



# OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

*The First Responders Series*

**No tokens. No trackers. Minimal math.**

*Your deck is your organization. Your Heroes block with their bodies.  
When the cards run out twice, the game is over.*

2 Players · Ages 14+ · 20–30 Minutes · 30-Card Decks

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MandateDyne Global has neither approved nor denied the contents of this rulebook

## 1. The Game

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IT Heroes is a two-player card game about running an IT department under siege. You win by collapsing your opponent's organization before they collapse yours.

Your draw pile is your organization. It starts at 30 cards. Unblocked Threats remove cards from the top of your draw pile every Threat phase. The first time your draw pile empties, you recycle your discard pile and take a collapse penalty. The second time your draw pile empties, you lose immediately.

### THE GAME IN ONE SENTENCE

Block their Threats with your Heroes, play your Threats against them, and be the last organization with cards in their draw pile.

### What You Need

- Two 30-card decks, one per player.
- A flat surface with room for your Active Zone, Resource Zone, Threat Zone, draw pile, and discard pile.
- No tokens, counters, or external trackers required.

## 2. The Four Card Types

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Each card type has a distinct role. The colored border tells you its type at a glance.

### HERO — Navy Blue

Deploy to your Active Zone to block Threats. Heroes take hits so your draw pile stays safe. When a Hero is defeated, discard them.

### THREAT — Crimson Red

Play into your opponent's Threat Zone. Unblocked Threats remove cards from the opponent's draw pile each Threat phase. Threats stay in play until neutralized.

### ACTION — Forest Green

One-time effects. Pay the Coffee cost, resolve the effect immediately, then discard. Heal your draw pile, neutralize Threats, or disrupt your opponent.

### RESOURCE — Amber / Gold

Permanent income cards. Each Resource generates +1 Coffee during your Collect phase. You may play a maximum of 1 Resource per turn unless a card effect says otherwise.

## 3. Setup and Table Layout

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1. Both players shuffle their 30-card deck. Your opponent may cut your deck after you shuffle.
2. Draw 5 cards as your opening hand.
3. Place your draw pile face down and your discard pile face up beside it.
4. Set up your four zones in front of you (see layout below).
5. Decide who goes first — whoever most recently survived a 2 a.m. page.

## Your Table Layout

<p><b>ACTIVE ZONE</b> Your deployed Heroes live here. Tilt them to track hits. Discard when defeated.</p>	<p><b>THREAT ZONE</b> Threats your opponent played against you live here until neutralized. Each unblocked Threat costs you cards every Threat phase.</p>
<p><b>RESOURCE ZONE</b> Resource cards you deploy. Stay permanently. Generate +1 Coffee per turn each.</p>	<p><b>DRAW PILE / DISCARD</b> Draw pile face down — this IS your health. Discard pile face up beside it.</p>

## 4. Reading Hero and Threat Stats

Every Hero uses the same six stats. Only two are used constantly, but all of them matter.

STAT	WHAT IT DOES	HOW IT IS USED
PATIENCE	How many hits a Hero can absorb before defeat.	$1-40 = 2 \text{ hits}$ · $41-70 = 3 \text{ hits}$ · $71-100 = 4 \text{ hits}$
CAFFEINE DEP.	The Coffee cost to deploy that Hero.	<i>Pay this exact amount when you play the Hero.</i>
DOC COMPLIANCE	Bonus cards drawn when the Hero is deployed.	<i>Value ÷ 100, rounded down. Usually 0 or 1.</i>
TICKET VEL.	How hard a Threat hits a blocking Hero.	<i>Compare to the blocking Hero's Blame Deflection.</i>
BLAME DEFL.	How well a Hero handles a Threat.	<i>If Blame Deflection ≥ Ticket Velocity, the hit is deflected.</i>
UPTIME	Bonus Coffee provided by a Hero.	<i>If at least one Hero you control has Uptime 100, gain +1 Coffee during Collect. Applies once regardless of how many Heroes have Uptime 100.</i>

## 5. The Hero System

Heroes are your shields. During the Threat phase they block Threats so your draw pile does not take damage.

### Deploying Heroes

Pay a Hero's Caffeine Dependence in Coffee and place the card upright in your Active Zone. Heroes stay in play until defeated unless a card effect says otherwise. You may deploy multiple Heroes across multiple turns.

### Assigning Blocks

- Each Hero may block exactly one Threat per Threat phase.
- You may not assign two Heroes to the same Threat unless a card effect specifically allows it.
- You may leave a Hero unassigned, but any Threat with no Hero assigned to it is unblocked.

### The Deflection Check

When a Hero is assigned to block a Threat, compare two stats:

**HOW BLOCKING WORKS**

Compare the blocking Hero's **BLAME DEFLECTION** to the Threat's **TICKET VELOCITY**:

**Blame Deflection ≥ Ticket Velocity** → DEFLECTED. No hit on Hero. Draw pile is safe.

**Blame Deflection < Ticket Velocity** → HIT LANDS. Hero takes one hit and tilts. Draw pile is still safe.

*Either way, the draw pile is protected as long as a Hero is assigned.*

### Deflection Examples

THREAT TICKET VEL.	HERO BLAME DEFL.	RESULT	NOTES
55 (Phishing Phil)	60 (Security Sentinel)	DEFLECTED	55 ≤ 60. Clean block. No hit.
88 (Ransomware Randy)	60 (Security Sentinel)	HIT LANDS	88 > 60. Sentinel takes one hit.
55 (Phishing Phil)	33 (Help Desk Hero)	HIT LANDS	55 > 33. Help Desk Hero takes one hit.
31 (Karen from Accounting)	60 (Security Sentinel)	DEFLECTED	31 ≤ 60. Karen can't break through.

### Tracking Hits — Card Tilting

When a hit lands on a Hero, tilt the card to show the damage. The card's physical position is the only tracker you need.

CARD POSITION	HIT COUNT	STATUS
Upright ↑	0 hits	Fresh. Fully effective.
Tilted 45° ↗	1 hit	Damaged. Still blocking.
Sideways →	2 hits	Defeated if Patience 1–40. Still blocking if Patience 41–100.
Past sideways ↘	3 hits	Defeated if Patience 41–70. For Patience 71–100: still blocking — one hit remaining.

<b>Rotated 180°</b> ↓	<b>4 hits</b>	Defeated (Patience 71–100 Heroes only). Card top faces away. Discard immediately.
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**HIT CAPACITY BY PATIENCE**

Patience 1–40 → 2 hits max. Defeated at Sideways.  
 Patience 41–70 → 3 hits max. Defeated at Past sideways.  
 Patience 71–100 → 4 hits max. Defeated at 180° rotation (card top facing away from you).

**HERO DEFEAT**

When a Hero reaches their maximum hits they are immediately defeated — discard them. Any Threat they were blocking is now unblocked. Starting the NEXT turn that Threat deals draw pile damage as if it were never blocked.

## 6. Coffee — Your Currency

Coffee is your currency. You collect it at the start of your turn and spend it during your Play phase. Unspent Coffee does not carry over to future turns.

### Collecting Coffee

- Gain 2 base Coffee every turn.
- Gain +1 Coffee for each Resource card in your Resource Zone.
- Apply any bonus Coffee from specific card abilities.
- If at least one Hero you control has Uptime 100, gain +1 bonus Coffee during Collect. This bonus applies once regardless of how many Heroes have Uptime 100.

### Playing Cards

- You may deploy multiple Heroes, play multiple Threats, and play multiple Actions on your turn as long as you can pay for them.
- You may play a maximum of 1 Resource card per turn unless a card effect says otherwise.
- A Hero's Caffeine Dependence is its exact deployment cost. No formula needed.
- After an Action resolves, discard it.

<b>TYPICAL COSTS</b>	<b>REMEMBER</b>
Common — usually 1 Coffee Uncommon — usually 2 Coffee Rare — usually 3 Coffee Legendary — usually 4–5 Coffee	<i>Caffeine Dependence on the card is the exact cost. Always.</i>  <i>You can make multiple plays in one turn as long as Coffee holds.</i>  <i>Unspent Coffee is lost at the end of your turn.</i>

## 7. Turn Structure

Every turn has five phases in this exact order. Both players complete all five before the opponent takes their turn.

#	PHASE	WHAT HAPPENS
1	<b>DRAW</b>	Draw 2 cards from your draw pile. If the draw pile empties here, resolve recycle or lose immediately if you have already recycled once.
2	<b>COLLECT</b>	Count your Coffee: 2 base + 1 per Resource + any card-specific bonuses + Uptime 100 bonus if applicable.
3	<b>PLAY</b>	Spend Coffee to deploy Heroes, play Threats against your opponent, and play Action cards. Maximum 1 Resource per turn.
4	<b>THREAT</b>	Assign Heroes to block Threats. Run deflection checks. Apply draw pile damage from unblocked Threats.
5	<b>END</b>	Discard down to 7 cards if needed. Check for empty draw piles if no immediate-loss condition has already ended the game.

## The Threat Phase — Step by Step

1. Look at all Threat cards in your Threat Zone.
2. Assign each of your available Heroes to block one Threat, or leave them unassigned.
3. For each assigned Threat, run the deflection check. If a hit lands, tilt the Hero one position. Either way, the draw pile is protected as long as the Threat was assigned a blocker.
4. For each unassigned Threat, remove cards from the top of your draw pile face down out of game. The amount is stated on the Threat card. Standard Threats remove 2. Check the card if the amount differs.
5. Discard any Heroes that just reached their hit capacity.

*If a Threat becomes unblocked because its blocking Hero was defeated during the Threat phase, that Threat starts dealing draw pile damage on the NEXT Threat phase, not the current one.*

## 8. Threats and Neutralizing

Threats are your primary weapon. Play them into your opponent's Threat Zone during your Play phase. A Threat stays in play until a rule or card explicitly says it is neutralized.

### How Threats Deal Damage

Each unblocked Threat removes cards from the defending player's draw pile every Threat phase. The number of cards removed is stated on the Threat card. Standard Threats remove 2 cards. If a card states a different amount, the card text takes precedence.

### Neutralizing Threats

- Blocking a Threat does not remove it. Blocking only protects the draw pile for that Threat phase.
- A Threat is neutralized only if a card or rule explicitly says it is neutralized.
- When a Threat is neutralized, discard it immediately.
- If a card effect gives you a choice to neutralize a Threat, you must announce that choice at the moment the effect resolves. If the effect resolves during a block in the Threat phase, announce it immediately after that block resolves. If the effect resolves during the Play phase or any other time, announce it immediately when that effect resolves. If you do not announce the neutralization at that time, the Threat remains in play.

## 9. Winning, Losing, and Recycle

Your draw pile is your life total. If it runs out twice, your organization collapses.

### FIRST TIME THE DRAW PILE EMPTIES — RECYCLE

Shuffle your discard pile thoroughly and place it face down as your new draw pile.

Immediately remove the top 5 cards from that new draw pile, face down out of game. This is the collapse penalty.

**If fewer than 5 cards remain after the shuffle and removal, you lose immediately.**

Continue playing. You may only recycle once per game. This is your last chance.

### SECOND TIME THE DRAW PILE EMPTIES — YOU LOSE

No second recycle. No comeback. Your organization has collapsed. Your opponent wins immediately — do not wait for the End phase.

#### YOU WIN

When your opponent's draw pile empties for the second time, or they cannot survive the recycle penalty.

#### YOU LOSE

When YOUR draw pile empties for the second time, or you cannot survive your own recycle penalty.

*A player may concede at any time. The queue will still be there tomorrow.*

## 10. Special Rules

### Flash

Flash is a keyword that appears on certain cards. A card with Flash may be deployed during your opponent's Threat phase — after unblocked Threats are identified and before draw pile damage resolves. When played this way, it costs no Coffee. Place it in your Active Zone and assign it to one unblocked Threat immediately. Resolve that block normally.

*Note: If you deploy a Flash card on your own turn during your Play phase, you must pay its normal Coffee cost. The free deployment only applies when using Flash on your opponent's Threat phase.*

### Once Per Game

Once Per Game is a keyword that appears on certain cards. When a Once Per Game ability is used, announce it out loud, resolve the effect, then slide that card halfway out of its zone toward you. The card remains in play. Only the ability is spent — the card still blocks and contributes to your team normally for the rest of the game.

*Note: rotation is reserved for hit tracking only. Sliding is used exclusively for Once Per Game abilities. These are two different physical states and should never be confused.*

### Hand Size

Maximum hand size is 7 cards at the end of your End phase. If you have more than 7, discard down to 7 of your choice. There is no minimum hand size. Playing with zero cards in hand is legal.

## Multiple Heroes, One Threat

Unless a card effect says otherwise, one Hero blocks one Threat. You cannot assign two Heroes to the same Threat in the same turn. If you have more Heroes than Threats, your extra Heroes sit idle that turn.

## Immediate-Loss Timing

Whenever a player must draw or remove cards from an empty draw pile, resolve recycle or immediate loss at that moment. Do not delay the outcome until the End phase. This applies during the Draw phase, during the Threat phase, and during any card effect that removes cards from the draw pile.

# 11. Deck Construction

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### DECK SIZE

Every deck must contain exactly 30 cards. Not 29. Not 31. Exactly 30.

### COPY LIMITS

- Legendary cards: maximum 1 copy of each Legendary card per deck.
- Rare cards: maximum 2 copies of each Rare card per deck.
- Common and Uncommon cards: maximum 3 copies of each card per deck.

### MINIMUM COMPOSITION

- At least 6 Hero cards.
- At least 6 Threat cards.
- At least 4 Resource cards.
- The remaining cards may be any mix that follows the copy limits above.

### SHUFFLING

- Shuffle thoroughly before each game. Your opponent may cut your deck.
- Any time an effect tells you to search your deck, shuffle afterward unless that effect says otherwise.
- On recycle: shuffle your discard pile thoroughly before it becomes your new draw pile.

## 12. Quick Reference

### TURN ORDER

1. DRAW — draw 2 cards
2. COLLECT — 2 base Coffee + 1 per Resource + bonuses
3. PLAY — spend Coffee on Heroes, Threats, Actions. Max 1 Resource.
4. THREAT — assign blockers, run deflection checks, apply draw pile damage
5. END — discard to 7 max, check draw piles

### BLOCKING

Blame Defl.  $\geq$  Ticket Vel. → deflected  
Blame Defl.  $<$  Ticket Vel. → hit lands, tilt Hero  
One Hero blocks one Threat per turn  
Unblocked Threat → draw pile damage per card text (standard = 2)

### HIT CAPACITY

Patience 1–40 → 2 hits → defeated at Sideways  
Patience 41–70 → 3 hits → defeated at Past sideways  
Patience 71–100 → 4 hits → defeated at 180° rotation

### RECYCLE & LOSS

First empty → shuffle discard, remove top 5, continue. Once per game only.  
Cannot cover 5-card penalty → lose immediately.  
Second empty → lose immediately. No second recycle.

## Strategy Tips

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New to IT Heroes? These five principles will keep your organization from collapsing on turn four.

### 1. Build Resources early — every turn

Your base income is 2 Coffee per turn. Each Resource adds 1. A player earning 5 Coffee can deploy a powerful Hero and play a Threat on the same turn. A player earning 2 Coffee cannot. Play your first Resource on turn 1. Play another on turn 2. Remember: you can only play 1 Resource per turn, so start early.

### 2. Get a Hero up before Threats arrive

Your opponent will play a Threat on turn 2 or 3. If you have no Hero in play, that Threat immediately starts costing you draw pile cards with no way to stop it. You only have 30 cards. Deploy at least one Hero before the hits start landing.

### 3. Match your Heroes to their Threats

A Hero with Blame Deflection higher than the Threat's Ticket Velocity deflects every hit cleanly and can block indefinitely. A Hero with lower Deflection takes a hit every turn and will fall. Assign your highest-Deflection Heroes to your opponent's most dangerous Threats.

### 4. Unblocked Threats win games

Two unblocked standard Threats cost your opponent 4 draw pile cards per turn. A 30-card draw pile disappears in 7–8 turns at that rate. You don't need perfect play — you just need more active Threats than your opponent has Heroes to block them.

### 5. Save Legendaries for the close

Legendary cards are your most powerful plays, but they cost the most Coffee. Build your Resource engine first. Drop a Legendary when your opponent is close to running out of draw pile cards and can't respond. That's when it ends the game.

## Glossary

<b>Coffee</b>	Your turn currency. 2 base each turn plus Resources and bonuses. Unspent Coffee is lost at the end of your turn.
<b>Draw Pile</b>	Your deck and your health. When it empties for the second time, you lose.
<b>Active Zone</b>	Where your deployed Heroes sit and block Threats.
<b>Resource Zone</b>	Where your Resource cards live. Each generates +1 Coffee per turn during your Collect phase.
<b>Threat Zone</b>	Where Threats your opponent played against you live until neutralized.
<b>Deflect</b>	A block where the Hero's Blame Deflection equals or exceeds the Threat's Ticket Velocity. The Hero takes no hit.
<b>Hit</b>	A block where the Threat's Ticket Velocity exceeds the Hero's Blame Deflection. The Hero tilts one position.
<b>Defeat</b>	A Hero that has taken its maximum hits. Discard immediately. Any Threat they were blocking becomes unblocked.
<b>Neutralize</b>	Permanently remove a Threat from play. Blocking does not neutralize. Only card effects that specifically say "neutralize" remove a Threat.
<b>Recycle</b>	When your draw pile empties for the first time: shuffle your discard pile into a new draw pile, then remove the top 5 cards as a penalty. Happens once per game only.
<b>Flash</b>	A keyword. A card with Flash may be deployed during your opponent's Threat phase after unblocked Threats are identified and before damage resolves. When used this way it costs no Coffee. If played on your own turn it costs its normal Coffee cost.
<b>Once Per Game</b>	A keyword. An ability that can be used only once during the entire game. Track it by sliding the card halfway out of its zone toward you.

## Deck Building Example

Here is a legal 30-card aggressive deck to show how the rules come together. This is a Threat-heavy build designed to overwhelm before the opponent can establish a defense.

CARD	COPIES	NOTES
<b>Ransomware Randy</b>	×1	Legendary Threat. Max 1 copy. On-play effect hits draw pile immediately.
<b>Karen from Accounting</b>	×3	Common Threat. Max 3 copies. Low cost, consistent early pressure.
<b>Phishing Phil</b>	×3	Common Threat. Max 3 copies. Core draw pile damage engine.
<b>Shadow IT Steve</b>	×2	Uncommon Threat. Max 3 copies. 9 Threats total — well above the 6 minimum.
<b>Help Desk Hero</b>	×3	Common Hero. Max 3 copies. Cheap to deploy, gets a blocker up fast.
<b>The On-Call Oracle</b>	×3	Common Hero. Max 3 copies. Has Flash — deploy free on opponent's Threat phase.
<b>DevOps Demi-God</b>	×2	Uncommon Hero. Max 3 copies. 8 Heroes total — above the 6 minimum.
<b>Black Coffee</b>	×3	Common Resource. Max 3 copies. Core income engine.
<b>Cold Brew Reserve</b>	×2	Uncommon Resource. Max 3 copies.
<b>IT Budget Approval</b>	×1	Legendary Resource. Max 1 copy. 6 Resources total — above the 4 minimum.
<b>Reboot Everything</b>	×3	Common Action. Max 3 copies.
<b>Check the Logs</b>	×3	Common Action. Max 3 copies.
<b>Emergency Patch</b>	×1	Uncommon Action. Max 3 copies. 7 Actions. Total: 30 cards. ✓

*This is a legal 30-card aggressive deck. It applies early Threat pressure while using the On-Call Oracle's Flash ability to plug emergency gaps. It wins fast or collapses fast — that's the strategic trade-off of building Threat-heavy.*

## FAQ — Edge Cases and Rulings

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**Q: What happens if the Clueless Executive's hand-discard effect triggers and my opponent has no cards in hand?**

A: The effect is ignored. If the affected player has no cards in hand, the discard requirement is met as fully as possible — which is not at all. The Threat remains in play and the rest of the Threat phase continues normally.

**Q: When exactly does immediate loss trigger — or do I wait until the End phase?**

A: Immediately. Whenever a player must draw or remove cards from an empty draw pile, resolve recycle or loss at that moment. If it happens during the Draw phase, during the Threat phase, or during a card effect, it resolves right then. Do not wait for the End phase.

**Q: My Hero was defeated during the Threat phase. Does the Threat it was blocking deal damage this turn?**

A: No. If a Hero is defeated during the current Threat phase, the Threat they were blocking becomes unblocked but does not deal draw pile damage until the NEXT Threat phase.

**Q: Can I use a Once Per Game ability and then slide the card to track it after the turn ends?**

A: No. Slide the card halfway out of its zone immediately when the ability is used. Both players should acknowledge the use at the time it occurs. You cannot retroactively mark an ability as used.

**Q: I have two Heroes with Uptime 100 in play. Do I get +2 bonus Coffee?**

A: No. The Uptime 100 bonus applies once per turn regardless of how many Heroes have Uptime 100. You gain +1 Coffee if at least one Hero you control has Uptime 100.

**Q: Can I choose not to neutralize a Threat even if my Hero meets the neutralization conditions?**

A: Yes. Neutralization is a choice. If you do not announce it immediately after the block resolves during the same Threat phase, the Threat remains in play.

**Q: What is the difference between rotating a card and sliding it?**

A: Rotation (tilting) tracks hit damage and is used only for Heroes taking hits. Sliding (halfway out of zone) tracks Once Per Game ability use. These are two distinct physical states. A Hero can theoretically be both tilted (damaged) and slid out (ability used) at the same time.

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## IT Heroes: The Card Game

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*Rulebook · No tokens. No trackers. Just cards.*