiers can make a card's value become zero, or even move into the negative.

> A card with a base value of 1 that has a -4 card advancement counts as a negative 3.

SPECIAL ABILITIES AND POWER TOKENS

Some card advancements have special abilities printed on them. These special abilities require to be used.

You start the game with 2 , and gain additional tokens based on how well you finish each round. You may also gain for playing cards with special abilities; see below.

During your turn, you may trade 4 for 1 . Also, you can never save more than 6 .
At the end of your turn or at the end of the Scoring Phase, if you have 7 or more you must either trade in 4 for 1 , or else discard until you have only 6 left.

Each special ability has a cost in listed to the left. To use a special ability, you must pay the cost of that ability before you play the card. If you do not have enough , you cannot use that special ability. You are never required to use a special ability; you may always play a card using only its numeric value.

When playing a card with a special ability, if you choose not to use the special ability, or if you cannot pay the price, you gain 1 . You get exactly 1 per card, regardless of the power cost of the special ability. You gain this after playing the card; it cannot be used to pay for the cost of special abilities on other cards played at the same time.



POWER COST EXAMPLE

You have a 7 card with the ability, "Wild if played in a set." You can play that card as a 7 and gain 1 , or you could pay 1 to make it wild and play it with a 10, as a pair of 10s.

CARD ADVANCEMENT CLARIFICATIONS

This appendix answers any questions you may have about how card advancements work.

ASCENDED FORMS

Ascended forms are powerful card advancements. Each player begins the game with one.

When played, you may pay 2 to activate its ability. If activated, an Ascended form is always played as a single card and its numerical value is ignored. The Ascended form's special ability automatically beats any previous play, regardless of the value or quantity of cards played (a single Ascended form beats four 8s, for example). After an Ascended form is used, play continues around the table as normal, however only other Ascended forms can be played (playing a second Ascended form skips as normal).

TWO-PLAYER GAMES

Normally, in a two-player game, you cannot play cards that match the value of the previous card. Ascended cards are an exception; you can play an Ascended card on top of an Ascended card, and this does not skip the other player.



BURNY

When this special ability is activated, the BURNY counts as two copies of the card, instead of one.

Example: *You play two 7s, one of which has the BURNY card advancement. You activate the ability, thus you are considered to have played three 7s.*



EDGE

When activated, this card becomes "wild" (its value becomes equal to that of the other cards in the set).

Example: *If you play two 5s and an activated EDGE, that counts as playing three 5s.*

This card's special ability can only be used when it is played as part of a set with at least one other card that has a specific value.

Example: *You cannot play 2 activated wilds as a pair of 1,000,000-value cards.*



CHARMY

After a player activates this special ability, the card value required to play inverts: if the values were ascending, they start descending, and vice versa. This effect lasts for the rest of the trick. (In a 2-player game, the restriction against playing equal values remains.)

Example: *After a CHARMY is played, to beat a pair of 4s, you would need to play a pair of 4s or lower.*

You must still play CHARMY legally. Its special ability does not apply until after it has been played.

Example: *If the play is two 8s, CHARMY must be played as part of a pair of 8s or higher. If you activate CHARMY's ability, all further plays must then be equal or lower.*



SPECTOR

This special ability does not give the player an immediate benefit. Instead, if the player wins this trick, they gain an extra , immediately. This could possibly give a player their 10th , allowing them to win the game if they also get 1st place that round.

Errata to First-Printing Cards: When SPECTOR refers to the "pile" it means the current trick, meaning if you win this trick and would lead the next trick, you get the extra victory point at that moment. If someone else wins the trick in which you play SPECTOR, you do not get the point.



KODORA

KODORA are card advancements that add a touch of gambling. Each player begins the game with one.

You can only use a KODORA special ability during the upkeep phase and only if you have at least 2 . You may play multiple KODORAs, but you must have at least 2 for each one you play. To use the special ability, set the card in front of your player screen and place 2 on it. Leave the KODORA in front of your screen for the rest of the round; it is not used for any trick this round. This means you have less than 10 cards in your hand at the start of the Main Phase.

If you win the round, keep the 2 on the KODORA, and gain 2 additional .

Make sure all players know this rule as it can be easily forgotten but is very important. You gain these 2 bonus BEFORE checking if you have enough to win the game. If you get any place other than first, discard KODORA and the 2 on it.



Example: *if you have 8 , and during the upkeep phase you play a Kodora, and then you go on to win the round, you would first score the 2 for winning the Kodora bet, then check if you have 10 or more , which you do, and thus you win the game.*

If you have multiple KODORA, you can make multiple bets.

You can also sleeve a KODORA simply to play it for its numeric value while gaining 1 .

Errata to First-Printing Cards: *When KODORA refers to a "turn" it means the current round. If you play all your cards first, you win the bet.*



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