

All gather to hear the Old Master speak...

"My soul is old. My time as the Head of your Order is over. One of you will replace me.

You are all, of course, worthy and enlightened – but only one can lead.

And so, a test.

You will race from the lowest of the low, life after life, to the highest of the high, governed by the laws of Karmaka.

Good luck, and may wisdom guide your hands."

Contents

64 game cards
- 19 red cards
- 19 green cards
- 19 blue cards
- 6 mosaic cards

12 Karmic Rings

1 Karmic Ladder

4 player tokens

4 reference cards

...and these rules

2–4 Players Ages 10+ 30–60 Minutes

Overview

Welcome to Karmaka, a competitive card game that plays out over multiple "lives."

You each begin the game as a Dung Beetle, with cards in hand and a small, personal deck. When you run out of cards, your life ends and you reincarnate to a new life, hopefully one rung higher up the Karmic Ladder. Make sure you score enough points in each life, or you'll have to repeat it. But don't linger too long in each life, or your rivals may pull ahead. The first player to achieve Transcendence wins!

Score points, sow the seeds of your next life, and – if necessary – sabotage your rivals. But remember, what goes around comes around, and your actions have consequences in this life . . . and the next.

The Karmic Ladder



Cards

All cards are worth between 1 and 3 points of a given color. The color of a card conveys its personality: Red cards are nihilistic and destructive; Green cards are bountiful and swift; Blue cards are wily and sly. Some cards are "Mosaic," or wild, and are worth points of any color.

All cards have an ability, listed at the bottom of the card.

Cards can be played either for points or for their ability, but never for both.



Play Area

In the center of play are two areas shared by all players:

- **The Well:** a facedown deck; the main source of cards.
- **The Ruins:** a faceup discard pile. Players may look through the top 3 cards of the Ruins at any time.

Each player has four personal areas:

- A **Hand** of cards (not shown), which only they can view.
- A **Deck** of cards, distinct from the Well. It is not unusual for a player's Deck to be empty.
- **Future Life:** a facedown deck which players may play cards to. Players may look through (but not reorder) their own Future Life. At the beginning of each new life, a player's Future Life is empty.
- **Deeds:** cards a player has scored this life. Deeds are arranged faceup so that newer cards partially cover older ones. When a card refers to an "Exposed Deed," it means the newest/topmost one.



Future Life
Player B

Deeds
Player B

Deck
Player B

Karmic Ladder

The Ruins



Set Up

1. **Populate the Karmic Ladder:** each player chooses a token and places it at the Dung Beetle level.
2. **Karmic Rings:** keep these handy, near the center of the play area.
3. **Create the Well:** shuffle all the cards together to form the Well.
4. **Create opening Decks and Hands:** Deal 4 cards facedown from the Well to each player, forming their opening Hand for the first life. Then deal 2 more cards facedown from the Well to each player, forming their opening Deck. (Future Lives begin empty.)
5. **Decide who goes first:** The player with the worst luck takes the first turn.

Turn Structure

Players take turns in clockwise order. Each player's turn consists of drawing a card and playing a card. (The only exception to this is when a player is **Reincarnated**, described in the next section.)

A. Draw a card from your personal Deck. (Skip this if your Deck is empty.)

B. Play a card from your Hand in one of 3 ways:

1. **For points:** place the card faceup onto your layered stack of Deeds. Your Deeds are stacked in the order they were played, and are all visible.
2. **For its ability:** place the card faceup in the center of the table and apply its ability, making any relevant decisions. Then, offer the card to your rival (see Karmic Cost, below).
3. **To your future:** place the card facedown onto your Future Life without revealing it.

You may skip playing a card if you wish, but only if your Deck has cards in it. In other words, if your Deck is empty, you must play a card.

Karmic Cost: Playing a card for its ability comes at a price; after resolving the ability, you must offer the card to your rival. If they want it, they place the card facedown on their Future Life; if not, the card is sent faceup to the Ruins. So, what goes around comes around; these cards may come back at you in a future life — be prepared! (For 3-4 players, see the Multiplayer section).

It is then the next player's turn.

Turn Structure (continued)

Ways to play a card



Strategy Tip: Some cards you will score as Deeds or play for abilities in your current life, while some you will pass forward to your next life. How to choose? As described in the next section, you only get points for your best-colored Deeds. So, new players may want to begin with the following simple strategy: look at your opening Hand and pick a color to score this life — one that gives you enough points to ascend. Pass cards of a second color to your Future Life (to score them next life), and play cards of the third color for their abilities. Tactical situations will soon have you thinking on your feet, but this approach should help you get started.

Reincarnation

Play continues in clockwise order, with each player drawing and playing a card during their turn. But from time to time a player will "die" and be reincarnated; this occurs when the player begins their turn with an empty Hand and an empty Deck. They have nothing to draw and nothing to play, so ***instead*** of taking a normal turn, they **Score** their Deeds and are then **Reborn**, possibly one rung higher up the Karmic Ladder.

Scoring

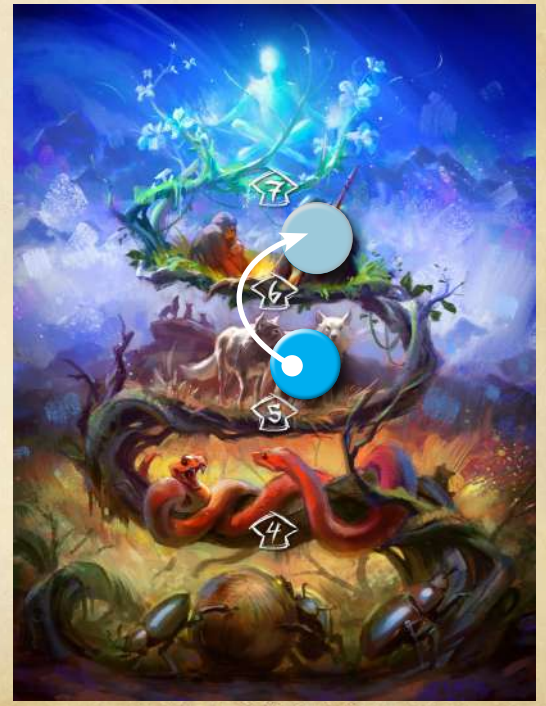
Players may claim points for only one color of Deed per life. To tally your score when dying, simply **add up the points in your best color.** Mosaic cards are "wild" and are always added. In addition, if you have accumulated any Karmic Rings from previous lives, you may trade in as many as you wish at this time for 1 point apiece. Then, if you have achieved enough points to advance up the karmic ladder – 4 for Dung Beetle, 5 for Snake, 6 for Wolf, and 7 for Ape – move your player token up to the next rung; otherwise, you don't move up the ladder and instead receive a Karmic Ring.

Example

Anna has no cards in her hand or deck; so, instead of taking a normal turn, she dies and scores the Deeds of her outgoing life. She is currently a Wolf on the Karmic Ladder and needs 6 points to ascend to Ape. Her strongest color is red at 5 points; so, she spends one of her Karmic Rings to get the 6th point, then moves her token up to Ape.







Rebirth

If you've just moved up to Transcendence, you win! Otherwise, you are reborn:

1. Move your Deeds to the Ruins.
2. Draw all cards from your Future Life to form your new Hand.
3. Create a new Deck. If your new Hand has fewer than 6 cards in it, deal cards from the Well to your Deck (not your Hand) so you have **6 cards total in your Deck and Hand together.** For example, if your new Hand has 3 cards in it, deal 3 cards from the Well to form a new Deck. Do not look at these cards!

Strategy Tip: Note that death and reincarnation consume a player's entire turn – they neither draw nor play a card (because, you know, transmigration of the soul takes time). This "Limbo Turn" is a window of opportunity during which your rival(s) can play with impunity, perhaps scoring a valuable card while you're unable to affect it, or something... less pleasant.

Play continues on with the next player, who may be beginning a new life, in the middle of a life, or about to reincarnate. **Generally speaking, players will reincarnate at different times!** For example, Player A may finish their second life and reincarnate while Player B is in the middle of their fourth life; a little later Player A may be in the middle of their third life as Player B finishes their fourth.

Ultimately what matters is: who will achieve Transcendence first?

Good luck!

Multiplayer (games with 3 or more players)

When playing a card for its ability in a multiplayer game (where you have more than one rival), the rival **on whom the ability was played** is the one who gets the card in their Future Life**.** For example, if you play Vengeance to ruin a rival's Deed, that rival may take the Vengeance card into their Future if they want; otherwise, it goes to the Ruins. If you play a card that affects only you, each rival gets an opportunity to take the card, beginning with the player to your your left and going around in turn order. If none of your rivals claim the card, it goes to the Ruins; you cannot take it into your Future Life.

Credits

Designed, developed and directed by **Eddy Boxerman** and **Dave Burke**.
Art by **Marco Bucci,** Karmic Ladder by **Lane Brown**.
Graphic Design by **Scott Nicely**.

A big thank you to our families.

Thanks to all our advisors and playtesters:
... list in progress ...
maybe you??

Visit us at www.karmaka-game.com

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Rules FAQ

If a player has **6 or more cards in their Future Life** when they are reincarnated, they simply take all these cards into their Hand; their Deck begins empty.

When you play a card that allows you to **play another card** (e.g. Peek, Panic or Another Day), your rival(s) first decide whether or not they want the card in their Future Life before you play your next card. You may then play the next card however you wish (scored as a Deed, played for its ability, or passed to your Future Life). You may "chain" together several such cards.

If a player needs to draw or look at a card from the Well, and the **Well is empty**, shuffle the entire Ruins into a new Well, then proceed to draw cards as needed.

Players are always allowed to **know the number of cards** in the Well and in any player's personal area (Deck, Hand, Future Life).

When moving cards from one deck/pile to another (e.g. via Hell's Heart, Longevity, or when simply dealing cards from the Well to a player's Deck), move them one at a time. The card order will thus be reversed in the new pile. However, upon reincarnation, an old life's **Deeds go to the Ruins in the order they were scored**; simply collapse the overlapping Deeds pile and place it on the Ruins.

You **can always play a card** for its ability, regardless of the specific ability text. For example, you can play the card Transmigrate ("Take any card from your Future Life into your Hand.") even if your Future Life is empty. As another example, you can play Dwindle on a rival ("The player of your choice ruins a card from their Hand.") even if that rival's Hand is empty. In such cases that ability simply has no effect, and the card is then offered to your rival(s) or ruined, as usual.

Card FAQ

Crisis: It is the rival who picks which Deed to ruin.

Denial: 1) In a game with 3 or more players, if you use Denial to play a card that targets a specific rival (Thievery, for example), it is the targeted player who gets Denial in their Future Life, if they want it. 2) The card copied by Denial is in the Ruins when its ability takes effect. As such, a card like Salvage or Recycle can reclaim itself from the Ruins when played via Denial. 3) You can chain Denial cards. That is, you can play a Denial to play a Denial (etc.) to play another card. All played cards go to the Ruins except the first Denial.

Destiny: You may place 0, 1, or 2 of the 3 cards on your Future Life. Replace all remaining cards back on the Well in any order.

Dwindle: You may play this on yourself. If you do, you pick which of your cards to ruin. If you play it on a rival, it is the rival who picks which of their cards to ruin.

Embody: 1) You can play Embody for its ability even if you have no Deeds (or just another Embody) on the table. It will, however, do nothing. 2) If one of your Deeds is a Mimic, you can play Embody to copy the Mimic to subsequently copy a rival's exposed Deed.

Mimic: 1) You can play Mimic for its ability to copy a rival's Embody (if it's their exposed Deed) to then copy any of your own Deeds. 2) In a game with 3 or more players, if you use Mimic to copy rival A's Deed (Spite, for example) which you in turn use to target rival B, it is rival B that gets the Mimic in their Future Life, if they want it. (That's Karma: the victim gets the card.) 3) If a rival's exposed Deed is a Mimic, you can play Mimic to copy it, but nothing will happen (sorry, no loops).

Roulette: If you ruin 2 cards, you may draw up to 3. If you ruin zero cards, you may draw 1.

Spite: The rival shuffles and presents their Hand to you facedown. You select a card and place it on the Ruins, then select another card and place it on the Ruins.

Swindle: The rival shuffles and presents their Hand to you facedown, and you select 3 cards. You look at these cards, pick one to keep, and return the rest.

Transmigrate: You may not reorder the cards in your Future Life when selecting the card. Your rival(s) may ask which card you selected (in terms of placement in the face-down pile).