

The Rust Sovereigns

Manual — version 1.19.0 — Tronsoft Games

A post-apocalyptic 4X on two planes. Draft a charter, found holds, bind the dead reactors, and rule the bus through the Switchboard.

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1. The world

Two planes of 34 by 22 hexes: the **Surface**, where most factions begin, and the **Undercity**, home of the Tunnelers. 6 shafts join them. Each plane holds 14 reactors and 10 ruins, every one guarded until cleared. Everything begins under fog of war; your holds see two hexes, your units one, and the Scry protocol sees five.

2. The charter

Spend exactly 11 picks.

Difficulty

Level	What changes
Lenient	The waste is kind. Rival sovereigns earn a quarter less and are slow to march.
Even	Every sovereign lives by the same rules.
Harsh	Rivals earn a third more and press an attack sooner.
Merciless	Rivals earn far more, march early, and rarely treat.

Difficulty moves only what the computer sovereigns are given — their income, the size of the host they keep, how soon they march and how readily they treat. Nothing about the human sovereign changes, so a charter that works on Even works on Merciless; there is simply more waiting for it.

Doctrines

- Rust — Salvaged machinery. Turrets, drones, plating, the scrap golem.
- Glow — Radiation harnessed. Rad bursts, hot zones, the mutant colossus.
- Blight — Mutation and spore. Swarms, chimerae, regeneration, plague.
- Signal — Broadcast and mind. Static, rallies, dead air, the signal ghost.
- Ember — Fuel and fire. Firebombs, hounds, jet rigs, the ember titan.

Codices in a doctrine open its protocol tiers at 1, 3, 5, 7 codices. Each codex also adds one power to the bastion.

Traits

Trait	Picks	Effect
Scavenger	1	+50% salvage from ruins and +1 gold per hold.
Warlord	2	Every raised unit starts one rank higher.
Engineer	1	Buildings cost 25% less.
Broadcaster	1	+25% study.
Reactor-born	2	Bound reactors yield double power.
Pathfinder	1	All units +1 movement.
Hoarder	1	+25% production.
Cell Leader	1	Holds grow twice as fast.

Archivist	2	Tier access one codex earlier in every doctrine you hold.
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Factions

Faction	Begins	Growth	Production	Food	Company	Notes
Settlers	Surface	×1	×1	×1.2	Wardens	Balanced survivors. Farms well, builds everything.
Ghouls	Surface	×1.1	×0.9	×0.9	Ravagers	Feed on the dead cities. Ruins pay double; no Market.
Synths	Surface	×0.5	×1.4	×1	Sentinel Frame	Machine minds. Slow growth, heavy production, no Shelter.
Tunnelers	Undercity	×0.9	×1.2	×0.9	Sappers	Begin in the Undercity. Miners and sappers.
Nomads	Surface	×1	×0.8	×1.1	Outriders	Fast movers. All units +1 MP; no Wall.

3. The Switchboard

Every watt of power on your bus — the bastion, generators, bound reactors — is split by three breakers drawn as bars in the right column (controls), with the forecast printed under each.

- **STORE** banks **charge**, the currency of casting.
- **STUDY** feeds **research** toward the protocol you are studying.
- **SURGE** raises the cap on how much charge you may pour out in one season, overland or in battle. The cap accumulates while the breaker is open and drains as you cast.

A sovereign who closes SURGE to hoard charge and research will find the charge cannot be spent quickly when war comes; a sovereign who leaves it wide open learns slowly. The Switchboard is the game.

4. Holds and the economy

Holds grow on **food**, build on **production** and pay **gold**. Each hex a hold works contributes its terrain yields. A hold with nothing queued sells its production. Gold pays unit upkeep; a treasury that runs dry disbands units. Population beyond the food supply starves. Caravans, raised at a Depot, found new holds at least four hexes from any other.

Building	Production	Effect
Barracks	40	Raises Militia and the faction company.
Range	60	Raises Marksmen.
Workshop	80	+50% production.
Armory	120	Raises Heavy Infantry.
Shelter	60	+3 food; growth.
Lab	100	+3 study.
Generator	100	+3 power.
Market	70	+3 gold.
Wall	80	+2 defence to the garrison.
Depot	50	Raises Caravans to found new holds.
Antenna	140	+5 study; sight 4.

5. Units and movement

Units are **raised** in holds with the right building, **summoned** by protocols, or found as **wild** guardians. Each has attack, defence, hit points and movement. Terrain costs one or two movement; a stack moves at its slowest member's pace. Units in a hold heal 2 a season; resting units 1. Flags: *fly* ignores terrain cost, *radproof* crosses glass unburnt, *regen* heals fully each season, *siege* strikes walls, *scout* sees two hexes, *hero* is named, unmoved by fear, and rises further than any soldier.

Terrain	Plane	Move	Food	Prod	Gold
Waste	Surface	1	1	1	0
Scrub	Surface	1	2	0	0
Rubble	Surface	2	0	2	1
Hills	Surface	2	0	2	0
Glass	Surface	2	0	0	1
Toxic Lake	Surface	0	0	0	0
Tunnel	Undercity	1	0	1	0
Cavern	Undercity	1	1	1	0
Vault	Undercity	2	0	3	2
Fungal Bed	Undercity	1	2	0	0
Collapse	Undercity	0	0	0	0
Flooded	Undercity	0	0	0	0

6. Battle

Moving onto an enemy stack, hold or guarded site opens the **battle plate**. Each **round** every unit on both sides strikes once: attack against defence sets the chance of a hit, hit points fall, the dead are removed. A hold's Wall adds to every defender's defence unless the attackers bring a *siege* unit, in which case the plate says the wall is breached. Between rounds you may cast **battle protocols** off your surge — bursts, buffs, summons — and the computer casts its own. **Fall back** withdraws the survivors at one wound each. When one side is destroyed the battle ends; a captured hold changes hands, and small holds may be put to the torch instead. Casualties are permanent.

7. Protocols

Research a protocol by choosing it on the Protocols tab; STUDY power flows into it each season. Known protocols may be cast overland (targeted or global) or in battle (marked *battle*). Cost is paid in charge and limited by the surge cap. The **Long Broadcast** becomes researchable once you have bound four reactors of four different doctrines; casting it ends the age in your favour.

Protocol	Doctrine	Tier	Charge	Kind	Effect
Scry	arcane	1	8	scry	Reveal the ground within 5 of any hex.
Call Wanderer	arcane	2	60	summon	A hero walks out of the waste.
Dispel	arcane	2	20	battle	Strip enemy battle blessings.
Beacon	arcane	3	25	unit	Recall a unit to your bastion.
The Long Broadcast	arcane	5	400	global	Every receiver in the world tunes to you. Victory. Needs four bound reactors of four doctrines.
Repair Drone	Rust	1	10	battle	Heal every friendly unit 3.
Turret	Rust	1	25	summon	undefined
Plating	Rust	2	20	unit	Unit +1 defence, permanently.
Factory Line	Rust	2	40	hold	Hold +4 production.
Auto-Cannon	Rust	3	22	battle	2 damage to every enemy.
Scrap Golem	Rust	3	70	summon	undefined
Overclock	Rust	2	18	unit	Unit +1 movement, permanently.
Iron Legion	Rust	4	120	global	All your mech units +2 attack.
Rad Burst	Glow	1	12	battle	5 damage to one enemy.
Glowfiend	Glow	1	35	summon	undefined
Radshield	Glow	2	15	unit	Unit walks the glass unharmed.
Half-life	Glow	2	18	battle	Every enemy -1 defence this battle.
Fallout	Glow	3	45	hold	Enemy hold loses 2 population.
Hot Zone	Glow	3	30	hex	Turn a hex to glass.
Mutant Colossus	Glow	4	110	summon	undefined
Meltdown	Glow	4	60	hold	Destroy a building in an enemy hold.
Spore Cloud	Blight	1	10	battle	Every enemy takes 1 each round.
Blightling Swarm	Blight	1	30	summon	undefined
Regrowth	Blight	2	35	hold	Hold +3 food.
Regeneration	Blight	2	25	unit	Unit regenerates.

Chimera	Blight	3	75	summon	undefined
Plague	Blight	3	50	hold	Enemy hold loses 1 pop a season for 5 seasons.
Blightlord	Blight	4	130	summon	undefined
Static	Signal	1	10	battle	Every enemy -1 attack this battle.
Rally Cry	Signal	1	12	battle	Every friendly +1 attack this battle.
Watch Tower	Signal	2	30	hold	Hold sees two further.
Dead Air	Signal	2	20	battle	The enemy cannot cast this battle.
Signal Ghost	Signal	3	45	summon	undefined
Broadcast Panic	Signal	3	25	battle	One enemy unit flees the field.
Mind Lash	Signal	4	30	battle	9 damage to one enemy.
Antenna Array	Signal	4	90	hold	Hold +6 study.
Firebomb	Ember	1	12	battle	4 damage to one enemy.
Ember Hound	Ember	1	30	summon	undefined
Flare	Ember	1	6	scry	Reveal the ground within 3 of any hex.
Fuel Cache	Ember	2	35	hold	Hold +3 gold.
Jet Rig	Ember	2	25	unit	Unit +2 movement, permanently.
Inferno	Ember	3	30	battle	3 damage to every enemy.
Scorched Earth	Ember	3	40	hold	Enemy hold -3 food.
Ember Titan	Ember	4	120	summon	undefined

8. Sites and the minimap

The information column carries a **minimap** of both planes: known ground in its terrain colour, holds in their sovereign's colour, bound reactors in the colour of whoever holds them, shafts ringed in blue, and an amber box around whatever the glass is looking at. Click either plane to send the cursor and the view there — it is the quickest way to cross to the Undercity and back.

8b. Sites

Reactors (triangles, coloured by doctrine) are guarded; clear the guardians, stand on the hex and bind (B) for +4 power. A rival may stand on your reactor and bind it away. **Ruins** (grey blocks) hold salvage — gold, and sometimes a lost protocol — paid to whoever clears them. **Shafts** (rings) join the planes; a stack on a shaft may change plane on the footer button.

9. Envoys

Every sovereign you have met appears in the **Envoys** section of the controls column, with a word for how they regard you and any truce that stands. Four things may be said to them: **offer a truce** (they weigh your strength, their temper and their standing with you, and may refuse to your face), **send gold** (which warms the standing and may turn a refusal into agreement next season), **swear an alliance** (one step beyond a truce: neither strikes the other and each sees where the other's holds stand, which must be earned with a truce kept and standing enough that they think well of you), and **break a truce** or **forswear** an alliance — the second costing far more than the first. Breaking one — or simply striking a sovereign you are at truce with, which breaks it for you — costs you dearly with the wronged party and is heard by every other sovereign in the waste. A truce runs twenty seasons and lapses on its own.

9b. Victory and the horizon

Conquest: take every rival bastion. **The Long Broadcast:** bind four reactors of four doctrines, research the Broadcast, cast it. **The ledger:** at season 150 the sovereign with the best ledger (holds, population, bound reactors, known protocols and standing army) holds the age. You fall when your last hold is taken.

9f. Scenarios

The charter opens on **A free age**, where every dial is yours. Choosing a scenario instead settles the world it is set in — the seed, the number of sovereigns, the difficulty and the horizon — and tells you what is wrong with it before you take the field.

Scenario	Sovereigns	Horizon	What is wrong with it
A free age	4	150	A fresh world, four sovereigns, a horizon at season 150.
The Last Reactor	4	120	Every reactor on the Surface is already bound by a rival. The power is below, or it is taken.
The Undercity Gambit	4	150	Every sovereign begins below. The Surface is empty, unclaimed and unlit.
A Short War	2	60	Two sovereigns, sixty seasons, and twice the guardians between them.
Race for the Broadcast	6	150	Six sovereigns, every one a seeker, and the reactors lie thick on the ground.

9e. Hotseat

Up to four sovereigns can share one screen. Choose how many on the charter; each then drafts their own charter in turn, and the first seat settles the seed, the size of the age and the difficulty for everyone. During a season the table passes from seat to seat: ending your season hands over rather than turning it, and a **pass the table** screen keeps the board covered until the next sovereign says they are ready. Only when the last seat has ended does the season turn, the computer sovereigns act, and the table come back round to the first.

9h. Heroes

A **Wanderer** — called by the Arcane protocol of that name, or found taking service in a cleared ruin — arrives with a name of its own and is called by it everywhere. A hero learns faster than a soldier, rising a rank after every fight it survives where a soldier needs two, and it goes on rising to the fifth rank where a soldier stops at the third. Rank tells in attack, defence and hit points alike, so a hero kept alive across an age is worth a company of militia. Heroes are also unmoved by fear and see further than the units around them.

9g. What befalls the waste

Now and then something happens that nobody chose.

Event	What it does
A dust storm	Every unit in the open loses a season of movement.
A reactor flares	A bound reactor pours out charge.
Refugees	People arrive at a hold, hungry and useful.
A find in the rubble	A hold turns up something worth selling.
Raiders out of the waste	A wild band falls on an outlying hold.
Blight in the fields	A hold loses a season of growth.

Events are drawn from the same seeded stream as everything else, so the same world plays the same way, and the ones that concern you appear in the season report.

9d. The chronicle, the report and the road

When a season turns you are given **the season report**: what changed in your holds, your power and your ledger, and the lines from the log that concern you. It carries your own business and what the whole waste heard, never a rival's private affairs, and a quiet season says as much. Dismiss it for good from the plate or switch it in Settings.

With a stack selected, moving the pointer over the map lays out **the road** it would take, step by step, with the destination marked larger — the same search the march itself uses, so what you see is what will happen. The **Realm** tab opens with **the chronicle**: the ledger of every sovereign drawn season by season since the age began, the human sovereign in a heavier line. It is the quickest way to see who is running away with the waste.

9c. Settings

The **Settings** section of the controls column holds four things, kept in their own storage key so they outlive any one game: **high contrast** (stronger ink and panels, and brighter outlines on the board), **advance to the next unit** (when a stack runs out of movement, jump to the next that has some), **ask before ending a season** (if a unit still has movement the first press warns, and the button reads “End season anyway” for a few seconds), and **full screen**. Sound, the hum of the bus and both volumes are remembered here too.

10. Taking it back

Anything you do in a season can be undone: the **Undo** button in the Game section names what it will take back, and **U** or **Ctrl**+**Z** does the same. Up to twelve steps are kept. The random state is restored along with the board, so a battle refought after an undo goes exactly as it did before — undo takes back a decision, it does not reroll the dice. Ending the season clears the steps: a season, once ended, stands.

10b. Controls and saving

Control	Action
U or Ctrl + Z	Take back the last thing you did this season
Q / Shift + Q	Quick save and quick load
The ? button	The field book: how to play, and every unit, building, protocol and terrain
Sound	A Sound button and volume slider in the Game section; sound starts on your first click or key
Envoys	Offer a truce, send gold, or break a truce, in the controls column
Click a stack	Select it; the left column (information) shows the stack, the right column (controls) offers its orders
Click an adjacent hex	Move the selected stack one hex
Click a far hex	March toward it, spending movement
Click an enemy stack or hold	Attack; the battle plate opens
Drag the glass / wheel / pinch	Pan and zoom the map
Move the pointer with a stack selected	The road that march would take is laid out in breadcrumbs
Arrows Q W E A S D Z X	Move the cursor one hex; the chosen hex centres on the glass
Enter	Select the stack under the cursor
N	Next unit with movement left
F	Found a hold with a caravan
B	Bind the reactor under the stack
P	Switch between Surface and Undercity
E	End the season
Esc	Deselect
+ -	Zoom
Enter / Space on the battle plate	Fight a round; close when the battle is done

The game autosaves at the end of every season and the Game section of the right column has a **Save game** button. One browser storage key, `tronsoft_rust_sovereigns_save`, is used. Resume from the charter screen. A world may be pinned with `#seed=N` on the address or the Seed field of the charter.

11. Tables

Units

Unit	Atk	Def	HP	Move	Cost	Upkeep	Kind	Flags
Militia	2	1	4	2	30	1	raised (barracks)	
Marksmen	3	1	3	2	50	1	raised (range)	ranged
Heavy Infantry	4	3	6	1	90	2	raised (armory)	
Caravan	0	0	2	2	60	1	raised (depot)	settler
Wardens	3	2	5	2	70	1	raised (barracks)	
Ravagers	5	1	5	2	70	1	raised (barracks)	regen
Sentinel Frame	4	4	7	1	110	2	raised (armory)	mech
Sappers	3	2	5	2	70	1	raised (barracks)	first, siege
Wall Breaker	5	2	8	1	95	2	raised (workshop)	siege
Outriders	3	1	4	4	65	1	raised (barracks)	
Turret	3	3	5	1	25	0	summon	mech, ranged
Scrap Golem	6	4	10	2	70	0	summon	mech
Glowfiend	4	2	5	2	35	0	summon	poison, radproof
Mutant Colossus	8	3	14	2	110	0	summon	fear, radproof
Blightling Swarm	3	1	6	2	30	0	summon	regen
Chimera	6	3	9	3	75	0	summon	fly
Blightlord	9	4	16	2	130	0	summon	regen, fear
Signal Ghost	4	3	5	3	45	0	summon	fly, fear
Ember Hound	4	1	4	4	30	0	summon	first
Ember Titan	9	3	15	2	120	0	summon	fear
Raiders	3	1	4	2		0	wild	
Feral Pack	4	2	6	2		0	wild	regen
Warbot	6	4	10	1		0	wild	mech
Ghoul King	8	3	14	2		0	wild	fear, regen
Wanderer	5	3	8	3	60	2	summon	hero

Computer sovereigns

Mara Ashcourt · The Dean of Ferrous · Halvard Nine-Teeth · Sister Kilowatt · Odo the Unlit · Provost Vane.
Each is dealt a temper — *builder*, *raider* or *seeker* — that sets its build order and its appetite for war.

The Rust Sovereigns is an original work of Tronsoft Games, shaped after the fantasy 4X games of the early 1990s. See LICENSE.txt and docs/credits.txt.