

King of Tokyo

Rulebook Review



[This is a review of an earlier edition of the rulebook. Newer copies of the game have a substantially redesigned book.]

Before getting into my critique of how the rules are written (which is limited to just one specific part of the game), the layout of the rulebook has to be mentioned. Five columns with headers all at different positions makes for a very reader-unfriendly experience. The more recent edition replaces this with a more sensible 3 column design.

The heading fonts are also a problem. It's a fun font to use in the text of cards and other game components, but here it makes it a bit more difficult to quickly scan the page to look up specific rules for clarification.

It is discarded under certain circumstances.)

DISCARD: Monsters immediately resolve these then discard them.

3: Effect of the card.

BECOMING KING OF TOKYO

At the start of the game no Monster is in Tokyo.

If Tokyo is unoccupied, the first Monster to obtain at least one gets the control of Tokyo and places his figure in Tokyo without dealing any damage.

If you are attacked while in Tokyo and you don't want to be there anymore (and who can blame you - it can be rough!) you can yield to the Monster that attacked. You still take the damage, however.

If you are eliminated while in Tokyo, the Monster who has eliminated you automatically takes control of Tokyo.

Warning: a Discard card that deals damage to you is not an attack.

If you are eliminated by such a card, nobody takes your place and Tokyo becomes unoccupied.

When playing with 5 or 6 Monsters you may have two Monsters at the same time in Tokyo.

The Monster who takes control of Tokyo places his figure on "Tokyo City"

EFFECT OF TOKYO

Being in Tokyo (Tokyo City or Tokyo Bay) has some advantages and disadvantages:

- When taking control of Tokyo you gain 1★ (→1★).
- When starting the turn in Tokyo you gain 2★ (1+2★1).
- The Monster in Tokyo cannot use the result on the dice (but can heal using cards).

Targets of your attack depend also on where you are:

- by the Monster in Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay deal damage to all the Monsters not in Tokyo.
- Another Monster's deal damage just to the Monster in Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay.

WINNING THE GAME

The game is over when a Monster scores 20 Victory Points or is the last Monster standing.

The Monster who gains 20★ or the last one standing wins the game and is crowned King of Tokyo.

ADVANCED RULE

Tokyo Bay - Rules for 5 to 6 experienced Monsters.

When playing with 5 or 6 Monsters you may want to add Tokyo Bay to the game. This position opens up a little extra room in Tokyo, which is nice with a lot of monsters.

After a Monster that is not in Tokyo attacks, it must occupy Tokyo if either Tokyo City or Tokyo Bay places are unoccupied or abandoned. If there is a choice Tokyo City must be occupied first.

As in a regular game the Monster who takes control of Tokyo City while it is unoccupied doesn't deal damage.

If Tokyo Bay is unoccupied but Tokyo City is, the Monster who attacks Tokyo deals damage to the monster controlling it, then takes control of Tokyo Bay - or Tokyo City if the damaged monster abandons Tokyo City.

Tokyo Bay acts like Tokyo City.

- If the Monster in Tokyo Bay is attacked it can choose to abandon Tokyo Bay (still taking any damage dealt, just like Tokyo City). In this case the Monster that attacked must move in unless it is moving into Tokyo City, in which case Tokyo Bay becomes temporarily unoccupied.

- A Monster can never occupy both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay.

If a Monster is eliminated and that brings the number of Monsters below 5, Tokyo Bay can't be occupied anymore. The Monster in it must leave Tokyo.

Any card that refers Tokyo

Now, onto the rules, or in this case a single rule: How does Tokyo Bay work?

In games of King of Tokyo with 2-4 players, players compete in a king of the mountain style battle where one player occupies the mountain (Tokyo City), and everyone not in Tokyo is fighting to take it over. Moving up to 5-6 players expands the mountain from just Tokyo City to include Tokyo Bay as well. It becomes kings of the mountain, at least until players start getting eliminated and the count is back down to 4 or fewer.

The rules are a bit confused when it comes to the nature of this two-king mountain. On the one hand, Tokyo City and Tokyo bay are repeatedly treated as having no difference.

Tokyo Bay acts like Tokyo City.

• If the Monster in Tokyo Bay is attacked it can choose to abandon Tokyo Bay (still taking any damage dealt, just like Tokyo City). In this case the Monster that attacked must move in unless it is moving into Tokyo City, in which case Tokyo Bay becomes temporarily unoccupied.

• A Monster can never occupy both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay.

If a Monster is eliminated and that brings the number of Monsters below 5, Tokyo Bay can't be occupied anymore. The Monster in it must leave Tokyo.

Any card that refers Tokyo applies to both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay

The rulebook is trying very hard to drive home this lack of difference between being in Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay. "Tokyo Bay acts like Tokyo City," and "Any card that refers to Tokyo applies to both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay."

At setup players are told Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay are "two distinct places." That implies some meaningful gameplay difference.

The rules also state that if there is a choice of occupying either Tokyo City or Tokyo Bay (if the occupants of both choose to vacate after an attack), Tokyo City must be occupied first. This again suggests some gameplay mechanic that distinguishes between them.

SETTING UP

Each player chooses a Monster, takes its figure 6, its Monster board 5 and sets its life Points to 10 and its Victory Points to 0.

Place the Tokyo board 1 at the center of the table, within easy access of every player. It represents the City of Tokyo divided into two distinct places: "Tokyo City" 1 and "Tokyo Bay" 1. Every time a card refers to Tokyo it refers to both places

[Someone missed a period. Oops!]

So, as far as gameplay is concerned, is there a difference between Tokyo Bay and Tokyo City? The rules keep saying to treat them the same while simultaneously saying that they are not in fact the same.

And indeed there is one mechanical difference. When the game is reduced from 5 to 4 players, if a player is in Tokyo Bay, they must leave Tokyo as the mountain can now only hold one king. They player in Tokyo city becomes the sole king of the mountain. That's it.

This one situation doesn't warrant the text and space spent explaining that the two areas are for almost every purpose the same. Just eliminate the individual spaces and call the entire board "Tokyo." Players are either in Tokyo or not. Then, add a short one-liner saying that if there's two players in Tokyo when the game drops from 5 to 4, the last one in must vacate.