

Star Wars: Duell der Mächte (Duel of the Forces)

Card game for 2-4 players aged 8+ by David Parlett

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Introduction

In Duel of the Forces players use their rebel cards to capture cards representing various Empire villains. The most successful player will be the one with the coolest head and most calculating brain.

To start

There are 36 rebel cards (light backs) and 34 Empire cards (dark backs). You each choose to be one of four heroes (Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Princess Leia, Yoda) and take as your playing hand all eight rebel cards of that character, plus one R2-D2 card, making nine in all.

Thoroughly shuffle all the Empire cards and lay them face down as a stock in the middle of the table. Your aim is to capture villains totalling the most ransom points. The Empire cards show the various villains of the Star Wars saga, with values from 1 to 10 points. At end of play you will score the total value of all you have captured. But they also include six Darth Vader cards. These have penalty values from 1 to 6 and each deducts that amount from your final score, so you may prefer to avoid capturing them.

Play

At each turn the topmost card of the stock is turned up to expose a villain vulnerable to capture and everyone decides whether or not they wish to capture it. The number on that card shows the ransom value of the villain if you succeed.

You then each choose from your hand a card showing the amount of force you wish to exert and hold it face down on the table. Each of your rebel cards shows a force value from 1 to 8 and from 0 to 4 rebel icons. Deciding which card to play calls for a nice degree of judgment, plus a certain amount of luck and bluff. When all are ready, turn these force cards face up.

Whoever plays the highest rebel card captures the available villain and places it in front of them. If two or more play the same value the one showing the most icons wins. On capturing a prisoner you must throw the card you captured with to a wastepile, but everyone else returns the card they played back into hand.

Darth Vader cards

When a Darth Vader card is turned up you all bid for it in the usual way, except that (1) you may not play an R2-D2 card (see below), and (2) whoever wins it may retain the card they won it with, while everyone else must discard the ones they played.

R2-D2 cards

R2-D2 cards work differently. If you play one and nobody else does, it doesn't win an Empire card: instead, you can look at the next top card of the stock and either keep it yourself or give it to somebody else. If you keep it you add it to your captured villains and must discard your R2-D2 card to the wastepile, but if you give it away you can keep your R2-D2 card and use it again later. However, if you turn a Darth Vader card and decide to keep it you can also keep your RD-D2 card for future use.

Having made and acted upon your decision, you cannot compete for the currently available villain, which is won in the usual way by the highest of the other rebel cards played.

If two or more players play their RD-D2 card at the same time, neither of them wins and they cannot turn over another card. Instead, they can take them back into hand for another turn and cannot compete for the currently available villain.

Ending and winning

The game ends as soon as one player runs out of rebel cards. You then add together the values of all the villains you have captured and subtract those of any Darth Vader cards you may have. Finally, add the following bonuses if applicable: for two of the same villain add 10 extra, for three add 20, and for four add 30 points. Whoever then has the highest total wins.

Variations

The rules of the German edition as currently published are not the same as I originally wrote. The original game on which it is based contained these two differences:

1. When you run out of rebel cards you stop playing, but the others keep going till only one player has any left. That player discards them and must capture the same number of cards from the top of the stock.
2. The bonuses apply without reference to the individual values of the cards taken. Thus any pair of the same villain scores a flat 20 points, any three together score 30 in all, and all four score 40. For capturing both Jabbas, however, you count 30, and for both Palpatines 40.