

Shakespeare

A game for 1-4 players by Hervé Rigal. Condensed rules for 2-4 players by Eric Postpischil, <https://edp.org>.

Introduction

Players recruit actors and craftsmen, rehearse, erect stage sets, and create costumes. The most prestigious play wins. Movement in Acts and Ambiance is limited to the tracks.

When landing on an occupied space (whether moving forward or backward), put your disc on top.

[Backstage expansion rules are in blue.](#)

[Some rules that might be overlooked are in purple.](#)

Characters and Character Cards

Each Character is an Actor, Craftsman (Costume Mistress, Set Dresser, or Handyman), Jeweler, Assistant, or Queen.

- 4 are printed on each player board: 2 Actors, a Handyman, and the Queen. They are used the same as cards.

The top-right of each card shows a cost to be paid for that Character at game end.

Most cards show an activation power in a brown circle at the top-left, described below under Activate. These differ:

- The 3 Assistant cards have no activation power; they add to Craftsmen.
- “Exit, pursued by a bear” shows “0.”, indicating the owner performs the first action of the day.
- The Backstage card Prompter does not activate; the Prompter allows avoiding a penalty during Rehearsal.
- The Backstage card Rag-picker does not activate; each Rag-picker allows one Craftsman to take from discards.

Each Actor card has a role name along the left edge and 2-3 light-shaded circles at the bottom for Costume elements.

- Right of the costume circles is a power the Actor provides if fully costumed in Rehearsal or during activation.

The reverse of each card shows an extra, an unnamed unpaid Actor who may be costumed, with no activation power.

Author’s Note

These condensed rules for Shakespeare are not as nice as I would like, for several reasons:

- I seek to have my condensed rules flow with gameplay, but *Shakespeare* does not entirely fit into this model. Rules for Costume and Stage Set elements and for Backstage cards have been separated.
 - In attempting to explain all the features and powers of the various cards, I am left with cumbersome descriptions of various icons or card images. The original game materials may provide more useful references.
 - Particularly with the Backstage expansion, some cards or combinations of rules are unclear, and I referred to discussions on Board Game Geek and resolved them as best I could. For example, Ophelia is an Actor but does not provide movement in an Act (she provides a “+3” token). The Backstage rules do not explicitly say whether activating Ophelia grants Initiative as activating a base-game Actor does. (These rules say it does not.)
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Setup

Put the Day token (white pawn) on space I of the day track.

Put the coins and the “+3” tokens aside as supplies.

Give each player 5 cylinders and 7 discs in a color, 1 player board, 1 Recruitment card, 1 Theater card, and 4 Rest tokens.

Each player:

- Puts 1 disc on the dark space of their Ambiance track.
- Puts 3 discs on the main board, 1 on the start of each Act.
- Puts 1 disc on 5 of the Prestige track.
- Gives 1 disc for Order and 1 for Initiative.

Randomize the Order track discs. Match the Initiative discs (top to bottom) to the Order discs (left to right).

Find the reference card sides matching the number of players in the game and give each player one.

Fill one black bag with Costume elements and one with Stage Set elements each according to this schedule:

Players	Black	Pink	Purple	Blue	Green	Yellow
2/3/4	8/12/16	8/12/16	7/10/12	5/8/12	4/6/8	4/6/8

From each bag, draw 3 elements per player and put them on one of the crates on the main board.

Shuffle the Objective cards and stack them facedown.

[Shuffle the Actor cards \(including Backstage Actor cards\) and deal 9 face-up to form the Lord’s deck.](#)

Shuffle the remaining Actor cards with the other Character cards. Deal face-up 2 more than the number of players.

In reverse order of the Order track, each player recruits 1 card and puts it by their board (Actors left, others right).

- The recruited card may be flipped over to be an extra, but this is usually inadvisable for these initial cards.

Discard the unrecruited 2 cards and again deal face-up 2 more than the number of players.

[Shuffle the Backstage cards. Deal 2 more than the number of players face-up.](#)

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Play

Play 6 days, each proceeding through the phases below.

Wager For Turn Order

Each player bids 1-5 cylinders by placing them in a closed hand (also concealing their others). Reveal the bids. Rearrange the Order track by bid, lowest to highest left to right. Players earlier in Initiative (higher) win ties.

- **Give the first player 1 Prestige point.**

- Move the discs off the Initiative track.

Put the cylinders you bid on your board, available for regular play.

Base game: Put unbid cylinders aside, to be unused this day. **Backstage:** Put unbid cylinders on the Backstage deck.

Recruitment and Activation

If a player has the “Exit, pursued by a bear” card, they take 1 action first. This does not affect their regular actions.

Players take actions (recruit, activate, or use Backstage card) in rotation by Order track until all players have passed.

- Each player must play their Recruitment card before passing. In the base game, this means they must recruit.
 - (The recruited Character may be turned into an extra, per Recruit below, which has no cost.)
 - **In the Backstage expansion, the Recruitment card may be used for a Backstage action.**

Recruit (once per day)

Replace 1 displayed Character card with your Recruitment card.

Choose to keep the Character (to be paid at game end) or flip the card to the extra (free).

Put the card by your board, Actors on the left, extras and others on the right. The card may be used this day.

Activate

Move a cylinder from your board to 1 of your empty (no cylinder or Rest token) Characters (on a card or the board).

- **If you activate an Actor to move in an Act and your Initiative disc is not yet on the track, put it on the first empty space.** (This represents an actor rehearsing for the play.)

Perform the action(s) of that Character:

- Red, yellow, or blue quill: Move 1 space forward in Act I, II, or III, respectively.
 - **Shylock, Hermione, and Mercutio gain +1 quill when fully costumed (per “+” with quill by costume circles).**
- **Black quill in a circle: Each other player moves back 1 space in the Act of their choice.**
- White/black quill: Move forward/backward 1 space in any Act.
- Copper/silver/gold coin: Gain £1/£3/£5.
- White/red mask: Move 1 space forward/backward on your Ambiance track.
 - **Richard III’s red mask is canceled if Richard III is fully costumed (per crossed-out mask by costume circles).**
- Black mask: Each other player moves 1 space back on their Ambiance track.
- Circles or squares: Take and place elements per the *Costume and Stage Set Rules* in Additional Rules below.
 -  (Jeweler): A Yellow element of either type.
 -  or : A green (5) Costume or blue (4) Stage Set element, respectively.
 -  or  with number: Non-Yellow Costume or Stage Set elements, respectively, up to indicated total.
 - + with number: Any combination of non-Yellow elements up to the indicated total value.
- Queen: Either take £4 or take 3 Objective cards, keep 1, and put the other 2 facedown under the deck.
 - **Objective cards with a black-white mask are played at the start of Ambiance, not kept for game-end points.**
- “+3” bonus token (Ophelia): Take a “+3” token from the supply.
- “0.” (on the “Exit, pursued by a bear” card): No activation power. See *Recruitment and Activation* above.

Use a Backstage card

Move 1 or more cylinders from the Backstage deck to an empty (no cylinders) face-up Backstage card.

- **You may also use your Recruitment card as 1 cylinder for this purpose, alone or with cylinders.**

Use the power of the Backstage card as indicated for the number of cylinders. See *Backstage Cards* below.

Ambiance

Any Initiative tokens not on the Initiative track are moved to the track in the order of the Order track.

Objective cards with a black-white mask may be played at the start of Ambiance, after which they are discarded:

- + with “6”: Take non-Yellow Stage Set and Costume elements from discards up to 6 total and play as usual.
- **Yellow Stage Set/Costume element:** Take 1 Yellow element from the discards and play as usual.
- **3 white masks:** Move Ambiance forward 3 (stop at end of track).
- **3 quills (blue, yellow, red):** Move forward 1 on each Act.

For each purple Stage Set element left on the main board, each player moves their Ambiance back 1 space.

Each player gains or loses something according to their Ambiance. From left to right, the spaces’ effects are:

- Lose 1 Prestige, move back on 1 Act, nothing, gain £1, move forward on 1 Act, gain 1 Prestige.

Each player resets their Ambiance to its start position (the dark space).

Dress Rehearsal (days 4 and 6 only)

In Initiative order, each player gains the rehearsal effect (bottom) of each Actor or extra with a complete costume:

- Extras and most Actors: For red/yellow/blue quills, move in specific Acts. For white quills, move in any Act.
- 2 copper coins (Viola): Gain £2.
- Candle (Hamlet): Gain 1 Prestige.
- “+” with quill: Not a rehearsal power. Gives additional quill for activation when fully costumed.
- Black quill in a circle (Caliban): Each other player moves back 1 space in the Act of their choice.
- Crossed-out coin (Mark Antony): Each other player loses £1.
- Crossed-out red mask (Richard III): Not a rehearsal power, cancels activation penalty (red mask).
- Objective card with “1/3” (Ghost): Take 3 Objective cards, keep 1, and put the other 2 facedown under the deck.

Score the Acts. In each Act, each player on the first 3 spaces loses 1 Prestige. Additionally:

- Act I (red): Each player who reached space 5/7/10 gains £1/£3/£5 (not cumulative).
- Act II (yellow): The leading player gains 2 Prestige, and the second player gains 1. (Lower in stack is ahead.)
 - Prestige can be gained even if a player has not advanced past space 3 or advanced at all.
- Act III (blue): Each player who reached space 6/8/10 gains 1/2/3 Prestige (not cumulative).

Maintenance (omit on last day)

Recover Recruitment cards.

Discard unrecruited Characters. Deal 2 more than the number of players face-up. (Shuffle discards if needed.)

Discard displayed Backstage cards. Deal 2 more than the number of players face-up. (Shuffle discards if needed.)

Discard unclaimed Costume and Stage Set elements. For each, draw 3 per player from the bag and put on crates.

Move Day token forward 1 space.

Rest (omit on last day)

Each player should do the following independently, without checking what other players are doing.

Remove prior Rest tokens from characters, if any.

Put Rest tokens on all but one of the Characters with cylinders on them (including those printed on player board).

Recover all cylinders from Characters and elsewhere (those put aside after bidding or used with Backstage cards).

Game End

Reveal Objective cards. Score 0-3 points per card.

- Two-element costumes do not count toward the complete costumes objective.
- The Prompter and the Rag-picker (recruitable Backstage cards) count toward the non-actor character objective.

Score 1 Prestige point for each Yellow element in your game area (in costumes or on the stage).

Score 1 Prestige point for each hat (from the Hatter Backstage card) where the hat and the element below it total 6.

- The costume does not need to be complete and may be a 2-element or 3-element costume.

Pay your Characters (cheapest first). Lose 2 points per unpaid character.

- With the fire-a-Character card, do not pay one Character, without penalty. They still participate in scoring above.
- The player with the most Prestige points wins. Ties are broken by leftover pounds.

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Additional Rules

Costume and Stage Set Rules

Elements may be taken only from what is available on the crates (except as special powers grant).

An element that cannot be immediately placed may not be taken.

Players may view the discarded elements at any time.

Each Assistant a player has adds 1 to the value of each Craftsman in each activation, and using a “+3” token adds 3.

- Craftsmen show a hammer-and-scissors icon at the bottom right. The Jeweler, with , is not a Craftsman.
- Non-Craftsmen cards that grant Costume or Stage Set elements are not affected by Assistants or “+3” tokens.
- Only one “+3” token may be used in an activation. It is discarded when used.
- A “+3” token may not be used during the activation it is acquired in.

Costume Elements

Costume elements are put into Actors’ costume circles, in any order desired, not necessarily left to right.

Each Yellow element adds 1 Prestige at game end.

When an Actor or extra’s costume is completed, the player gains according to the total value of the costume:

- 0-5: Nothing. 6-7: £2. 8-10: £1 and 1 Prestige. 11-12: 2 Prestige. 13-15: 3 Prestige.
- The value of a hat is not included in the value of the costume.

Stage Set Elements

Each element above the lowest level must be supported by two elements below it.

- The preprinted elements provide support and may not be covered.

Colors must be left-right symmetric; a piece that mismatches its mirrored piece on the other side may not be placed.

- Yellow elements are wild and match any color. Spaces may be left empty.

When a candle is covered, score 1 Prestige.

Each Yellow earns 1 Prestige at game end. Black elements do nothing. Each other element has an immediate effect:

- Pink 2: Gain £1. Purple 3: Other players –1 Ambiance. Blue 4: +2 Ambiance. Green 5: “+3” token from supply.

Backstage Cards (described for identification by clothing colors and the poses of their characters) (32 in deck)

Architect (yellow, pink, purple clothing, holding papers with two hands) (6 in deck)

For 1 / 2 / 3 cylinders, place a 1 / 2-4 / 5 value Stage Set element, if available on the crate.

- Put it on the lowest empty space on your Theater card. If it covers a candle, score 1 Prestige point.
- Apply the usual effects of that and previous elements on the card (so previous effects are repeated).

Hatter (pink dress, holding a yellow hat) (4 in deck)

For 1/3 cylinders, put a hat on 1/2 Actors.

- A hat is any non-Yellow Costume element available on the crate. Put it above an Actor’s leftmost costume circle.
 - (That circle may be empty, and players may fill costume circles in any order desired.)
- At game end, if the values of the hat and the element below it total 6, the player gains 1 Prestige.

Double (yellow and gray clothing, one arm across chest and one up) (2 in deck)

For 1/2/3 cylinders, activate a cost £1/£3/£5 Actor card (not a non-Actor), even if Actor has a cylinder or rest token.

- **If your Initiative disc is not on the track, put it on the first empty Initiative space.**

Lord Chamberlain (yellow on grey clothing, holding a hat and a staff) (3 in deck)

For 1/2 cylinders, gain £2 and the top/any card of the Lord deck.

- The Actor cannot be turned into an extra. Preserve the Lord deck order.

Director (red clothing, crossed arms, holding a staff) (2 in deck)

For 1 cylinder, place 1 fewer Rest token during the next Rest phase.

Jeweler (blue clothes, working with a tool) (3 in deck)

For 2 cylinders, place a Yellow Costume or Stage Set element, if available on the crates.

Barkeep (blue, white, brown clothes, holding a plate) (2 in deck)

For 1/2 cylinders, advance Ambiance 1/3 spaces.

Kit Marlowe (light brown clothes, writing but looking toward viewer) (2 in deck)

For 1/3 cylinders, advance in any 1 track / all 3 tracks.

Merchant (blue clothes with yellow trim, two fingers up and holding cloth) (2 in deck)

For 1 / 2 cylinders, place a 1-3 / 4-5 value Costume element, if available on the crate.

Prompter (green clothes, holding papers with one hand) (2 in deck)

For 1 cylinder, recruit this card to gain its power. (This card counts toward the non-actor character objective.)

- During Rehearsal, for each Act, the player may spend £1 to avoid a penalty.

Rag-picker (various brown, reddish, tan clothes, holding cloth with two hands) (4 in deck)

For 1 cylinder, recruit this card to gain its power. (This card counts toward the non-actor character objective.)

- The Character depicted on the card may take from the discards. (There are 2 with the Handyman, 1 with the cost £3 Costume Mistress, and one with the cost £3 Set Dresser.)