Epoch Struggle Rulebook

Introduction

Welcome to **Epoch Struggle**, a two player deckbuilding card game where you must duke it out with- uhhhh, yourself- to restore order to the universe.

In this game, three things are true. 1) You are a mad scientist. 2) You built a time machine. 3) You are about to have a very bad day.



One moment you're in your lab, coordinates locked on your time machine, hand trembling over the switch. Averting your eyes, you press the comically large “Travel” button. In an instant, your reality is no more. Why does your lab look like the deck of a pirate ship? Who is this man and why does he have an eyepatch? Was that a cannonball that just grazed your ear?

And then you see them. All the other versions of you, scattered across the ship. One of you is trying to fit in with the crew donning the most ridiculous “pegleg” you’ve ever seen; another is grinning concerningly, hunched over a vial of sentient red goo; You #3 has a severe underbite donning only a loin cloth. Suddenly, you all seem to lock eyes in a universal moment of clarity. There can only be one. Beg, borrow, kill, steal, whatever it takes- you must stabilize your version of reality before it’s too late.

Gameplay At A Glance

In a game of Epoch Struggle, you will start with very bad cards. Over time, you will acquire better cards, but the only way to win is to remove them from your deck.

Each player starts with a deck made mostly of **Spent Batteries**, which are weak cards. Each round, you will travel to the **Past, Present**, or **Future Eras** to acquire new cards. These cards are stronger. They can increase your energy, disrupt your opponent, or affect which Eras players can travel to.

To win, you must **Sync** cards: remove them from your deck and commit them to **Timelines**. When you remove the card from you deck and commit to to a **Timeline**, the card becomes a **Timeline Fragment**. **3 Fragments** are needed for a **Timeline** to be **Stable**, and **3 Stable Timelines are needed to win (9 Fragments total).**

Every turn you'll need to decide if you'll use your cards for their **Actions,** use them to purchase more cards, or **Sync** them to a **Timeline** to progress toward victory.

Setup

1. **Create Your 3×3 Market.**
    - **Shuffle Era decks:**
        i. **Past Era Deck:** Shuffle all Past cards into a face-down draw pile.
        ii. **Present Era Deck:** Shuffle all Present cards into a face-down draw pile.
        iii. **Future Era Deck:** Shuffle all Future cards into a face-down draw pile.

    - **Create The Market**
        i. Set up **3** rows for the Era Markets: **Past** (top), **Present** (middle), and **Future** (bottom).
            1. Leave space for a discard pile beside each Era.

Draw Decks	Market			Discard Decks
Past	Past Card Slot 1	Past Slot Card 2	Past Card Slot 3	Past
Present	Present Card Slot 1	Present Slot Card 2	Present Card Slot 3	Present
Future	Future Card Slot 1	Future Slot Card 2	Future Card Slot 3	Future

Figure 1: Market Layout

    - **Populate The Era Markets**
        i. Lay out three cards from each Era deck into their respective slots.
2. **Distribute Scientists**
    - Each player receives 1 pawn. Use anything around you.
    - *Designer Note: In future iterations of this game, there may be a three-card deck used to help blind selection of Eras each turn - one card for each era.*
3. **Prepare Glitch and Anomaly Piles**

- Place each deck face up in a single pile. **Glitches** and **Anomalies** are curse-like cards that will be inserted into your opponents deck (glitches) or **Timelines** (anomalies).
- See Card Keywords for information on these card types

4. **Set Up Player Areas**
   - Each player starts with:
     - A deck of eight **Spent Battery** cards and two **Charged Battery** cards.
     - A face-down draw pile.
     - A face-up discard pile.
     - Space for a hand of cards.
     - Space to build your timelines

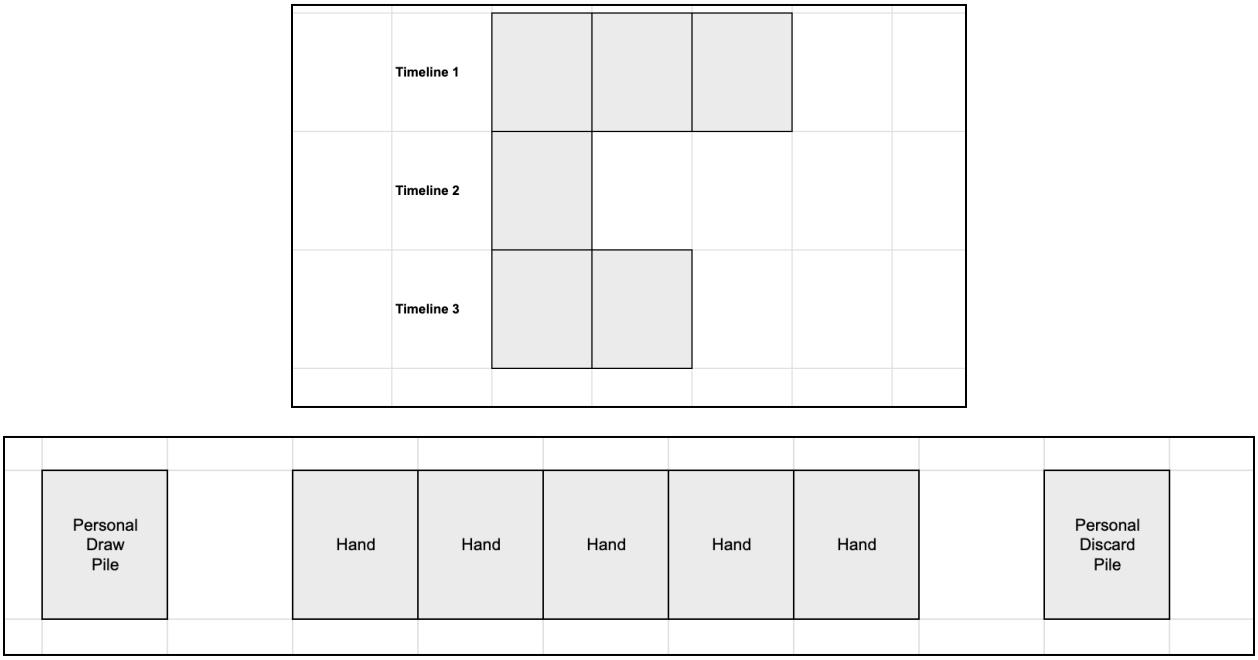


Figure 2: Example Player Board Layout

5. **Select First Player**
   - Find the first player token (or use anything around you)
   - In this game you are the same person. This will be tough. Be civil and select someone to go first =)

How to Win

A player wins by completing three **Stable Timelines.**

Timelines

A **Timeline** is a row of cards in your Player Area. When you **Sync** a card from your hand, you place it into one of your **Timelines,** and it is removed from your deck. Cards in a **Timeline** are called **Fragments**.

All **Fragments** in a **Timeline** must be from the same **Set**.

Each **Timeline** holds 1 **Past**, 1 **Present,** and 1 **Future Fragment.** Some effects may return a **Fragment** to your deck or discard pile.

Visual Example of a Timeline



Stable and Unstable Timelines

A **Timeline** is **Stable** when it contains all three **Fragments**: **Past**, **Present**, and **Future**.

A **Timeline** that is missing any of its three Fragments is **Unstable**.

Example: A Timeline with Pirate Past and Pirate Future is Unstable. Adding Pirate Present makes it Stable.

Rules for Syncing Timelines:

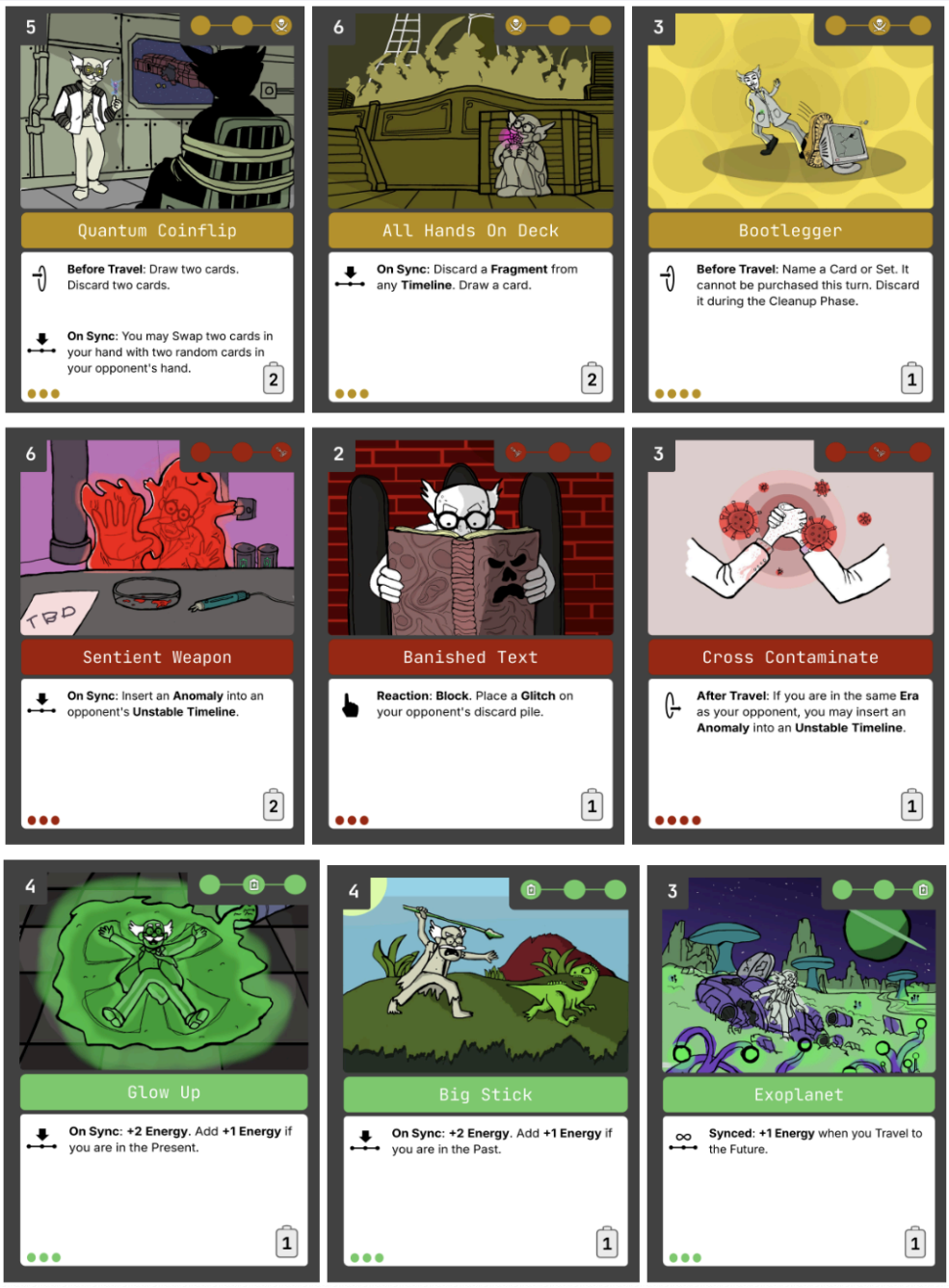
- You may **Sync** one card per turn unless a card effect states otherwise.
- Each **Set** and **Era** combination may only appear once across all your **Timelines**. You cannot have two **Pirate Past Fragments**, for example. If you **Sync** a card that

duplicates an existing **Set** and **Era**, place the current **Fragment** on your discard pile.

- When you complete your third **Stable Timeline**, the game does not end immediately. Each other player takes one final turn. If no other player completes their third **Stable Timeline** on that turn, you win.
- You may have only one **Timeline** for each **Set**.

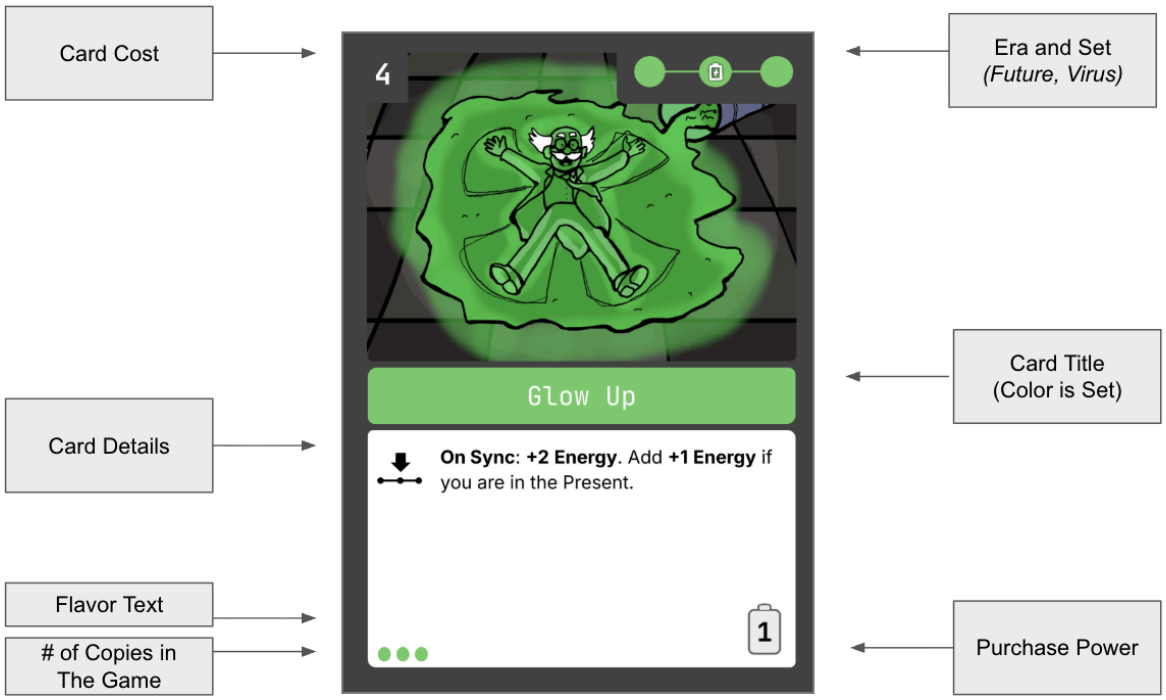
Example of a Winning State

- **3 Stable Timelines:** Pirate, Virus, Power
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Anatomy of a Card

- **Card Cost:** Energy required to purchase it from the Market.
- **Card Title & Set:** Name and faction (e.g., Pirate, Virus, Time), color-coded.
- **Era & Set:** The card's Era (Past, Present, Future). Icon is the Set (ex. Virus, Network, Energy, Time, Power)
- **Purchase Power:** Energy this card generates when used to buy new cards.
- **Text:** You may discard the card to take an **Action.** Types of **Actions**: **Before Travel**, **After Travel**, **Synced**, **On Sync**, **Reaction.**
- **Flavor Text** (Designers Note: This may now be **keywords** for clarity)
- **Card Count:** Dots denote how many copies exist in the deck.



Round Sequence

The following is a general summary of the Round Sequence.

Golden Rule: Execute these steps to the best of your ability. If a card specifies a modification to these steps, the card takes precedence.

The game proceeds in repeating rounds, each consisting of 4 phases:

1. **Before Travel Phase**
2. **Travel Phase**

3. **After Travel Phase**
4. **Cleanup Phase**

Before Travel Phase

1. Rotate First Player Token clockwise. Skip this the first round.
2. **Draw 5 Cards.** If your deck runs out, shuffle your discard pile back in and keep drawing. If you still don't have enough cards, draw what you can.
3. **Resolve Synced Actions (No Limit).** Starting with the first player, resolve all Synced actions from **Fragments** in your **Timelines**.
4. **Use Before Travel Actions (No Limit).** Starting with the first player, a player may play **Before Travel Actions.** Declare the effect, resolve it, then discard the card. There is no limit.

Travel Phase

5. **Travel.** Everyone secretly picks which **Era** Market they're visiting this turn. You can only buy from the Era you visit. Reveal simultaneously and place your pawn. (“3, 2, 1, go...”)

After Travel Phase

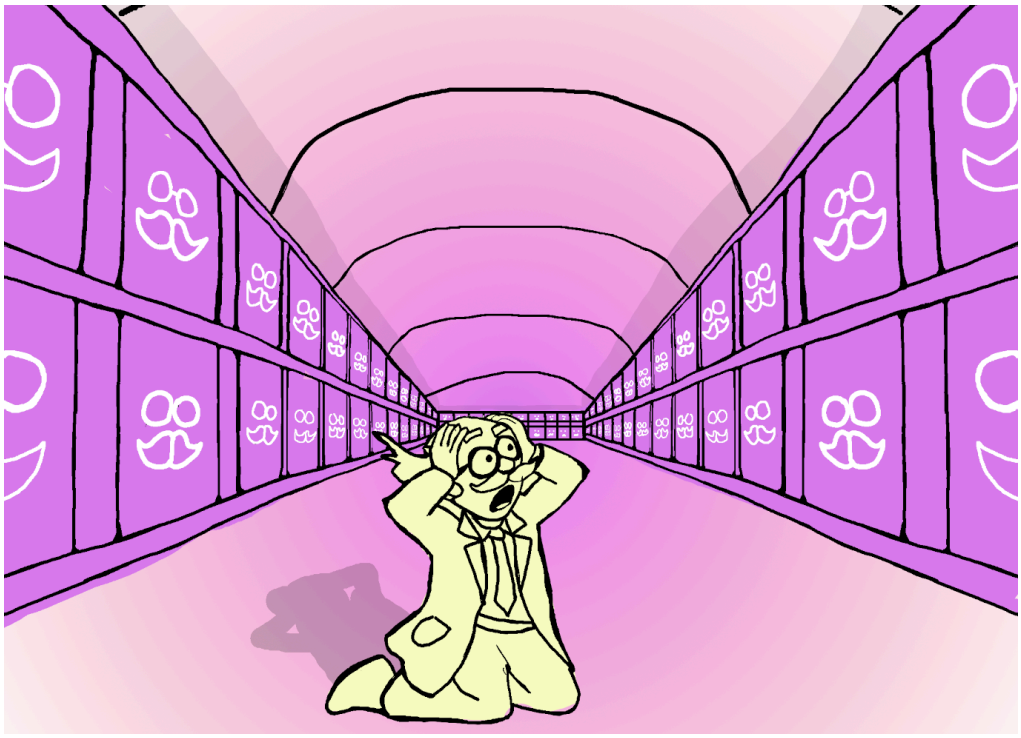
Starting with the First Player, take these actions in any order

6. **Use After Travel Actions (No Limit).** Play **After Travel** Action cards from your hand. Declare the effect, resolve it, then discard the card. Cards that have had their Action played cannot be used for energy once played.
7. **Sync (Once Per Turn):** Place one card from your hand into one of your Timelines. Only cards with a Set and Era can be Synced (Batteries and Glitches cannot).
    - You may **Sync** to an occupied **Timeline** slot. If you do, discard the previous **Fragment.**
8. **Purchase (No Limit):**
    - Discard cards with Purchase Power to add energy to your Energy Reserve.
    - Spend energy to buy cards from your chosen Era Market.
    - Bought cards go to your discard pile.
    - Refill the Market slot immediately.
    - Buy as many cards as you can afford / as you’d like

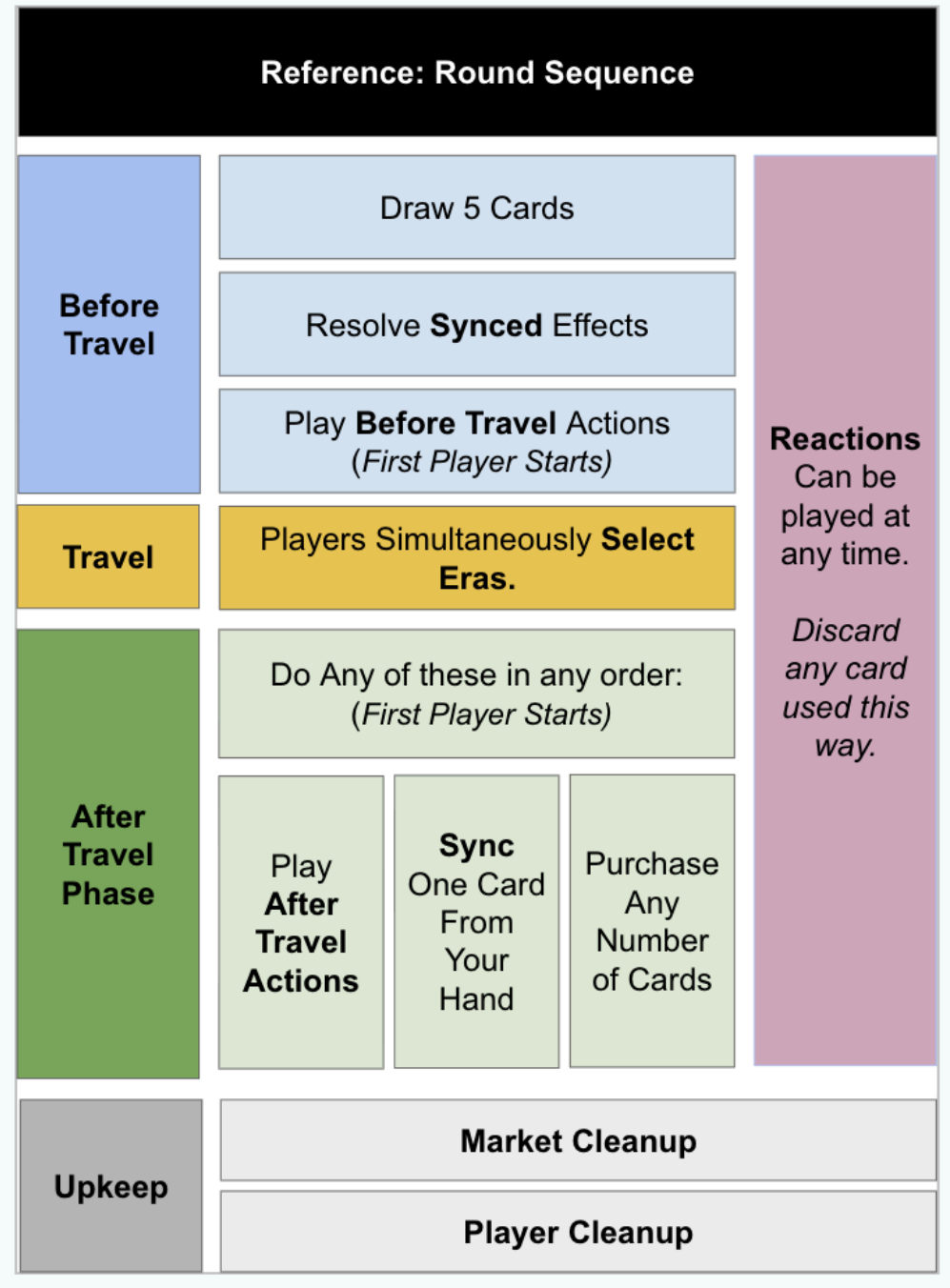
- **Reactions (No Limit): Reaction** are a type of **Action** that you can play when you are targeted by your opponent. You are considered targeted when you Opponent when an **Action** has "Target:Opponent."
    - This can include **Before Travel, After Travel, On Sync, Synced,** and **Reactions.**
- When you play a **Reaction**, discard the card to execute the **Action**.
- **Block:** Block is a keyword found on certain **Reaction** cards. See *Card Keywords*

Cleanup Phase

9. **Market Cleanup.**
    - If an **Era** wasn't visited this turn, discard its Market and refill it.
    - If an **Era's** draw pile is ever gone, shuffle the discard pile and create new draw pile.
10. **Player Cleanup.** Discard all remaining cards in hand.



Player Round Reference



Card Keywords

Keyword	Card Icon	Description
Before Travel		Type: *Action* Target: *Opponent* or *Self*. **Actions** that are played during the **Before Travel** Phase, prior to **Travel.**
After Travel		Type: *Action* Target: *Opponent* or *Self*. **Actions** that are played during the **After Travel** Phase. These actions may be taken in any order by a player, and dispersed between purchases or Syncs.
Reaction		Type: *Action* Target: *Opponent* or *Self*. You may play a **Reaction** when your opponent plays an **Action** that targets you (Opponent plays **Action** with "Target:Opponent"). This can include **Synced, On Sync, Before Travel, After Travel** effects. Resolve the **Reaction,** then discard it. You can play a **Reaction** in response to a **Reaction** which executes an Action with Target: "Opponent."
Synced		Type: *Action* Target: *Self* or Opponent. Passive Actions that resolve every round during the **Before Travel** Phase. A **Synced** effect does not trigger in the round the card was **Synced.**
On Sync		Type: *Action* Target: *Opponent* or *Self*. This **Action** resolves as soon as you **Sync** it into one of your **Timelines.**
Erase	N/A	Erased cards are removed from the game. Keep an Erased Pile for these cards.
Discard	N/A	Send **your card t**o your discard pile. Send **Opponents card t**o Opponents discard pile. Send **Era card** to Era discard pile.
Block	N/A	Type: *Action* Target: *Self.* **Block** prevents a **targeted action** from resolving. Block can be played immediately after your opponent plays one of these actions.

		If successfully blocked, no parts of the action resolve, and the opponent discards the card with the action. You discard the card with the **Block** Keyword.
Swap	N/A	Exchange positions of two cards (ex. hand to hand; market to market).
Unblockable	N/A	This action cannot be prevented by **Blocked**.
Glitch		A **Glitch** is a negative card that card effects add to a player's deck. Glitches have no **Set** or **Era**, so they cannot be **Synced**. A **Glitch** has an optional **Action**: Pay 2 Energy to Erase it.
Anomaly		An **Anomaly** is a negative card that card effects insert into an opponent's **Unstable Timeline**. It takes up the slot it's placed in. While a **Timeline** contains an **Anomaly**, you cannot **Sync** to that **Timeline**, and the **Timeline** cannot become **Stable**. To remove an **Anomaly**, Travel to the **Era** of the slot it occupies and skip your **Sync** step that turn. The **Anomaly** is Erased.