

# All's Fair in Life and Stratego

How to Win at the New *Star Wars* Board Games

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**W**ith the release of *Attack of the Clones* come new games, and Hasbro's 2002 *Star Wars* board games run the gamut from simple to challenging. Here's a look at four of the new games and their best basic strategies. **Epic Duels** offers the highest level of strategy and tactics for dedicated gamers. **The Game of Life: A Jedi's Path** and **Jedi Unleashed** are straightforward games that offer light strategy for serious gamers but are easy for less sophisticated gamers to learn. **Star Wars Stratego** presents a greater challenge, and the new powers in the game offer fresh opportunities for Stratego players to outwit their opponents.

## Epic Duels

Epic Duels uses special playing cards to act out miniature warfare. Each player selects a *Star Wars* character and takes the deck of cards for that character. Then choose a location (say, the Cloud City carbon freezing chamber), place your figures there, and start fighting. On your turn, you move and then get two actions (either draw a card or play a card). Most are attack/defense cards, but each character has a dozen special cards that define that character's abilities and strategy. Characters have damage points, and the first one to run out loses. If your supporting characters are all defeated, their cards can be used to heal your main character.

Experienced gamers will take to Epic Duels in no time flat. One game takes about 25 minutes; it plays well with teams and can serve as an introduction to miniature and trading card games. Of all the new *Star Wars* board games, Epic Duels offers the greatest depth of strategy. It includes basic trading card game elements such as drawing, discarding, and performing actions, but it also incorporates miniature gaming elements such as line-of-sight and tactical movement.

### GENERAL STRATEGY

Avoid your opponent while you draw cards. Once you get a hand you like, move in. In the meantime, use your supporting characters (who all have distance weapons) to harass and pin down your opponent's characters. Set up your figures so that your main character is protected and the supporting characters stand watch over rows and columns of spaces. Keep an eye on your opponent's hand size, as she will probably move in when she gets to 6 or 8 cards. Make sure you have an escape plan if the attack does not go as you expected; you'll need a few turns to draw up and recover from a plan-gone-awry.



### OBJI-WAN KENOBI & CLONE TROOPERS

Except for Boba and Jango, Obi-Wan has the greatest ability to move around the board, so there's no need to keep him near the action until you are ready. **Jedi Attack** and **Force Quickness** allow you to move just about anywhere in a single turn. But Obi-Wan's other cards are what offer real finesse. **Force Control** lets Obi-Wan move all characters up to three spaces each. You move them in any order and can use this ability to remove blockers, pin characters, bring your main target adjacent to you, shove opponents out of the way, get your allies behind cover, and other interesting effects. Do not underestimate this card. Also, you can use **Jedi Mind Trick** to get any card back from your discard pile. This is handy when things go wrong and you need another **Jedi Block** or **Force Control**. Finally, save **Force Balance** for the end of a big attack, when you have little or nothing left in your hand. It forces everyone to discard all their cards and draw a new hand of 3 cards.



### YODA & CLONE TROOPERS

Use Yoda's Force abilities to block opponents, toss them around, and soften them up. Use **Insight** to look at your opponent's hand, then **Force Lift** to keep the enemy immobilized until your opponent discards 3 cards. If your foe is pinned, come in with attack cards. When your foe gets going again, use another **Force Lift** to put him back down. Yoda doesn't have a lot of strong attack cards, but he does have many ways to prevent opponents from reacting to his attacks. Don't forget **Force Rebound**, which turns an opponent's attack against him. Always act like you are holding it, even if you are not. It will make opponents think twice about attacking you.



### HAN & CHEWIE

Unlike many characters, Han and Chewie are a true combination. Use Han to hit-and-fade, jump out from behind obstacles, play a card, and then beat a **Heroic Retreat**. Hide Han behind Chewie, since the Wookiee has a lot of damage points and defense cards. Keep Chewbacca alive until you get a chance to blast an enemy with **Bowcaster Attack**. **Wookiee Instincts** lets you search through your draw pile for **Bowcaster Attack**, and Han's **Never Tell Me the Odds** not

only damages multiple opponents but also lets you shuffle your discard pile back into your deck, giving you a second chance to play both **Bowcaster Attack** and **Wookiee Instincts**. If things get too hot for Han and Chewie, play **It's Not Wise** to throw an enemy out of range and rough them up in the process.



#### LUKE & LEIA

Like Han and Chewie, Luke and Leia work well as a duo: lead with Luke, or use **Children of the Force** to get both into the action. Then fade back and heal up Luke with **Luke's In Trouble**. While you are refilling your hand, use **I Will Not Fight You** to keep your opponent from stocking up on powerful attack cards. Once you draw **Justice**, it is time to send Leia in. Her **Latent Force Abilities** card packs quite a punch. When she's defeated, Luke's **Justice** becomes an **Attack 10**, enabling him to finish off most opponents.



#### MACE WINDU & CLONE TROOPERS

Mace is most powerful with a full hand of cards, so do everything to stay near your maximum hand size. **Battlemind** cards have a value equal to your hand size, so they can be **Attack/Defend 9** with a full hand of cards. Use Mace's other special cards, like **Masterful Fighting** and **Wisdom** to keep Mace along the edge of the action while he draws cards. Hit and fade while drawing for key cards. If an opponent surrounds Mace, play **Whirlwind** to damage a number of foes, then **Wisdom** to fade back and draw another card. While all this is happening, use your **Clone Troopers** to weaken your opponents. You don't need them for Mace's victory.



#### ANAKIN & PADMÉ AMIDALA

Anakin shows hints of the Sith Lord he will become. Anakin's **Wrath** can defeat any evil supporting character instantly, with no defense. Use to eliminate some (but not all) of an opponent's supporting characters. As long as your opponent has one supporting character, that character's attack cards cannot be used to heal damage. Try to get one each of **Anger** and **Calm**, and save them as your last two cards. Play **Anger**, which causes you to discard all but one card (**Calm**), then play **Calm** to retreat from battle and draw until you have a hand of 5 cards. Anakin's normal attack cards are also powerful, so even a few can keep the pressure on. Keeping Padmé alive is helpful but not necessary. Once her two special cards are played, the rest are best used to heal, since Anakin has limited blocking ability.



#### BOBA FETT & GREEDO

These two specialize in causing damage when opponents think they are safe. Boba Fett has a number of options for paralyzing and defeating opponents. Use **Rocket Retreat** to move to a space where Boba Fett can target a cluster of opponents. Then use **Thermal Detonator** to do 4 damage to each character in the group. Once your opponent is softened up, use **Wrist Cable** to keep the enemy



## The Game of Life: A Jedi's Path

It looks like the standard Game of Life, but there's a bit more going on here. You gather skills in the Force in one of four categories—**Logic**, **Intuition**, **Fighting**, and **Energy**—as you make your way to your Jedi Trials. Along the way there are "Dark Paths" which can give you lots of skills but also give you **Dark Side** chips. If you go down three **Dark Paths**, you become a Sith. At the end of the game, the Sith and Jedi with the most skills fight to see who rules the galaxy. Good tends to win more often than evil, although it won't look that way during the game.

If you are going to go evil, go very evil. You are rewarded at the end for the number of "Dark Side" chips you have. The worst place to be is stuck having 2 or 3 **Dark Side** chips—you are weak either way. As a Sith-in-training, you need enough **Fighting** skill to pass your **Dark Trial**. Your Master will leave you and take his skills away, so keep in mind what abilities you will lose near the end of the game.

If you are going to be good, you need to have strength in two skills for the final duel. You need to win only one of the challenges, but the Sith champion can ignore your strongest skill. Make sure your second strongest is good enough.

**Logic** skill allows you take the **Logic** side path and helps in the Trials. The same is true for **Intuition**. **Fighting** helps if you are a Sith, and on most missions. **Energy** helps you get through the board faster and gives you extra skills if you land on the right spaces.

This is a great twist on a classic board game that's not much harder to play than the original Game of Life.



## Jedi Unleashed

Jedi Unleashed is a quick game that's all about fighting. It's perfect for a lunch hour or a gaming appetizer before a main course of multi-hour game play. Novice gamers will find Jedi Unleashed easy to play, and veterans won't be disappointed. After all, you get to be on both sides of the conflict between good and evil. This game is set in the Geonosis arena from the finale of *Attack of the Clones*. Each player controls one Jedi (randomly dealt out before the game) and all players take turns controlling the bad guys. Your Jedi's goal is to defeat all the bad guys. The bad guys' goal is to defeat the other players' Jedi.

Some basic tactics are obvious: Move your Jedi to a square where he can attack a number of enemies on the same turn; Attack with Darth Tyrannus and Jango Fett first, since they have the best chance of defeating Jedi.

The only object of the game is to be the last Jedi alive. Defeating a dozen enemies with one Jedi makes you nothing but a target. A good tactic is to spread your kills around to all your characters early on. That way, none of your characters is a prime target, and losing one is not such a heavy blow. Late in the game, you want to make a run with one character and then get that Jedi off to a clear part of the board, away from opponents who can eliminate him. One effective tactic is to guard the prime-point-winning Jedi with one or two of your other characters, forming an honor guard.

Also, the Reek roams the arena, and you can try to ride the beast to stomp opponents. Riding the Reek is dangerous but can pay off handsomely if it goes well. Try to "ride-and-conquer" in the mid-game. If it works, it's late enough in the game to run and hide with your now-winning Jedi—but not so late that you can't recover from some bad dice rolling. Also, Jedi on the Reek are hard to defeat, since they first have to be bucked off and then defeated on the ground. Therefore, you might want to hide your high-point scorer in the most dangerous place of all—on the Reek.

from drawing or playing too many cards. Once you are sure you have your opponent reeling, play **Saber Dart** to finish him (you draw 3 cards if you use it to eliminate an opponent) and then **Rocket Retreat** to safety. Greedo isn't as versatile but can be deadly if forgotten. **Sudden Arrival** does not count as an action and can move him anywhere on the board. Follow this up with either a two-card attack followed by a **Sudden Arrival** to retreat or a one-card attack and then the **Desperate Shot**. This can be a powerful tactic, but could be the end of Greedo if it doesn't work.



### DARTH VADER & STORMTROOPERS

Vader's damage points alone make him a strong character, plus he has two healing cards. Add in the fact that his cards allow him to attack someone anywhere on the board, and he is one tough Sith Lord. **Wrath**, **Throw Debris**, and **Choke** all do damage to characters anywhere on the board—no hiding, no defense—and there are multiple copies of each. Use some of these early on to eliminate supporting characters (**Choke**) or to whittle an opponent down. If possible, keep one or two to finish off a wounded enemy, since there is no defense against a special card. Vader's most dangerous card is **All Too Easy**, which does 20 points of damage if not blocked. If you get this, go for an opponent with few or no cards. Or, use **Your Skills Are Not Complete** to look at their hand and make them discard any cards that might stop **All Too Easy**.



### THE EMPEROR & IMPERIAL GUARDS

Do not make the mistake of charging into battle with the Emperor. He's strong attacking from afar, and his low damage points make him weak in head-to-head combat. Your attack cards consist of multiple copies of **Force Lightning** and supporting character attacks. Always keep one Imperial Guard back next to the Emperor, away from the action. You have some standard attack cards, but use them only to finish off an opponent—you don't want to be counter-attacked. While you are waiting to draw these cards, be sure to annoy opponents with the other Emperor specialties. Reorder your deck with **Future Foreseen**. Make opponents discard cards with **Let Go of Your Hatred** or their whole hand with **You Will Die**. **Meditation** not only heals you, it also stops an opponent from drawing, too. Once you have a few attack cards and some **Force Lightning**, play **You Will Die** to discard your opponent's hand, and then attack. Next turn, attack again and then play **Meditation** to heal and prevent the opponent from drawing. If things get dicey, play **Royal Command** to switch the Emperor with any Imperial Guard.



### DARTH TYRANUS & SUPER BATTLE DROIDS

Darth Tyrannus has the ability to maintain a good hand while dealing out the beatings. **Taunting** does 7 points of damage and then allows you to draw, combining two actions into one. **Gain Power** gives you 3 cards with one action and **Force Drain** removes 2 cards from an opponent. Overall, it is easy to maintain a larger hand than your opponent. Don't forget about your Super Battle Droids; they're stronger than most other supporting characters. **Give Orders** lets all

of your characters rush into action, surrounding a weakened opponent. Leave your characters where they look "out of play," then charge in with one of these cards.



#### DARTH MAUL & BATTLE DROIDS

Darth Maul is all about short, free attacks and dizzying speed. Six of his cards (3 Sith Speed, 3 Super Sith Speed) don't count as one of your actions, giving Maul the potential to attack with 8 cards in one turn. Compared with most characters' 2-card maximum, these cards can strip defensive cards in a hurry and do some serious damage against even a well-stocked opponent. Attacking players while they have a small hand size will make them less able to stop your onslaught. Finish with an **Athletic Surge**: In addition to doing 8 points of damage, this card enables Maul to run back to safety. Early in the game, send out the Battle Droids while you draw for your good cards. If you have a lot of damage points remaining and your opponent is down to his last 3, wait for **Blinding Surge**: It deals 3 points to the attacker after Maul takes damage.



#### JANGO FETT & ZAM WESELL

Like Boba Fett, Jango Fett's strengths are darting in and out of battle. Armed with Zam Wesell on sniper duty, Jango can harass opponents all over the board. First, line up Zam Wesell in a spot where she can hit a lot of spaces, then move Jango in to draw out the enemy. When opponents close in, you'll have a lot of options. You can **Wrist Cable** them, limiting their actions. You can use **Missile Launch** to draw cards and do damage, or use Zam's **Sniper Shot** card to hit an unsuspecting target. Also be sure to fly Jango in to a group of opponents with one of his **Jet Pack** or **Rocket Retreat** cards, and then use **Famethrower** to both damage and scatter them—since you choose where they go, you can move them into Zam's line of fire. If Zam starts getting counter-fire, use **Assassination** to flee to a new targeting position. ■



## Star Wars Stratego

It's Stratego with a few twists. You can play standard Stratego or Stratego using Rise of the Empire or Rebellion era pieces. The real fun is using the "special powers" in the game. Gamers who like thinking, bluffing, strategy, and classic board game play will enjoy all of these choices.

While all the strategies of classic Stratego still apply, the addition of the special power pieces mean you must add new tactics to your time-tested battle plans. Your strategy for special powers pieces should enhance the basic Stratego strategy, not replace it. How you set up your army, guard your Lightsaber (Command Center), move your pieces, and bluff go a long way in this game.

Use the **Vision** special power (the Emperor, Yoda, Luke Skywalker, and Darth Vader all have this power) to reveal the identity of a piece up to 2 spaces away. Lead with Luke or Vader and use **Vision** to reveal the identity of approaching forces, keeping Yoda and the Emperor safely hidden.

Han Solo and Boba Fett use the **Advanced Blaster** and **Charging** powers. **Advanced Blaster** can destroy a lower-ranked piece up to 2 spaces away. It can't destroy higher ranked pieces like Vader, but it will reveal their identity, so there is no downside to shooting at a figure. **Charging**—moving any number of spaces horizontally or vertically—gets these two in and out of the action quickly. Keep them out in the open where they'll have room to maneuver.

Jango Fett and Anakin Skywalker use the **Leaping** power to jump over any number of friendly pieces, enemy pieces, or obstacles. Start these heavy hitters in the back rows, from which they can rapidly and unexpectedly leap into action. Later in the game, they can be vitally effective in tightly populated areas.

Obi-Wan Kenobi, Mace Windu, Darth Tyrannus, and Darth Maul have the **Quickness** power, allowing them to move 2 spaces on one turn, even around corners. Try to keep one of these units on each side of the board.

Finally, place your R2-units and Sith Probe Droids (Miners) hidden but near the front. They are slow but critical in defusing your enemy's Thermal Detonators.

