RULES

1-4, 14+ 60 min

James Firnhaber

TESSERACT

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TESSERACT™

SITUATION REPORT

The Tesseract appeared in our skies six days ago, over the exact magnetic north of the planet. It was the size of a city block. Since that time it has been condensing, collapsing upon itself. It can now fit into the palm of your hand.

Together, our world's best minds will either find a way to contain and control the reactions of this alien artifact, or its exponentially increasing destructive power will remove our planet from existence, reconfiguring our space / time to the extra-dimensional needs of its creators.

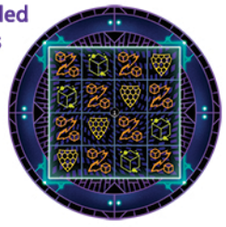
Are we intelligent enough to shut down the Tesseract, or is humankind simply a blip in the grand scheme of the universe? Time will tell.

COMPONENTS

Cooperative, dice manipulation game.

1-4, 14+ 60 min

(2) double-sided Base Plates



(1) lazy susan

(64) six-sided dice

(16 of each color)

(36) Research cards

(14) LVL 2 (12) LVL 3 (10) LVL 4

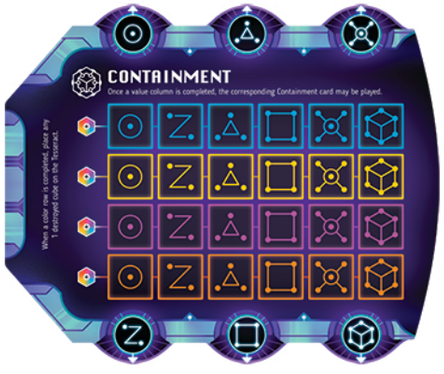
(6) Containment cards

(2) Base Platform Legs

(1) Dice Set Up Sleeve

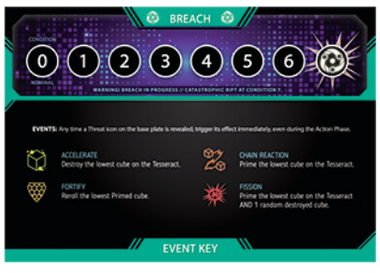
(8) Researcher character cards

(1) Platform board

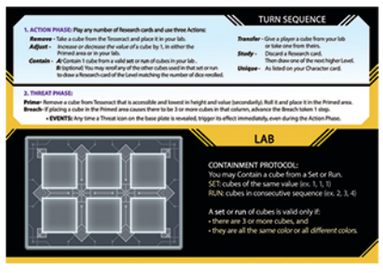


(1) Containment board

(1) Breach cube



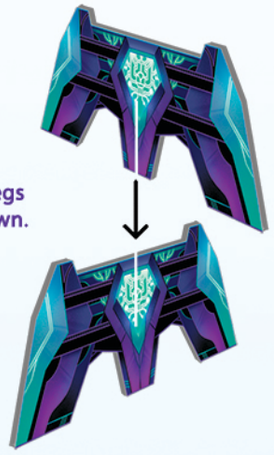
(1) Breach board



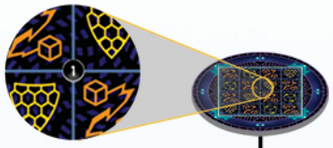
(4) Player Lab boards

SET UP

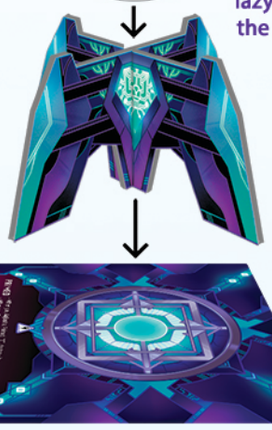
TESSERACT / PLATFORM ASSEMBLY



Slot the two Base Platform Legs together as shown.



Find Base Plate #1 and place it on the lazy susan.



Place the lazy susan on the Platform.

Place the Platform on the Platform board.

Place the Dice Sleeve onto the Base Plate.

Take all 64 dice and slowly drop them into the sleeve, making sure that the dice fill each layer completely before adding the next layer.

There will be 4 layers of dice.

Carefully remove the sleeve.

If dice are accidentally knocked off the Tesseract, replace them in their previous value and position as best as players can remember.

1. Place the assembled Tesseract Platform at the center of the table, with the Containment board on the right (as shown).
2. Shuffle the Containment cards and deal one, face-down, to each spot along its edges bearing an icon (numbers 1-6).
3. Seperate the Research cards by Level, shuffle each deck, and place them face down to the left of the Containment board.
4. Position the Breach board below the Platform board. Place the Breach token on the number "0" space.
5. Give each player a yellow Lab board.

   Shuffle the Researcher character cards and deal one to each player *(Alt: Choose a Researcher)*. Place it face-up next to your Lab. Read your character abilities aloud to the group.

   Each player draws one LVL 2 Research card (blue) and places it face up next to their Lab.

   SOLO PLAY: In a one-player game, set up two Labs, two Researchers and two Research cards. You will alternate play between both Labs.
6. Based on the number of players, remove a number of cubes (dice) from the top corners of the Tesseract.
   1, 2 and 3 Players: Each Researcher takes a corner cube, rolls it and places it in their Lab. Then, remove the remaining corner cubes, roll them and place them into the Primed Area (the left side of the Platfom board), beneath their matching number icons.
   4 Players: Each player takes a corner cube, rolls it and places it in their Lab. Reexamine the Tesseract for the next lowest value corner cube, roll it and place it in the Primed Area.

PLAYING THE GAME

OBJECT:
TESSERACT is a cooperative game, in which all players will either win or lose together. You and your fellow players are a team of scientists who must attempt to disarm the Tesseract before its systems fully charge and rip a hole in space/time that will destroy our world.

Players WIN by containing 1 cube (die) of each color and value, filling all 24 spaces on the Containment board.

Players LOSE in one of two ways:
- if the last cube is removed from the Tesseract.
- if there are 7 Breaches.

COMMUNICATION:
Players may openly discuss all information and are encouraged to play with the cards in their hand face-up as public information. Players are welcome to discuss what they wish to accomplish on their turn and how others may assist them, in this or future turns. Consider carefully the input of others, as there is often more information than a single player will be able to focus upon. Many player abilities require assistance from others to optimize their turn, so the coordination of your activities as a true team is CRITICAL to success. That said, all the decisions on a given turn are the responsibility of the active Researcher and their say is final.

FIRST PLAYER:
The player who is most familiar with the rules will play first. Otherwise, the player who last checked the time will be the first player.

TURN SEQUENCE (Overview):
Each Researcher's turn is divided into two phases: the **Action** phase and the **Threat** phase.

During the **Action** phase, the active Researcher will use 3 Actions and may play any number of Research cards they may have. During the **Threat** phase, 1 cube must be removed from the Tesseract, rolled, and placed into the Primed area, potentially causing a Breach. Remember, seven Breaches will result in a loss, so cubes in the Primed Area must be closely monitored and managed.

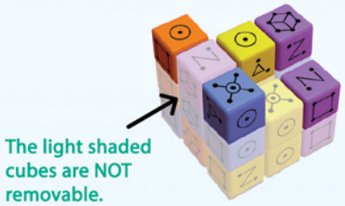
After resolving the Threat phase, including the resolution of any revealed Events on the base plate (see Events), play passes clockwise to the next Researcher.

1. ACTION Phase:

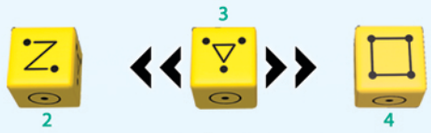
During the Action phase, a Researcher takes 3 of the following Actions. You may choose the same Action multiple times or choose different Actions. You may also play any number of Research cards from your hand, as FREE Actions.

REMOVE:
Take a *removable* cube from the Tesseract and place it on any empty space in your Lab, without changing its value.

A cube is considered *removable* if it has three or more open faces (this includes the top face). If a cube has two or fewer open spaces, it is not removable. A player cannot interact with cubes on the Tesseract if they are not removable, nor can the Tesseract "Prime" cubes that are not removable.



ADJUST:
Increase or decrease the value of a cube by 1.
For example, you may adjust a cube with a value of 3 down to a 2 or up to a 4. ***NOTE:*** *a 6 CANNOT be adjusted to a 1, or a 1 to a 6.*



Dice values are equal to the number of pips (dots) shown.

Cubes may be adjusted in your Lab OR in the Primed Area. Adjusting cubes in your lab will help you create valid Sets or Runs for Containment, whereas adjusting Primed cubes will help you minimize the risk of Breaches. SPECIAL: In the Primed Area, a 1 MAY be adjusted down and destroyed, removing it from the Primed Area.

TRANSFER:
Move a cube from your Lab to an empty space in another researcher's Lab - OR move a cube from another researcher's Lab to your Lab. Sharing cubes via Transfer will slow the rate at which cubes are removed from the Tesseract.
Note: You must get a player's permission whenever you interact with cubes in their Lab.

STUDY:
Discard a Research card from your hand to draw a Research card of the next higher Level.
For example, discard a LVL 2 Research card to draw a LVL 3 Research card.

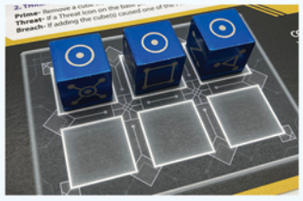
CONTAIN:

Containment is the most important Action of the game. Each time you Contain a cube, you are one step closer to winning. In addition, it is the only way to earn Research cards.

Containment Protocol

1. To Contain a cube, you must first have a valid Set or Run of cubes in your Lab. You may arrange and rearrange them freely on your board.
- SET: cubes of the same value (ex. 1, 1, 1)
- RUN: cubes in consecutive sequence (ex. 2, 3, 4)

A Set or Run of cubes is valid only if:
- there are 3 or more cubes, AND
- they are all the *same color* -or- all *different colors.*



2. Choose one of the cubes from the valid Set or Run and place it in an empty space, matching its color and value, on the Containment board. The Containment board can only accept *one* cube of each color and value.

3. Check the Primed Area. If the Primed Area has a cube of the same color AND value as the cube you just Contained, you may destroy the cube in the Primed Area that matches it. Only one cube may be destroyed per Containment, even if multiple exact matches exist.

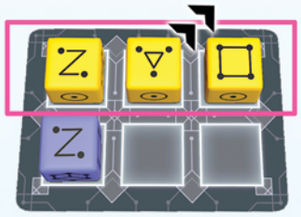
Strategy Tip: If there is no matching cube in the Primed Area, but a same-color cube is close in value, consider Adjusting the Primed cube to match the value of the cube you intend to Contain, thereby destroying it.

4. (optional) Roll to gain a Research card.
A Researcher may roll the cubes remaining in their lab that were used in their Set or Run, in order to draw a Research card with a Level matching the number of cubes rolled. After rolling, the cubes remain in that researcher's lab for continued use

This step is optional, as you may wish to keep the values you have for future Actions or Containments.

CONTAIN Action example:
A Researcher has these cubes in their lab. Cubes can always be rearranged freely within a given Lab.

The player forms a valid Run of three yellow cubes (2,3,4) and decides to use an action to Contain the yellow 3.

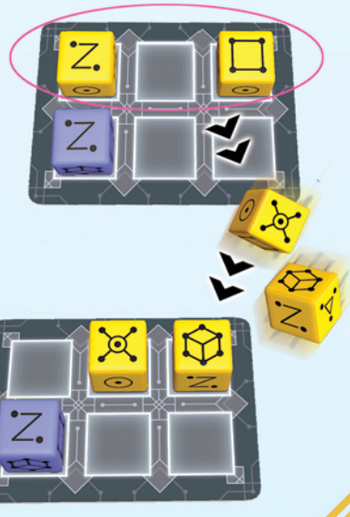


The yellow 3 is moved from their Lab to the empty matching space on the Containment board.

Since a yellow 3 also exists in the Primed Area, it is destroyed and removed from the game.
(See Primed Area)

The Researcher could choose to leave the remaining cubes, perhaps hoping to get a third 2 of a different color. But instead, they choose to roll the two yellow cubes used in their Run - and draws a LVL 2 Research card.
(Note: The blue 2 cube cannot be rolled, as it was not part of the Run)

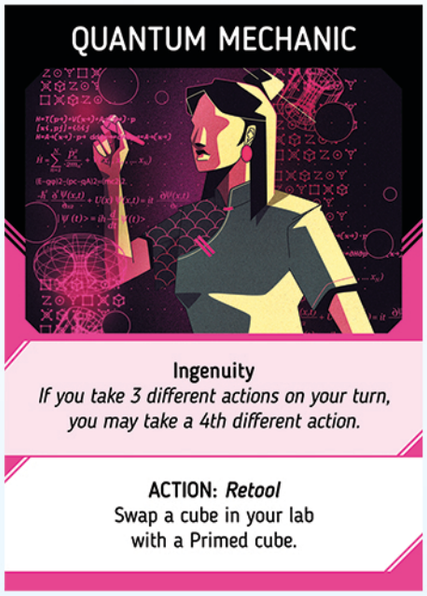
The rolled dice are returned to the Lab.



UNIQUE:

Each Researcher has a unique Action printed on their character card. As you plan your 3 Actions for the turn, don't forget your Unique Action and ability, as they can be quite powerful.

Researcher character cards in detail:



In addition to their unique Action, each Researcher card has an on-going ability. This passive, "always-on" ability does not require spending an Action (though it may be tied to a specific Action). Many unique Actions or "always on" abilities can be used more than once per turn. Those that cannot will be obvious or specifically say so.

Some Researcher abilities are specifically geared towards teamwork and facilitating the Actions of others, which is absolutely critical in this game. Those with these traits are marked with a diamond in the lower corner. As an example, the Transport Engineer is focused on efficiency; grabbing cubes, adjusting them and transferring them between players. Given your play style, this type of role may not seem as active or exciting to you, in which case, feel free to choose another Researcher. To be clear, they are NOT lesser roles and we strongly recommend having one or two on the team.

RESEARCH CARDS:

During a Researcher's Action phase, they may play any number of Research cards from their hand. These can be played before, during or after their Actions. To play a Research card, simply read and resolve its effect, then discard it. Playing a Research card does not cost an Action, but is considered a FREE Action.

There is no limit to how many cards a Researcher can hold. However, they are a finite resource. When a deck of Research cards runs out, players can no longer gain Research cards of that Level. They are not reshuffled.

Unless specifically stated, Research cards cannot be played during the Threat phase. Nor can they be traded between Researchers or used on another Researcher's turn.

There are three Levels of Research cards, each with their own deck. As you go up in Level, the effects become more powerful, with the magenta-colored LVL 4 cards boasting some game changing abilities. *(Note: There is no LVL 1, as the Level is based on how many remaining cubes are rolled from a Containment - and there will never be less than two.)*

Strategy tip: Each Level of Research cards is roughly twice as powerful as the level below it. Don't underestimate the benefit of pursuing LVL 4 Research cards - or the importance of the STUDY Action in acquiring more powerful cards.

KEY WORDS:

Some keywords used on Research cards and/or character cards fall outside of the core rules description. Here are definitions:

SET: Change this cube's value to any value (1 through 6).

INVERT: Flip this cube to its opposite side (ie a 6 becomes a 1).

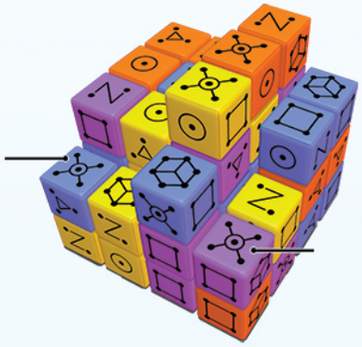
RELOCATE: Move a removable cube on the Tesseract to a new postion on the Tesseract. The new position cannot be higher than 4 cubes tall.

2. THREAT Phase:

During the Threat phase, the Tesseract continues to reconfigure itself as it builds towards detonation. In so doing, you MUST Prime one or more cubes from the Tesseract, in the following manner:

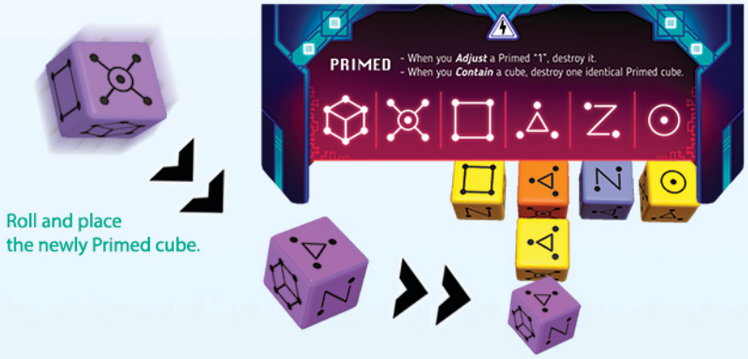
PRIME:

Slowly rotate the Tesseract to find the *removable* cube that is both lowest in height and value. A cube that is lower in height will always take precedence. If the lowest cubes are tied for both height and value, you may choose which cube to Prime.



Tiebreaker Example:
In this situation, players would choose between Priming the purple 5 or the blue 5. Note that the yellow 2 will not be Primed because it is not removable.

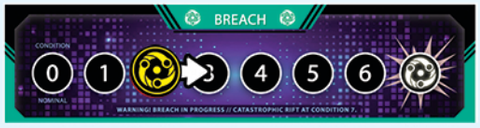
Remove this cube from the Tesseract. Roll it. Then place the cube in the Primed Area, beneath the matching value icon.



Roll and place the newly Primed cube.

If the newly Primed cube causes there to be three or more cubes of that value in the Primed Area, a Breach occurs.

Advance the Breach token one space on the Breach track, signalling that you are 1 step closer to total annihilation.



EVENTS:

Any time the last cube in a column is removed from the Tesseract, an Event icon will be revealed on the Base plate. Trigger the effect of the revealed Event icon immediately. Most often this will occur after Priming a cube, however it can also occur in the Action phase by removing the last cube from a column.

Event icons

EVENT KEY:

The Events printed on the Base plate are all dangerous - and are the primary way of adjusting game difficulty. The standard game uses Base Plate #1. Each plate is more difficult than the plate preceeding it, based on the type of Events that populate it.

ACCELERATE: Destroy the lowest removable cube on the Tesseract and place it aside or in the box. *While the least dangerous, destroying cubes hastens your end.*

FORTIFY: Reroll the lowest Primed cube in the Primed Area. *The danger here is that rerolling a cube may cause a Breach you didn't see coming.*

CHAIN REACTION: Prime the lowest removable cube on the Tesseract. *Yes, this means repeating the process and can potentially reveal other Threat Events in succession.*

FISSION: Prime the lowest removable cube on the Tesseract AND Prime 1 random destroyed cube. *Instantly adding two more cubes to the Primed Area can be devastating. Compensate by keeping the Primed Area as clear of cubes as you can when Fission is listed on the Base plate.*

MINIMIZING RISK IN THE PRIMED AREA:

As cubes collect in the Primed Area, the threat of a Breach rapidly increases. It cannot be stated strongly enough how important monitoring and managing the Primed Area is to your success. Players cannot take cubes from the Primed Area with their basic Actions, but the cubes can be managed in the following ways to reduce your risk:

- Whenever you Adjust a Primed cube with a value of "1," you may destroy it and place it aside or in the box.
- Players can and should consider dedicating Actions to Adjusting cubes in the Primed Area, either bringing them closer to "1" to destroy them - or to even out the distribution of cubes. Two matching cube values in the Primed Area is an imminent threat. Sometimes, adjusting them to higher values is just as much a help.
- Whenever you Contain a cube, you may destroy 1 cube in the Primed Area that matches both the color and value of the Contained cube. This effect occurs for any Containment, even if it was achieved through card play.
- Certain Research, Containment and Character cards may also have the ability to adjust, destroy or otherwise manipulate cubes in the Primed Area.

After completing the THREAT Phase, play passes clockwise to the next Researcher.

CONTAINMENT BOARD BONUSES:

Positioned around the Containment board are six face-down cards, the Containment cards. Containment cards are similar to Research cards, except they can be played during ANY player's Action phase and have some of the most powerful effects in the game. They are earned by Containing all 4 colored cubes of a given value.

Containing all four cubes of a value, activates and claims the matching Containment Card.

When a Researcher *Contains* two of the four color cubes in a column, they may reveal the Containment card of the matching value. This provides foreknowledge of the Containment card's power, but does not yet grant access to use it. However, when a Researcher *Contains* the fourth cube of a given value, the Containment card is placed near the Researcher's Lab, where it can be used by any Researcher during their Action phase, at a time of their choosing.

Two 4's reveals the matching Containment card.

In a similar way, when a Researcher Contains a full row of colored cubes (1-6), they may choose a destroyed cube of any color, roll it, and place it back on the Tesseract. A few extra cubes placed back on the Tesseract could well be the difference between victory and defeat.

GAME END:

Players WIN as soon as all 24 spaces on the Containment board are filled with cubes. The Tesseract is deactivated and the world is saved!

Players LOSE if the Breach token moves onto the last space on the Breach tracker. The 7th Breach rips a hole in space / time that destroys us all.

Players also LOSE if, at the beginning of the Threat phase, there are no cubes left on the Tesseract. It detonates and we are removed from existence.

FAQ:

Q: If a Researcher adjusts a cube in the Primed Area so that it is the third Primed cube of a given value, does it cause a Breach?
A: No. Breaches are only caused when the Tesseract Primes a cube or through the resolution of Event icons.

Q: If a Researcher removes the last cube from a column of the Tesseract and reveals an Event icon during their Action phase, does the Event trigger immediately?
A: Yes. Events are resolved when they are revealed, regardless of the current phase or what causes it.

Game design: James Firnhaber
Illustrations: Denis Frietas
Graphic Design: James Firnhaber, Curt Covert

GAME PLAY FLOWCHART

1. ACTION Phase:

The active Researcher will use 3 Actions AND may play any number of Research cards from their hand. Actions can be taken in any order and any given Action can be taken more than once.

- **Remove:** Take a removable cube from the Tesseract and place into your Lab.
  - EVENTS: Resolve any revealed Events, if applicable.
- **Adjust:** Change the value of a cube in the Primed Area or in your Lab, up or down by one.
  - If you adjust a "1" cube in the Primed Area down, destroy that cube.
- **Transfer:** Move a cube from your Lab to another Lab, or from another Lab to yours.
- **Study:** Discard a Research card from your hand to draw a Research card of the next higher Level.
- **Contain:** Place one cube from a valid Set or Run from your Lab onto an open space on the Containment board.
  - Destroy: If the Contained cube exactly matches a cube in the Primed Area (same value & color), destroy that cube.
  - Option: You may roll the remaining cubes from that set or run. If you do, draw a Research card of the LEVEL matching the number of dice you rolled.
- **Unique:** Each character card has an Action unique to them.

** If at the end of the Action phase, the Containment board is FULL, the game ends in a WIN.

2. THREAT Phase:

** If the Tesseract has had its last cube removed, the game ends in a loss. Otherwise…

- **Prime:** Find the removable cube on the Tesseract that is lowest in height and value. Remove it from the Tesseract, roll it, and place it in the Primed Area beneath the matching icon.
- **Breach:** If placing a cube in the Primed Area causes there to be 3 or more cubes in that value column, advance the Breach token 1 step.

** If the Breach token has reached "7", the game ends in a loss.

- **Events:** If a Threat icon on the base plate was revealed by Priming a cube, trigger its effect.

3. Play passes clockwise to the left.