

# LEGENDS OF THALORANTH

# ZONES AND ACTION POINTS

HOW COMBAT WORKS IN LEGENDS OF THALORANTH



THALORANTH  
PUBLISHING

A LEGENDS OF THALORANTH  
FREE SUPPLEMENT



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# ZONES AND ACTION POINTS

## *How Combat Works in Legends of Thaloranth*

*A Legends of Thaloranth Free Supplement*

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# INTRODUCTION

*Kael heard the arrow before he saw it, the snap of a bowstring from somewhere above and to his right, the sound that meant the courtyard was no longer safe.*

*He moved left, toward the well, putting stone between himself and the walkway. Two steps. A decision. The cover cost him time he could have spent closing on the Bandit Captain, who was watching from the Hall Steps with the particular patience of someone who expected to win.*

*Across the courtyard, Mira was already calculating angles.*

Combat in Legends of Thaloranth is built around two systems that work together: Zones, which define where things are and what the space around them means, and Action Points, which define what characters can do and at what cost.

Neither system counts distance. There are no five-foot squares, no rulers, no diagonal movement calculations. What both systems track instead is something more useful at the table: position, decision, and consequence.

A Zone is a meaningful space, the courtyard, the walkway, the steps. It is defined not by its dimensions but by what it offers and what it costs. A character in the courtyard and a character on the elevated walkway occupy different tactical realities. The difference between them is not measured in feet. It is expressed in what they can do and what advantages they hold.

Action Points are the resource that governs what a character can accomplish before the initiative order moves on. Moving costs AP. Attacking costs AP. Boosting an attack, taking cover, helping an ally, reacting to danger, all of it costs AP. A character with 10 AP available can do more in a round than a character with 6, and the decisions about how to spend that resource are the tactical heart of every combat scene.

This supplement explains both systems: what zones are and how they function, what zone tags do and how GMs use them, and the complete reference for AP expenditure in combat. It closes with a worked example using Kael and Mira from the Player's Guide, showing

both systems in play across a full round of combat. The complete rules are in the Player's Guide. This is the introduction to how they work and why they are designed the way they are.

## **ZONES: SPACE AS STORY**

A zone is a distinct area of tactical or narrative significance. It is not defined by measurement, it is defined by context. A rooftop is a zone. A courtyard is a zone. A narrow bridge over a rushing channel is a zone. A cluster of market stalls that provides cover and routes of escape is a zone.

What makes something a zone is not its size but its tactical identity. If a space has a reason to exist, if being in it or moving through it changes what a character can do, it is a zone. A typical combat scene contains three to seven zones. Fewer than three and the scene has no real spatial texture. More than seven and the spatial picture becomes harder to hold.

### **Movement Between Zones**

Moving within a zone, repositioning to reach cover, closing to melee range with someone on the other side of the space, shifting to a better angle, costs 1 AP. Moving from one zone to an adjacent zone costs 2 AP. These costs are baseline. Zone tags can modify them: a Hazardous zone costs an additional AP to enter on top of standard movement cost. An Impassable zone cannot be entered at all without the specific capability that permits it.

Characters do not track their exact position within a zone. What matters is which zone they occupy and what that zone provides. If Kael is in the Courtyard, he is in range of the well for cover, he can make melee attacks against anyone else in the Courtyard, and he can move to any adjacent zone for 2 AP. Where precisely he is standing relative to the well is a narrative detail, not a mechanical one.

### **Zones and Melee Range**

Melee range is defined by zone. Two characters in the same zone can engage each other in melee combat. Two characters in different zones cannot, regardless of how close together those zones might be. Moving into an opponent's zone is required before a melee attack is possible, and that movement costs 2 AP.

This means melee characters face a meaningful choice in every round: spend AP to close and fight, or hold position and defend. The AP investment to cross zones is real. A fighter who spends 2 AP moving has 2 fewer AP available for attacks, boosts, and reactions. That trade-off is the tactical texture of zone-based combat.

## **Zones and Ranged Combat**

Ranged attacks and spells reference zone distance rather than measured range. An attack targeting someone in the same zone is at full effect. An attack targeting someone in an adjacent zone is at standard range. Attacking into a zone two or more zones away requires a spell enhancement or a specific ranged capability; without one, the attack cannot be made.

This creates genuine positioning decisions for ranged characters. Mira at range has options a fighter at melee does not. She can attack from a zone the enemy has not yet closed, spend AP on cover rather than movement, and pick her targets based on zone positioning rather than proximity. Those advantages cost her something in melee capability if the fight closes, which it eventually will.

## **Designing Zones**

For Game Masters, zones are the primary tool for building combat encounters that have spatial texture without requiring detailed maps. When designing a scene, the question is not how large the room is but what distinct spaces exist within it and what each one offers.

A ruined gatehouse encounter might contain a Gate Passage that funnels movement and limits how many characters can move through simultaneously, a Courtyard that is open ground with a well for cover, a North Walkway with height advantage over the Courtyard, and Hall Steps that are Narrow enough to restrict how many combatants can occupy them at once. Four zones, each with a tactical identity. The players will understand the space immediately because each zone means something.

Zones can also change during a scene. A structural fire makes a zone Hazardous mid-combat. A collapsing walkway becomes Impassable. A barrier that started as cover gets destroyed. These changes do not require new mechanics, they require updating which tags apply to which zones as the scene develops, which the GM announces as part of describing what happens.

## ZONE TAGS

Zone tags are specific characteristics assigned to a zone that affect what characters can do within it or when interacting with it from an adjacent zone. The Player's Guide documents seventeen tags across six categories. The following are the most commonly encountered, with examples of how each functions in play.

### Movement Tags

**Narrow.** The zone can hold a limited number of combatants simultaneously. The GM sets the limit based on the fiction, a tight stairwell might hold two, a stone bridge three. Characters attempting to enter a full Narrow zone cannot do so until space opens.

**Hazardous.** The zone presents active danger. Entering costs +1 AP on top of standard movement cost. The GM determines the hazard: a burning room, a floor strewn with rubble, a flooded passage with strong current.

**Impassable.** The zone cannot be entered without specific capability. A flooded zone is Impassable to characters without the Swimming Sub-Skill. A sheer cliff face is Impassable without Athletics investment and equipment.

### Elevation Tags

**Elevated.** The zone sits above adjacent zones. Characters in an Elevated zone gain +1 to ranged attack and spellcasting checks. Characters attacking into an Elevated zone from below suffer -1. The advantage applies in both directions: height is worth holding and worth taking.

### Visibility Tags

**Obscured.** Visibility within the zone is significantly reduced. Ranged attacks into or out of an Obscured zone suffer -1. Characters within an Obscured zone gain +1 AR against ranged attacks originating from outside it. Smoke, heavy shadow, and dense foliage all create Obscured conditions.

### Environmental Tags

**Flooded.** Standing water at wading depth. Movement costs +1 AP. Melee attacks suffer -1. Swimming depth is Impassable without the Swimming Sub-Skill.

**Frozen.** Ice or frost-covered surfaces. Movement costs +1 AP. Characters who move more than 1 AP worth of movement within the zone must make an Agility saving check at Easy DC or fall prone.

**Unstable.** The zone's structural integrity is compromised. The GM determines the trigger condition and the consequence: a walkway that collapses when more than

two characters occupy it, a floor that partially gives way under heavy movement. Characters who plan around an Unstable zone's deterioration gain a significant tactical advantage.

## Structural Tags

**Fortified.** Prepared defensive position: battlements, barricades, reinforced firing positions. Characters within a Fortified zone gain +2 AR against ranged attacks originating from outside the zone.

Tags are cumulative. A zone can be both Elevated and Fortified, providing height advantage and defensive cover simultaneously. A zone can be both Narrow and Hazardous, creating a bottleneck that costs extra AP to enter and presents ongoing danger once inside. The combination of tags is how GMs create specific tactical environments without needing additional rules.

## ACTION POINTS

Action Points represent a character's capacity for focused effort in a scene. Every meaningful action in combat costs AP: moving, attacking, defending, helping, reacting. A character who has spent all their AP has nothing left to spend until the next round.

AP is derived from Power and Agility:  $(\text{Power} + \text{Agility}) \times 2$ . A character with Power +2 and Agility +2 has 8 AP. A character with Power +3 and Agility +2 has 10 AP. The formula means that physical capability, both strength and speed, directly determines how much a character can do in a round.

AP recovers fully at the end of each scene. It does not carry over between rounds within a scene, unspent AP at the end of a round is lost. This means the question of what to spend AP on is a constant one. Saving AP for a defensive reaction has a cost: the attack or movement that AP was not spent on. Every expenditure is a trade-off.

AP can also be spent reactively, between other characters' turns. A character who holds AP in reserve can spend it on a Defense Boost when an attack comes in, or on a Counterattack when they successfully avoid a melee strike. Reactive spending is what keeps characters without initiative advantage from being passive during other characters' turns.

## AP REFERENCE: WHAT YOU CAN DO

The following is the complete reference for AP expenditure during combat. All costs are per action unless otherwise noted. This matches the Player's Guide exactly and is reproduced here for convenience.

### Movement

**Reposition within zone**, 1 AP. Shift position to reach cover, engage a target, or interact with a zone feature.

**Move to adjacent zone**, 2 AP. Enter a neighboring zone. Standard movement cost, modified by zone tags.

**Enter Hazardous zone**, +1 AP. Additional cost on top of standard movement. Applied whenever a Hazardous-tagged zone is entered.

### Attack Actions

**Basic melee attack**, 2 AP. Standard melee attack against a target in the same zone.

**Basic ranged attack**, 2 AP. Standard ranged attack against a target in the same or adjacent zone.

**Basic spell attack**, 2 AP plus spell SP cost. Spellcasting in combat. The AP cost applies in addition to Spell Point expenditure.

**Attack boost**, 1 AP per +1 to attack check. Declared before the outcome is determined. Each AP spent adds +1 to the attack check total.

**Damage boost**, 1 AP per +1 damage. Declared after a hit is confirmed but before damage is applied. Each AP spent adds +1 to damage dealt.

### Defensive Actions

**Defense Boost**, 1 AP per +1 AR against one attack. Reactive expenditure, made between turns after the attacker announces their attack but before the outcome is determined. Applies to that single attack only and expires immediately after it resolves.

**Take Cover**, 1 AP. On-turn action. Grants +1 AR against ranged attacks from outside the zone for the remainder of the round. Requires something physically present in the zone to take cover behind. Applies to all ranged attacks that round, not just one.

### Tactical Actions

**Flanking position**, 1 AP per flanking character. Each participating character spends 1 AP to coordinate. Grants +2 to the next melee attack by either flanking character that round. The target must remain in the same zone.

**Counterattack**, 3 AP. Reactive. An immediate melee strike made after successfully avoiding or resisting a melee attack.

**Force Movement**, 3 AP plus contested Power check. Push or pull a target into an adjacent zone or hazard.

**Engage Multiple Opponents**, 3 AP. Split attack total among all targets in the same zone.

**Interrupt Action**, 4 AP. Prevent an enemy from completing their intended action. GM determines viability based on what the action is and what the interruption involves.

**Assist Ally**, 2 AP. Grant +2 to one ally's next action or defense that round.

## **Grappling Actions**

**Initiate grapple**, 2 AP plus contested Power check. Establishes the Clinch state. Opposed by target's AR or Power plus Melee Combat.

**Maintain grappling state**, 2 AP per round. Failure to spend degrades the grappling state one step.

**Advance grappling state**, 2 AP plus contested Power check. Move from Clinch to Takedown, Takedown to Pin, or Pin to Lock or Hold.

**Resist or break grapple**, 2 AP plus contested Power check. Success degrades the grappling state one step.

## **Recovery and Support**

**Resist hazard or status effect**, 2 AP. Grants +2 to AR or a saving check against an environmental hazard or ongoing condition.

**Stabilize ally**, 2 AP. Medicine check at Moderate DC to stabilize an incapacitated character in the same zone.

## **Spell Enhancements**

These costs are additional to the base spell AP and SP cost. They extend or amplify a spell's effect beyond its standard parameters.

**Spell Power Boost**, 1 AP per +1. Add +1 to spell damage, healing, or effect magnitude.

**Extend Range**, 2 AP. Target a zone beyond the spell's normal range.

**Expand Area of Effect**, 2 AP. Affect an additional zone or all targets within one zone.

**Prolong Duration**, 2 AP. Extend the spell's duration by one additional round.

**Overcome Resistance**, 3 AP. Gain +2 to bypass wards, magical resistances, or defensive enchantments.

## A COMBAT SCENE: WORKED EXAMPLE

The following example uses Kael and Mira as they appear in the Player's Guide. Their statistics are reproduced here for reference. The scene demonstrates zones, tags, movement, attack resolution, and reactive AP expenditure across a single round of combat.

### The Setup

The scene has four zones: Gate Passage, Courtyard, North Walkway, and Hall Steps. Kael and Mira are entering from the Gate Passage. Two enemies are positioned ahead: a Bandit Captain on the Hall Steps, and an Archer on the North Walkway.

The North Walkway has the Elevated tag. The Archer gains +1 to all ranged attack checks and characters attacking upward into the walkway suffer -1. The Hall Steps are Narrow, with a maximum of three characters able to occupy them simultaneously. The Courtyard has no tags: open ground with a well that can provide cover.

### Combatant Statistics

#### Kael

**Power:** +3

**Agility:** +2

**Melee Combat:** +3 (Swordsmanship +1, Bladework +2)

**AP:**  $(3+2) \times 2 = 10$

**VP:** 10

**AR:** Agility +2 + Studded Leather +3 + Medium Shield +2 + Knight Sub-Path Shield Wall +1 = 13 when actively using shield

**Weapon:** Long Sword, damage 4 + Power = 7

#### Mira

**Power:** +3

**Agility:** +0

**Melee Combat:** +1 (Axes and Hammers +1)

**AP:**  $(3+0) \times 2 = 6$

**VP:** 8

**AR:** Agility +0 + 5 + Leather Armor +2 = 7

**Weapon:** Warhammer, damage 6 + Power = 9

## **Bandit Captain**

**Power:** +3

**Agility:** +2

**Melee Combat:** +3

**AP:** 10

**VP:** 18

**AR:** 12

**Weapon:** Axe, damage 5 + Power = 8

## **Archer**

**Power:** +1

**Agility:** +3

**Ranged Combat:** +3 (Archery +1, Archer's Eye +2)

**AP:** 8

**VP:** 10

**AR:** 9

## **Initiative**

Initiative is determined by Agility. Kael acts first with Agility +3. The Archer also has Agility +3, ties go to player characters, so Kael acts before the Archer. Mira has Agility +0 and acts third. The Bandit Captain has Agility +2 and acts last.

## **Round One**

### ***Kael's Turn: 10 AP Available***

Kael is in the Gate Passage. The Bandit Captain is on the Hall Steps, two zones away, requiring movement through the Courtyard first. The Archer on the North Walkway is a threat to both Kael and Mira as they cross the open ground.

Kael decides to move into the Courtyard and take cover rather than commit to the Hall Steps immediately. He wants to draw the Archer's fire before Mira is exposed in the open.

He spends 2 AP to move from the Gate Passage to the Courtyard. He spends 1 AP to take cover at the well, gaining +1 AR against ranged attacks from outside the zone for the remainder of the round. His AR against ranged attacks becomes 14.

He has 7 AP remaining. He makes a ranged attack against the Archer on the North Walkway, spending 2 AP for the basic ranged attack. The Archer is in an Elevated zone, Kael is attacking upward and suffers -1 to the check. Kael's ranged total would need to reflect this. He spends 1 additional AP as an attack boost to offset the Elevated penalty, bringing his check back to baseline. The attack resolves against the Archer's AR of 9.

Kael holds his remaining 4 AP for potential reactive Defense Boost expenditure.

### ***Archer's Turn: 8 AP Available***

The Archer on the North Walkway targets Kael in the Courtyard. The Elevated tag grants +1 to the Archer's ranged checks. Kael is behind cover at the well, granting +1 AR against ranged attacks.

The Archer spends 2 AP on a basic ranged attack. His total: Agility +3 + Ranged Combat +3 + Archery +1 + Archer's Eye +2 + Elevated +1 = 10. Kael's AR against ranged attacks is 14 (base 13 + cover +1). The Archer's total of 10 falls well short. The shot strikes the well stone and scatters.

The Archer has 6 AP remaining and holds them.

### ***Mira's Turn: 6 AP Available***

Mira is in the Gate Passage. With the Archer having spent his attack on Kael and the Bandit Captain waiting on the Hall Steps, she wants to close and engage in melee. The Hall Steps are Narrow, but with only the Bandit Captain currently there, she can enter.

She spends 2 AP to move from the Gate Passage to the Courtyard. She spends 2 more AP to move from the Courtyard to the Hall Steps, entering the Narrow zone. She has 2 AP remaining.

She spends 2 AP on a basic melee attack against the Bandit Captain. Her total: Power +3 + Melee Combat +1 + Axes and Hammers +1 = 5. The Bandit Captain's AR is 12. Mira's total of 5 falls short. She has no AP remaining for a boost.

The attack fails to land. Mira is now in the Hall Steps zone with the Bandit Captain, 0 AP remaining, and the Bandit Captain's turn coming next.

### ***Bandit Captain's Turn: 10 AP Available***

The Bandit Captain turns on Mira, who is in the same zone and has no AP remaining for defensive reactions.

He spends 2 AP on a basic melee attack. His total: Power +3 + Melee Combat +3 = 6 vs Mira's AR of 7. Falls short by 1.

He spends 1 AP as an attack boost, bringing his total to 7. He meets Mira's AR exactly. The attack lands.

Damage: Axe base 5 + Power +3 = 8 VP. He spends 1 additional AP on a damage boost, raising damage to 9 VP. Mira's VP: 8 - 9 = -1. Mira is incapacitated.

The Bandit Captain has 6 AP remaining. Kael still has 4 AP in reserve.

Kael has a decision to make before the round ends.

### **What This Shows**

Every action cost AP and every expenditure had a consequence. Kael's decision to take cover and attack the Archer rather than immediately close on the Bandit Captain left Mira to make the advance alone with only 6 AP, enough to move and attack once, but not enough to boost a failed attack or react defensively. The Narrow tag on the Hall Steps prevented flanking; only one player character could reach the Bandit Captain in a single round given the movement costs involved.

Mira's 0 AP at the end of her turn left her with no ability to spend on Defense Boost when the Bandit Captain attacked. The Bandit Captain's willingness to spend AP on both an attack boost and a damage boost, knowing Mira could not react, was the deciding factor. That knowledge, that an opponent without remaining AP cannot spend reactively, is tactical information the zone and AP systems make visible.

The Elevated tag on the North Walkway made the Archer genuinely dangerous. His +1 to all ranged checks meant Kael needed to either accept the -1 penalty or spend an AP to offset it, which he did. Cover at the well made the investment worthwhile, the Archer's boosted total still fell four short of Kael's modified AR.

No distance was measured. No map was required. Every tactical consequence flowed from the zone descriptions, the tags applied to them, and the AP economy.

## WHAT THIS MEANS AT THE TABLE

Zone-based combat changes what players pay attention to. On a grid, players track exact positions, count squares, calculate range, and measure area of effect. In a zone system, players track which zone they are in, what adjacent zones contain, which zones have tags that matter, and how much AP they have available and what they might need it for.

The shift is from geometry to situation. A player who understands the zone layout understands the tactical picture. A player who tracks their AP, and their opponents' approximate AP, knows when reactive spending is available and when it is not. These are the same kinds of tactical awareness that grid-based play rewards, expressed in terms that are faster to process and easier to hold in mind during play.

For Game Masters, zones replace the need for detailed maps without replacing the spatial texture that makes combat feel grounded. Describing a scene in zones, three to seven distinct spaces, each with a tactical reason to exist, takes less preparation than mapping a room in five-foot squares and produces a cleaner, faster combat experience. The GM who knows that the courtyard well provides cover, the walkway is elevated, and the hall steps are narrow has everything needed to run the scene. The players will discover those facts through play, which is where discovery belongs.

The complete combat system, including grappling, magic in combat, incapacitation, and the full zone tag reference, is in the Player's Guide. What this document establishes is the foundation: space defined by meaning rather than measurement, action governed by a resource that makes every decision cost something. The rest builds from there.

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*The complete combat rules, including the full zone tag reference, grappling, magic in combat, and the resolution system, are documented in the Legends of Thaloranth Player's Guide. The Player's Guide is available as part of the Legends of Thaloranth Core Line at [thaloranthpublishingllc.com](http://thaloranthpublishingllc.com).*

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