

CRITICAL MASS

RAIJIN vs ARCHON



RULEBOOK

THE STORY

The war lasted one hour and forty-five minutes. No one remembers who fired first. A series of mistakes, a crisis or two, and automatic processes resulted in full scale worldwide launches and retaliatory strikes. The outcome was worse than even the starkest of projections imagined. The simultaneous detonation of so many weapons attacked the planet on a sub-atomic level, scouring the atmosphere, boiling the seas, and turning old growth forests into raging firestorms.

Yet we survived... Governments erected elaborate bunkers to protect their leaders. Private companies and research laboratories dug secure facilities deep into the mountains. Even the common people survived in deep caves and abandoned mines protected by freak natural conditions.

To operate in this new, hostile environment, powerful walking war machines were created. These self-contained, piloted "mechs" are armed with the latest cutting-edge technologies and serve not just as weapons and tools but as expressions and symbols of a faction's driving ideology. The old world may be dead, but a new world has arisen, the word of Critical Mass!



Critical Mass is a game of hard-core, heavy-hitting Mech-on-Mech combat. As the pilot of a massive war machine, you must head out into the irradiated wastes and face-down the unworthy upstarts who dare to challenge your dominion. After all, the honor of your survivor enclave is riding with you!

THE MECHS

THE PACIFIC PROSPERITY SPHERE

Once there was a land of shining radiance, where honorable warriors protected a benevolent emperor from the influences of foreign barbarians. These warriors were proud, and thought they could take on the world in war. As a result, they were the first to feel the sting of atomic death. Devastated, they dug deep into the sacred mountains, under their shallow sea. A red sun banner rises over the world again held high by the survivors; not as a sign of conquest but as a beacon of hope.

The Sphere's Signature Mech is Raijin, a fast, agile machine deadly with flame blade, lightning lance, and grappling claws.



THE PACIFIC PROSPERITY SPHERE

Scientists discovered the technology that unleashed atomic horror. The smartest (some might say the most paranoid) began to stockpile resources and talent deep beneath the Antarctic ice. They created a society where rationality and technology hold sway. The Conglomerate pushes technology to the edge of reality, and perhaps several steps beyond. In this new world there is no room for those who will not follow the new paradigm and embrace logic.

The Conglomerate's Signature Mech is Archon, which wields disintegration rays, force shields, and other weapons that once only graced the cover of Sci-Fi magazines.



GAME COMPONENTS

Editor's Note: Some of the game's components (mainly the player boards) were updated after this booklet was created, and may not be accurately represented herein. These changes do not affect the explanations for those components or how they function.

1. Mech Cockpit Boards x2
2. Raijin Cards x12
3. Archon Cards x12
4. Additional cards to customize your Mechs x48
5. Targeting cards x6
6. Metallic Cubes x37
7. Green Cubes x4
8. Rulebook x1 (not pictured)



SETTING UP THE GAME

1. Each player chooses the Mech they want to pilot, then takes the Mech Cockpit board (A) and all of the cards for their chosen Mech. You can tell which cards go with which Mech by the icon on the front of the card (B). When you take your Mech Cockpit Board, place it in front of you.
2. Separate your Tech 1 cards (C) from the rest of your Mech's Combat cards. These cards are your starting hand (D). Place the rest of your Combat cards in a face-down Deactivated pile to the right of your Mech Cockpit board (E).
3. Take a set of additional cards for customizing your Mech. Each set comes with 68 cards. These cards do not have a Mech specific icon (F) on them because they can be added to any Mech. Secretly choose which cards you want to add to your Combat cards (see "Customizing Your Mech" on pg. 8) and add them to your face-down Deactivated pile. Recommended cards to begin the game quickly are listed on the back of your Mech Cockpit board.

! Each Mech can only have a specific number of additional cards. You can only choose cards that match the Tech and type as listed on the back of your Mech's Cockpit board.

4. Place metallic cubes into the slots (G) for your Critical Components on your Mech Cockpit board.
5. Place green cubes to the side (H). These are used to denote when your Mech is Primed, or its ability is active. Note that only one cube is shown for Archon, but Raijin will need one for its Primed ability and one for its special ability.
6. Each Player may now activate one Deactivated card. Look through your Deactivated pile and choose one Tech 2 card. Add the chosen card to your starting hand of cards.



THE BATTLE IS READY TO BEGIN!

CONTROLLING YOUR MECH

During the game, you will use your Combat Cards to control the actions of your Mech. At all times, every card you have will be located in one of four places:

A. Cards in Hand: These cards are the cards available for you to play during the Plan Step in a turn.

B. Played Cards: Each turn, you will play one Combat Card from your hand (sometimes effects allow more than one card to be played!). This card remains in play until the Cooldown Step.

C. Cooldown: Typically, after a card is played it goes into your Cooldown pile during the Cooldown Step. To get the card back into your hand to play again, you will have to Recharge it.



Always remember that you can see what cards are in your or your opponent's Cooldown pile. This can give you valuable hints about what they might do in the next turn.

D. Deactivated: These cards are part of your Mech but are not currently available for use. You need to Activate (see pg. 7) these cards in order to add them to your hand. You can examine your Deactivated cards at any time. You may not examine your opponent's Deactivated pile.



THE STEPS OF A TURN

In *Critical Mass*, the game is played over a series of turns. However, players do not alternate taking turns. Instead, most of the action is simultaneous!

Step 1: Plan

In the planning step, you and your opponent will both choose one Combat card from your hand to play at the same time. After you have chosen a card, place it face-down in front of you (1).

Step 2: Reveal

Once both players have chosen their cards, at the same time, the cards are turned over and revealed (2).

Step 3: Combat

During the Combat Step, the Combat cards revealed in Step 2 will take effect. This is where you will attack and damage the enemy Mech, defend against attacks, engage Equipment to power up, or play Action cards to do other effects.

The first thing to do during the Combat Step, is to compare the Speed of each revealed card. Each card has a Speed value in the top left corner. This determines the order in which the cards are resolved.

Cards with a lightning bolt in the Speed box are always resolved first, before all other cards (they are considered to always have the highest speed). Defense, Equipment, and some Action cards have a lightning bolt.

After all cards with a lightning bolt are resolved, any cards that remain are resolved in order from highest to lowest Speed. If two cards have the same Speed, both cards take effect at the same time.



Example: Raijin's Light Laser has a Speed of 4, while Archon's Heavy Laser has a Speed of 2, so the Light Laser takes effect first. If Archon's pilot had played his Reflector instead, it would take effect first since it has a lightning bolt for its Speed.

Some cards have an effect that takes place "at the end of Combat." These effects take place at the end of the Combat Step, after other Combat cards have had their effect. For example, the Activate card has an effect that occurs at the end of Combat. For more information on Activate (see pg. 7).

Step 4: Cooldown

Both players now place the cards they played this turn into their Cooldown pile, face-up. Sometimes, you may have other cards that need to go into your Cooldown pile during this step.

Any cards that take effect "at the end of the turn" are resolved now. Unless one of the Mechs has had all of their Critical Components destroyed, the battle isn't over! Start a new turn with Step 1: Plan.

THE MECH COCKPIT BOARD

In *Critical Mass*, your Mech is represented by a Mech Cockpit board, its own deck of Combat Cards, and any additional cards you have added to customize it. The Mech Cockpit board is the control station for your chosen Mech. On the back of each Mech Cockpit board is a list of all of your Mech's cards, and where each card starts during the game.

1. Critical Components

Every Mech has four Critical Components displayed at the top of the Mech Cockpit board. If all four of your Critical Components are destroyed, you lose the game. In addition to the name of the Critical Component, each Critical Component has Armor Plates and Critical Effects.

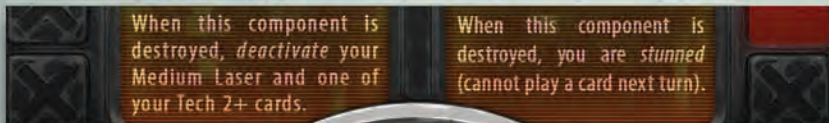
Armor Plates: Fortunately, your Critical Components are protected by tough Armor Plates represented by the metallic cubes beside each Critical Component. Each Armor Plate has a Durability value shown as a number in a shield icon on that component (1). Your opponent must deal damage equal to or greater than the Durability in a single attack to destroy one Armor Plate on a component.

As Armor Plates are destroyed, remove the metallic cubes from that component (2). If all of the metallic cubes (Armor Plates) protecting a Critical Component are destroyed, that Critical Component is considered destroyed.

Example: *Raijin's Thrusters are protected by two Armor Plates, each with a Durability of 4—your opponent must deal 4 damage from a single attack to destroy each Armor Plate. If both of the Armor Plates are destroyed, the Thrusters are destroyed!*

Critical Effects: When one of your Critical Components is destroyed, your Mech suffers critical effects. Each Critical Component describes the critical effects that occur if it is destroyed, which can include:

- **Stun:** If your Mech is stunned, you cannot play a card next turn! Finish out the current turn normally. Then, on your next turn you must skip the Plan Step and you do not choose a card to play.
- **Deactivate:** At the end of the Combat Step, you must take any cards that are listed on your destroyed Critical Component (whether they are in your hand, your Cooldown, or in play), and place those cards face-down in your Deactivated pile.



If you have multiple choices of cards to Deactivate, you choose which one to Deactivate. If you have no matching cards available, ignore that part of the critical effects.



Deactivation doesn't take effect until the end of the Combat Step, so if you played a card this turn that is Deactivated, it remains in play and can still take effect before it is Deactivated.



Example: *Raijin has just destroyed the last of the two Armor Plates protecting Archon's Thrusters. Archon's pilot must Deactivate 1 Evade card, placing it in his Deactivated pile. Later, he can play Activate to bring his Evade card back to his hand.*

2. Primed



During the game, certain actions will make your Mech Primed. When that happens, place a green cube into the Primed space on your Mech Cockpit board. You begin the game with no cube in the Primed position (meaning you start the game not Primed). For more information on Primed, see pg. 7.

2. Special Ability

Each Mech has a unique special ability that it can use to get an edge in battle. There are two kinds of Special Abilities: Conditional and Continuous.

Conditional Special Abilities: These can only be used when while they are turned ON. At the start of the game, conditional abilities are turned "OFF", and therefore there is no cube in the "ON" position.



Certain requirements specified for that ability will enable you to turn the special ability ON. If you meet the requirements, place a green cube into the "ON" position of that ability on your Mech Cockpit board. Once the ability is "ON," certain conditions may cause it to turn "OFF" again, at which time you would remove the green cube.

Example: *Raijin's Special Ability is Close Combat. If Raijin's pilot plays a Defense card with the Dodge ability, and uses it to avoid an enemy attack, they get to turn "ON" their Close Combat ability. As long as Close Combat is "ON," all of Raijin's Weapon cards have +1 Speed. But, if Raijin ever takes damage from any source, the Special ability is turned "OFF" again.*

Continuous Abilities: These are always in effect for the entire game. They do not have an ON and OFF position.



COMBAT CARDS



Combat cards determine what you can do during the game. There are four kinds of Combat cards:

- **Action** cards allow you to perform a variety of special actions, such as recharging your Weapons.
- **Defense** cards are used to protect yourself from enemy attacks.
- **Weapon** cards are used to attack enemy Mechs.
- **Equipment** cards are powerful gear that you can add to your Mech to enhance its abilities.

1. Name: This is the card's name.

2. Mech Icon: This shows which Mech the card belongs to. Note that this set has additional cards which are neutral, so they don't show a Mech Type. These can be added to any Mech to customize that Mech.

3. Speed: The speed of that card. Higher numbers are better. If the card has a lightning bolt, it always goes first!

4. Firepower: Only Weapon cards have a Firepower value. It determines how much damage you do to an enemy Mech if you hit it with that Weapon.

5. Damage Type: Some Weapons inflict damage of a specific type and some cards may affect Weapons of a specific Damage Type. These different types are:

Flame: Missile: Beam: Electrical:

6. Durability: Equipment cards have a Durability value. Similar to the Durability for armor plates, this tells you how much damage that Equipment must receive for it to be Disabled.

7. Text: If the card does anything special (most of them do), it will be described here.

8. Card Type: This identifies the card as a Weapon, Defense, Action, or Equipment.

9. Tech Level: This is an indication of how advanced the card is, and more importantly how hard it is to Activate during battle. Tech 1 cards start the game in your hand, and Tech 2 cards are easier to Activate than Tech 3.

Weapon Cards

If you play a Weapon card, you are making an attack. If you attack with a Weapon and hit, you deal damage to the enemy Mech equal to the Weapon's **Firepower**. Some other cards (usually Action cards) may also deal damage to a Mech, but they do not count as Weapons or attacks.

When you hit a Mech, **you** choose how to apply the damage from the attack. You can divide the Firepower value in any way you wish, splitting it between multiple targets on that Mech, or concentrating it into a single blow.

There are two types of targets you can hit on a Mech:

Armor Plates: Choose a Critical Component on the Mech, and attack one of its armor plates. To damage an Armor Plate, you must deal damage equal to or greater than the Armor Plate's Durability. If you deal enough damage, the Armor Plate is destroyed and you remove a gray cube from that component.



Once all of the Armor Plates of a Critical component are gone, it is destroyed!

Equipment: Every Equipment card has a Durability value. Similar to Armor Plates, you must deal damage equal to or greater than the Durability value to Disable that piece of Equipment. If a piece of Equipment is Disabled, place it in its owner's Cooldown. Unlike Armor Plates, Equipment is never permanently destroyed. Once Disabled, it can later be recharged and equipped again.



Partial damage has no effect! If you don't do enough damage to destroy an Armor Plate or Disable a piece of Equipment, the attack has no effect!

Disruption

It is important to hit the enemy Mech first each combat round! If your Weapon deals damage to an enemy Mech, it may also Disrupt it. Any cards that your opponent has played this turn that have a lower Speed than your Weapon card have no effect this turn. In some cases, their text may give them a reduced or alternate effect.

If the enemy Mech has already resolved its Combat card for the turn (because it had a higher Speed), then it cannot be Disrupted.



Example: Raijin just used its Light Laser (which has a Speed of 4) to hit Archon. That means that Archon's Heavy Laser (which has a Speed of 2) is Disrupted—it has a slower Speed than the Light Laser. Archon's Heavy Laser will have no effect this turn, and Raijin's Light Laser will deal 1 damage (equal to the Firepower) to one of Archon's Armor Plates.



If you and your opponent both play a card with the same Speed, they take effect simultaneously—neither Mech will be Disrupted by the attack.

Cards with a lightning bolt in the Speed box cannot be Disrupted (they always resolve first). Also, some weapons have an ability called **Uninterruptible**, which means that they cannot be Disrupted, even if the Mech is hit by a faster Weapon.

Only damage from a Weapon can cause **Disruption**. Damage from other sources can never Disrupt a Mech. A Weapon can Disrupt a Mech even if it does not deal enough damage to destroy or **Disable** any of the Mech's components or equipment.

Multiple Attacks

Sometimes you will be able to play multiple Weapon cards on the same turn. You must completely resolve one card and assign its damage before the next card takes effect, even if they both have the same speed. You can choose which order to resolve your cards, but you cannot combine the damage from multiple attacks together.

Similarly, some Weapons can make multiple attacks in a row. You must resolve each attack before beginning the next one, and you *cannot* combine the damage from those attacks.

Example: If Raijin's Nekode Blade deals damage, it allows you to immediately play another weapon card (with an unmodified Speed of 3 or more). If you do damage with Gauntlet Blade, you could also then play your Medium Laser. You must make one Firepower 2 attack, followed by a completely separate Firepower 2 attack. You cannot combine the attacks together to deal 4 damage.



A card's unmodified Speed is the speed printed at the top left of the card before it has received any bonuses or penalties from other cards or actions.

Defense Cards

Defense cards protect your Mech from your opponent's attacks. If you play a Defense card, it may completely negate attacks against you that turn. Defense cards always have a lightning bolt for their Speed, so they always take effect before any Weapon cards played that turn.

There are two kinds of Defenses:



Dodge: Cards like Evade allow you to dodge attacks. If you dodge, cards played by your opponent do not deal any damage to your Mech unless they have the Unavoidable ability. If a card says "Unavoidable" in its text, it ignores Dodge and can still deal damage to a dodging Mech.



Block: Cards like Deflector and Reflector can block attacks. If a card is blocked, it does not deal any damage to your Mech unless it has the Piercing ability. If a card says "Piercing" in its text, it ignores block and can still deal damage to a blocking Mech.



Defenses normally stop all damage from all cards, including damage from cards that are not Weapons!



Example: Archon plays the Reflector Defense card. Because it has a lightning bolt, it goes first, before Raijin's Medium Laser can fire. Archon Blocks the Medium Laser (which does not have Piercing) so no damage is taken! If only Raijin had used their Storm Lance instead—it has Piercing, so it would have hit Archon despite his defensive tactics.

Note that Reflector also has a secondary effect in its text: "If Reflector blocks damage from any attacks, deal that much damage minus 1 from each attack to the attacking Mech." Since Archon successfully blocked Raijin's Medium Laser, he reflects the attack and deals 1 damage to Raijin

Note that, as long as you do not get damaged, the Evade card returns to your hand instead of going to your Cooldown pile. If Iron Curtain had played his Shock Claw attack, he would have damaged Patriot, and made Patriot's Evade go to his Cooldown pile.

COMBAT CARDS - CONTINUED

Action Cards

When you play an Action card, your Mech is performing a special maneuver that is neither an attack nor a defense. When your Action card takes effect, simply follow the instructions in the card's text.

Some Action cards have special rules that apply when they are played:

Recharge: This card is used to allow your Mech to recharge, and reload its systems. When you play Recharge, you get to pick up all of the cards in your Cooldown pile and add them to your hand.

Recharge has a lightning bolt for its Speed, so it can never be Disrupted. Also, Recharge can never be in your Cooldown pile and it cannot be Deactivated. It always starts every turn in your hand!

Activate: This card is used so your Mech can power up, set up, or activate special advanced systems it has. When you play Activate, at the end of the Combat Step, after all other cards have been played and resolved, you may choose one Tech 1 or Tech 2 card from your Deactivated pile and add it directly to your hand. You now have a new card you can use starting next turn! You also become Primed (move a cube to the "ON" position on "Primed").

However, if your Mech is Disrupted during the turn that you play Activate, your Mech cannot complete the activation cycle. You must choose either to activate one card or become Primed, not both.



Example: Raijin's pilot just played Activate. Lucky for him, his opponent was expecting an attack and played a Defense, so Raijin is not Disrupted this turn. First, Raijin's pilot gets to choose either a Tech 1 or Tech 2 card from his Deactivated pile and add it to his hand. He doesn't have to show his opponent which card he activated.

Then, Raijin becomes Primed, so he places a cube into the Primed space on his Mech Cockpit board. Had Raijin been Disrupted, he would have only been able to perform one of these effects (instead of both of them).

Primed

If your Mech is Primed, it will have a green cube in its Primed location on the Mech Cockpit board (see the above graphic). A Primed Mech is ready to activate its most powerful systems. If you play Activate while your Mech is Primed AND your Mech is not Disrupted that turn, you can choose to take one Tech 3 card and add it to your hand (instead of a Tech 1 or Tech 2 card). If you choose to take a Tech 3 card, "turn off" Primed by removing the green cube from the Primed position on your Mech Cockpit board.



If your Mech is Primed, you can still choose to activate a Tech 1 or Tech 2 card when you play Activate. If you do, your Mech stays Primed (do not remove the green cube).

Example: In a later turn, Raijin's pilot manages to play Activate again without getting hit by his opponent that turn. Now, he can activate a stronger Tech 3 card from his Deactivated pile. Now he'll have some serious firepower!

Equipment

Equipment cards are special gear that can enhance your Mech's performance. When you play one of these cards, you are Equipping that piece of Equipment. As long as it is Equipped, the Equipment provides a constant benefit to your Mech.

All Equipment cards have a lightning bolt for their Speed. When you play one, you Equip it at the start of the Combat Step. Place the Equipment card face-up above your Mech Cockpit board.



Like Armor Plates, Equipment cards have Durability. The Equipment remains Equipped until your opponent does damage equal to or greater than this Durability in a single attack. If this happens, your Equipment is Disabled, meaning you must put it into your Cooldown pile, face-up. Like other cards, you can use your Recharge card to bring your Equipment back into your hand, to equip it again later.

Equipment Abilities: Each Equipment card describes the ability it provides in the card text. This ability continues to take effect until the Equipment is Disabled.



Example: Archon just played Focus Lens. Now its Beam weapons gain +1 Firepower! If Archon's opponent wants to stop this effect, they will have to Disable the Focus Lens by dealing at least 2 damage to it from a single attack.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR MECH

Before the game begins, you will choose a number of additional cards to add to your Deactivated pile. These cards are additional Weapons, Defenses, Actions, and/or Equipment cards that you can Activate during the battle.

A Mech only has a limited amount of space and power that can be customized. These limits are shown on the back of the Mech Cockpit board, in the "Customization" section. You only get to choose cards up to the limits shown on the card list for your chosen Mech.



At the start of the game, you get to add one Tech 2 card from your Deactivated pile to your hand. You can choose any Tech 2 card from there, including any additional cards you added to your Mech.

Equipment

Customizing your Mech can be daunting for first time players. We recommend, for your first few games, that you use the customization cards listed on the back of your Mech Cockpit board. They have been chosen to work well with the Tech 1 cards for your Mech. After you have a few battles under your belt, feel free to change your cards and try out new combos and strategies!



Example: Raijin's Card List shows that it can add the following cards to customize it. It can add four Tech 2 cards, one of these must be an equipment, and the other three must be weapons. It can add one Tech 3 card of any type.

MULTIPLAYER BATTLES

You can play Critical Mass with more than two players! There are two ways to play:

Free-for-all: Three or four players face off and attack each other until only one Mech remains standing!

Team Battle: Two teams of two Mechs each duke it out. The battle continues until all the Mechs on one side have been destroyed.

All of the rules for two-player games apply during a multiplayer battle, with one key difference: During the Plan Step, you must not only choose which Combat card you are playing, you must also choose which enemy you are going to target!

Setting Up the Game

Give each player a set of Targeting cards. These cards show whether you are targeting the Mech to your left, the Mech to your right, or the Mech directly across from you.

If you are playing a three-player Free-for-all or a Team Battle, you only need the left and right cards. The center card is only used in four player Free-for-all games.



During the Planning Step

Each turn, you must pick two cards: the Combat card you want to play that turn, as normal, and one of your Targeting cards. The Targeting card you choose determines which Mech you will affect if you make an attack. For example, if you choose "Target Left Mech," you will only attack the player to your left this turn.

You must always choose a Targeting card, even if you are not making any attacks this turn. That way, your enemy doesn't know if you are attacking or not!

During the Combat Step

Cards are resolved as normal, in Speed order. If you make an attack or take an action that targets an enemy Mech, you can only use them to affect the Mech shown on your Targeting card.



Defense cards protect you from all enemy attacks. Your Targeting card has no effect when you play a Defense card.

Radios

If you are playing a Team Battle, you are free to talk to your teammate, and discuss which cards you want to play. But be careful! Your enemies may be listening in on your frequency!

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