The Chaos Agents Handbook

1.9

They say the best way to learn is by teaching…

This Handbook is designed to help all players improve their level of understanding of the system that governs Chaos Agents and, through that understanding, improve their level of play. Before you begin this Handbook, it is assumed that you have already read the incredible Proton's Primer, completed the in-game tutorials, played a few quick matches, participated in some Trials and want to delve deeper. Chaos Agents is an "Easy to learn, Hard to master" game, this guide is a step towards the latter.

Chaos Agents is currently in its Alpha phase, and it is to be expected that many changes of many kinds will occur before we enjoy the final version, and even then, the game may continue to evolve, adapt, and change. For this reason, this Handbook aims to be as "Alpha-proof" as possible, focusing on the core elements of the game and its strategies, without taking into account specific abilities or other elements that are prone to change.

The tone of this Handbook is intended to resemble the voice of Carl Sagan combined with the catchy rhythm of Dr. Seuss to help make the length of this document easier to digest. This becomes more evident throughout the Handbook as phrases and themes are revisited in order to expand upon and reinforce the current topic. This is intentional. It is not necessary to read it cover to cover, nor to memorize anything; it is a friendly conversation from one person who enjoys the game to another.

The goal of this Handbook is not to give you direct answers, but rather to help you find them yourself so that you can interpret and improve your own version of the Broker you choose to be in Chaos Agents. It is a great honor for me to share the firmament with you.

TejonMx

CHAPTER 1

The Chaos Philosophy

Traditional autobattlers are built around long-term optimization loops, predictable economies, and delayed consequences. Chaos Agents deliberately rejects those assumptions.

Chaos Agents is designed around:

- Permanent elimination
- Early and persistent risk
- Incomplete and asymmetric information
- Indirect control

From the first turn, the player is exposed to irreversible consequences. There is no safe early game, no guaranteed scaling window, and no assumption that optimal play produces stable outcomes. The design intent is not mastery through precision, but mastery through judgment under uncertainty.
This philosophical distinction underpins every system analyzed in this document.

The player does not control a character. The player controls decisions.

The player assumes the role of a Broker, an entity that formulates hypotheses, configures behavioral constraints, allocates limited opportunities and evaluates delayed outcomes.

The Broker does not aim attacks, control movement, react in real time

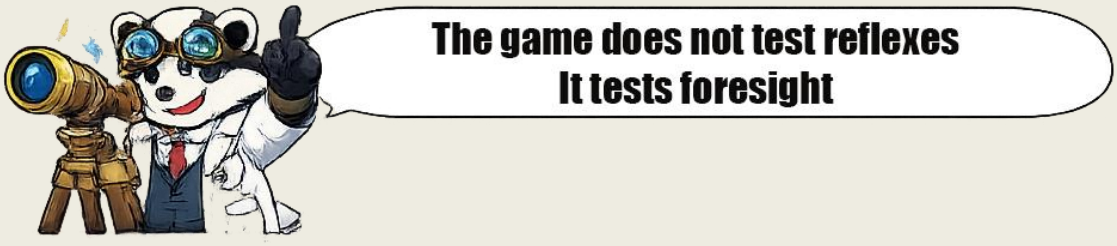
This is not a limitation of control, but a deliberate removal of mechanical execution in favor of strategic responsibility. The game is explicitly designed so that the player cannot “fix” a bad decision through mechanical skill.

At the core of the game lies a strict separation between decision-making and execution.

This separation manifests through two immutable phases: The Power Up Phase, where the Broker acts and The Battle Phase, where the Agent executes autonomously.

Once the Power Up Phase ends no intervention is possible, no corrections can be made and no reactions are allowed.

This creates a design environment where every decision must be made with the understanding that outcomes will be delayed, feedback will be partial and errors may only become visible later.



Agents are not avatars. They are autonomous execution systems. An Agent interprets priorities, thresholds, available capabilities, and environmental constraints.

It does not reason strategically, but it does behave consistently within its configuration. This consistency is probabilistic rather than deterministic, meaning that identical configurations can produce different outcomes under different contexts but similar mistakes tend to produce similar failures.

This design forces the player to abandon anthropomorphic reasoning ("the Agent chose wrong") and adopt systemic reasoning ("this configuration made that outcome likely").

Every decision is made under at least one constraint:

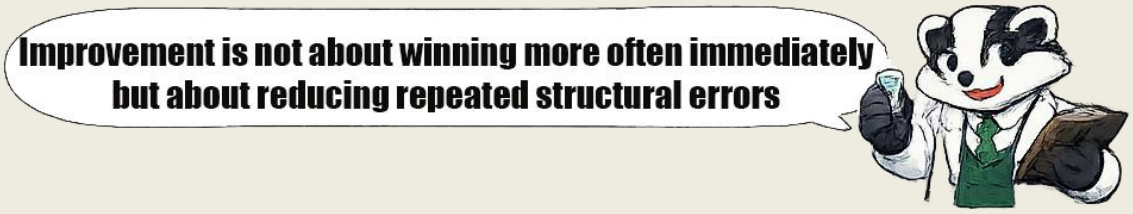
- Incomplete information
- Limited time
- Elimination pressure

The game intentionally withholds certainty. The state of the match is never fully known, opponent intentions are inferred rather than revealed, and outcomes are influenced by interactions outside the player's direct view.

As a result, correct decisions can still fail, incorrect decisions can sometimes survive and results alone are insufficient to evaluate decision quality. Chaos Agents measures expectation management, not correctness.

Chaos Agents treats failure as a data point, not a moral judgment. Elimination does not imply poor execution, it often implies an incorrect assumption, an outdated hypothesis or a delayed adaptation.

The game rewards players who can identify which assumption failed, understand when optionality was lost and adjust future decisions accordingly.



Understanding this philosophy leads to several non-obvious conclusions:

- Aggression is not inherently optimal
- Survival is a strategic resource, not a defensive crutch
- Retreat is a tool, not a failure
- Flexibility often outweighs raw power
- Overcommitment is punished more reliably than undercommitment

Every system described in later chapters (Actions, Elements, Skills, behavior priorities, HP slider, and Win Conditions) exists to operationalize these principles.

Without this philosophical foundation, Chaos Agents appears… Chaotic.
With it, the chaos becomes… Interpretable.

CHAPTER 2

The Core Game Loop

In Chaos Agents, the fundamental unit of strategy is not the Fight, the Skill, or the Agent… It is the turn.

Every meaningful outcome in the game is the result of a sequence of turns, not a single action. A turn encapsulates the information available at that moment, the constraints (imposed by time and resources) and the irreversible commitments made by the Broker.

Thinking in isolated combats is one of the most common conceptual errors. Chaos Agents is designed so that fights are consequences and turns are causes. A player who does not think in turns will consistently misattribute success and failure.

Each turn is strictly divided into two phases:

- Power Up Phase - The phase of decision
- Battle Phase - The phase of consequence

This separation is absolute. No system in the game allows overlap, interruption, or partial control across these phases. This design enforces a critical discipline: Every decision must be made assuming it cannot be corrected later.

The Power Up Phase is the only moment of direct player agency. During this phase, the Broker may deploy Elements, acquire Skills, adjust behavior priorities, modify the HP slider.

Constraints define this phase:

- Limited time forces prioritization and focus
- Limited Actions force trade-offs
- Partial information forces hypothesis-based decision-making

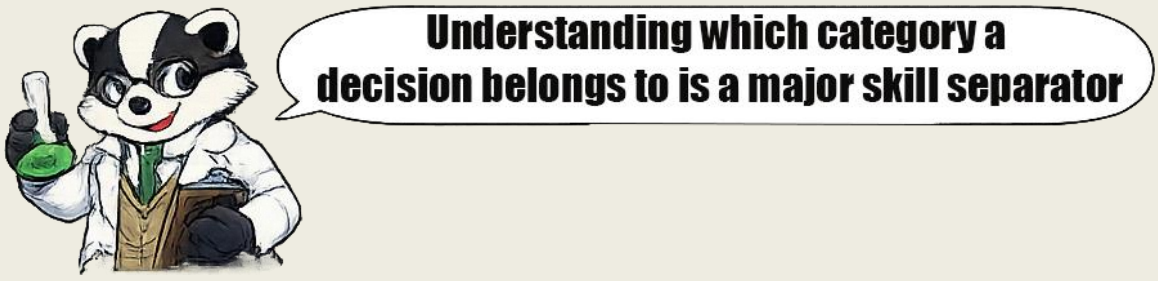
The Power Up Phase is intentionally stressful. The design goal is not comfort, but compression of judgment.

Not all decisions in the Power Up Phase serve the same purpose. They can be categorized as follows:

Structural Decisions - These affect long-term identity like Skill XP advancement, Skill acquisition, irreversible strategy choices. Mistakes here compound over time.

Tactical Decisions - These affect the upcoming Battle Phase like Spawn point, temporary effects, priority adjustments, slider tuning. Mistakes here may be survivable but costly.

Economic Decisions - These govern future flexibility like when to complete Impulse bar, when to stack Elements, when to delay commitment. Economic mistakes rarely kill immediately but they guarantee later vulnerability.



During the Battle Phase the Agent acts autonomously and opponents do the same, the shardstorm reshapes the environment and the Broker observes but does not intervene. This phase is not interactive, but it is informationally dense. The game deliberately removes control to prevent mechanical correction, expose the quality of prior decisions and allow patterns to emerge without interference.

The Battle Phase serves three simultaneous purposes:

- Resolution - Decisions made earlier are tested
- Revelation - Information is exposed (enemy durability, behavior priorities, survival patterns, positional tendencies)
- Preparation - The Broker mentally prepares the next hypothesis

The shardstorm is not merely narrative flavor. It is a multi-function design device that justifies the interruption of control, introduces generation of Elements and Shards, reduces the accessible map space over time and enforces urgency and positional conflict.

From a systemic perspective, the shardstorm ensures the player can never wait for ideal conditions. Every turn exists under increasing external pressure.

Each Power Up Phase represents an implicit hypothesis: “If the state of the match is approximately "X", then "Y" configuration maximizes my probabilities.”

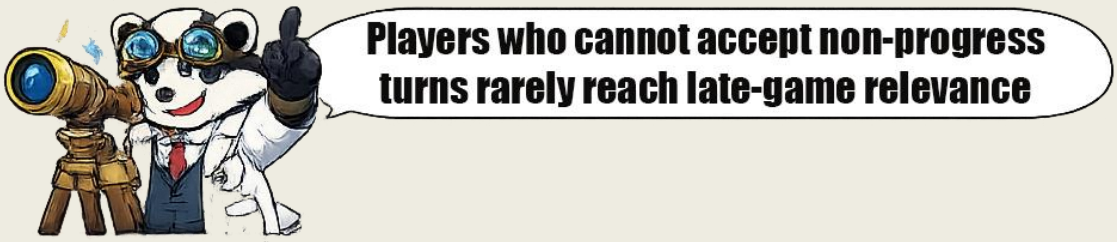
The Battle Phase does not fully validate or invalidate this hypothesis, it provides partial evidence. The Broker must then decide whether to reinforce the hypothesis, refine it, or abandon it. The game rewards hypothesis correction speed, not hypothesis certainty.

A critical distinction must be maintained: A good turn can lead to a bad outcome, a bad turn can let you survive temporarily. Evaluating turns purely by survival or damage dealt leads to systematic error. Turn quality must be assessed by:

- Optionality preserved
- Information gained
- Risk exposure managed

This distinction is foundational to long-term improvement.

One of the most frequent strategic failures is forcing progress in a turn that exists solely to avoid collapse. Not every turn is meant to advance a win condition. Some turns exist only to survive, reposition, gather information or wait for pressure to shift.



CHAPTER 3

The Role of the Agent: Autonomy, Limits, and Behavioral Reading

A very common conceptual mistakes in Chaos Agents is treating the Agent as a traditional avatar. This mental model is not only inaccurate, it actively undermines decision quality. An Agent is not a character to be controlled, an extension of player intent or a strategic thinker. An Agent is a rule-driven autonomous execution system. It does not choose strategies; it executes configurations under environmental constraints.

Understanding this distinction is mandatory for interpreting outcomes correctly. Agent autonomy exists to relocate player skill away from execution and into configuration. By removing direct control, the game ensures that decision quality is exposed, pre-commitment matters and responsibility cannot be deferred to mechanical correction.

If the Agent behaves in an undesirable way, the cause is almost never “the Agent made a mistake.” The cause is a configuration that made that behavior likely.

Although the Broker cannot issue direct commands, they control the decision space within which the Agent operates. The Broker configures behavior priorities (Attacking / Collecting), HP withdrawal thresholds (slider), available capabilities (Skills), temporary advantages (Temporary Effects), and the overall strategic orientation. These inputs do not prescribe actions. They define what the Agent prefers, what it avoids, and what trade-offs it is willing to accept. The Broker does not tell the Agent what to do. The Broker tells the Agent what matters.

Because the Agent reacts to a dynamic environment, identical configurations can produce different outcomes depending on current match state, shardstorm pressure, opponent density and cooldown alignment. This produces emergent behavior, patterns that arise from interaction rather than instruction. Emergence is often mistaken for inconsistency. In reality it reflects consistent rules applied to variable contexts.

High-level play requires learning how to read Agent behavior rather than control it. This involves observing when the Agent disengages, what triggers pursuit abandonment, how often it repositions versus commits and how it behaves under HP pressure. The correct analytical question is never “Why did the Agent do that?” The correct question is “Which configuration made that behavior the most likely outcome?”

The Agent acts as a multiplier of decision quality. Good configurations produce resilient behavior even under stress, poor configurations collapse rapidly under pressure. The game does not punish single mistakes harshly. It punishes misaligned systems repeatedly.

Most players experience a phase where the game feels “out of control.” This is not a design failure, it is a cognitive transition. This phase ends when the player accepts that control is indirect, certainty is unavailable and outcomes must be evaluated probabilistically.

Once this transition occurs, the Agent stops feeling erratic and starts feeling predictable within bounds. Correctly internalizing Agent autonomy leads to several practical behaviors:

- Simplifying configurations increases predictability
- Conservative thresholds preserve optionality
- Over-specification reduces adaptability

Observing multiple turns matters more than single outcomes. An Agent should be configured to survive multiple turns, not to win a single engagement. Assigning human intent to the Agent (“it chose poorly,” “it panicked”) is a critical analytical error. Anthropomorphism leads to emotional adjustments, erratic slider changes and impulsive reconfiguration.

CHAPTER 4

Actions, Impulse, and Turn Economy

It is tempting to frame the economy around visible resources: Elements, Shards, Skills. This framing is incomplete. The true economy of a Win Condition is an economy of opportunities. The primary limiting factor is not how many resources the player has, but how many meaningful decisions can be made per turn. That limiting factor is represented by Actions.

Every system in the game exists to either consume Actions, modify the impact of Actions or change the timing of when Actions matter. Each turn provides a small, intentionally constrained number of Actions. This starting constraint is fundamental, not incidental.

The sum of your Actions represents a commitment to a line of play, an exclusion of alternative decisions and an acceptance of opportunity cost. A common mistake is treating Actions as something that must be spent simply because they exist. In reality, each Action must justify its opportunity cost.

Impulse and some Skills can give you extra Actions, which most of the time translates into a more powerful turn (making Brain and Time highly valued Elements), but the opportunity cost of having that option must be weighted versus the plan, the play style and the benefit that other Elements can bring to your plan.

Invisible decisions, the choices not taken, are what separate disciplined players from impulsive ones. The game routinely punishes activity without purpose. Spending Actions without a hypothesis reduces future flexibility, accelerates commitment before sufficient information exists and compounds error across turns. Many losses do not result from a single bad decision, but from a sequence of unjustified Actions that quietly remove optionality.

Impulse is often misunderstood as an alternative currency. It is not. Impulse exists to reward planning across turns, enable controlled spikes of activity and break the linearity of Action availability. Impulse does not replace Actions. It modifies their cadence.

This design ensures that exceptional turns are possible, but unsustainable. When sufficient Impulse is accumulated, the player gains access to an additional Action during that turn. This does not automatically makes the turn better. A turn with an extra Action, if undertaken without analysis, can be more dangerous than a constrained turn. Committing more decisions in a compressed window amplifies correct reads but also amplifies incorrect ones.

From a strategic perspective, turns fall into two categories.

Normal Turns:

- Preserve optionality
- Limit exposure
- Prioritize survival and information
- Delay irreversible commitments

Explosive Turns:

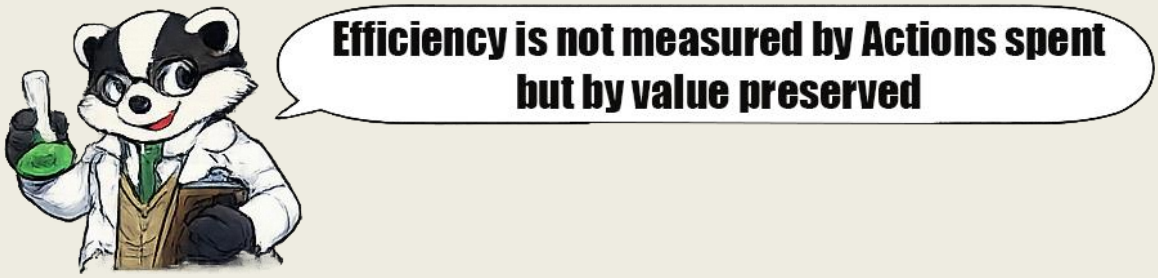
- Concentrate structural decisions
- Commit heavily to a direction
- Trade flexibility for immediate advantage

Many critical failures occur when players force explosive behavior in turns that should remain normal.

A recurring pattern in gameplay is the following assumption:

“I have Actions available, so I should use everything I can unlock with them.”

This reasoning ignores several realities: Not all Actions generate value, some Actions only advance decisions better postponed, activating a Skill now may consume a benefit better used next turn. The game rewards strategic restraint as much as well-timed aggression.

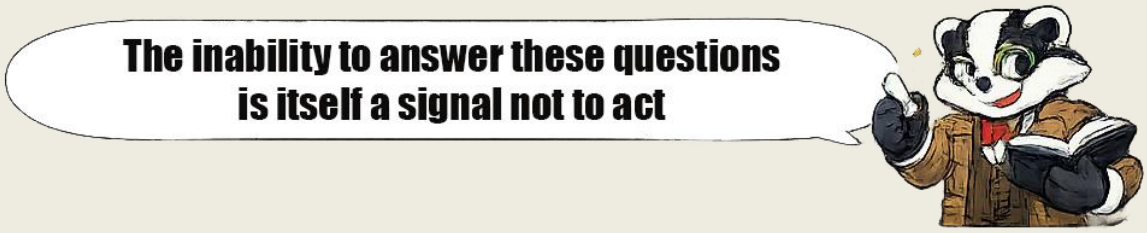


Actions do not exist in isolation. They intersect directly with:

- Elements (investment timing)
- Skills (irreversible commitments)
- Priorities and Slider (risk exposure)
- The evolving state of the match

Every Action should be evaluated contextually:

- Does this improve immediate survivability?
- Does it lock me into a direction prematurely?
- Does it reduce my ability to react next turn?

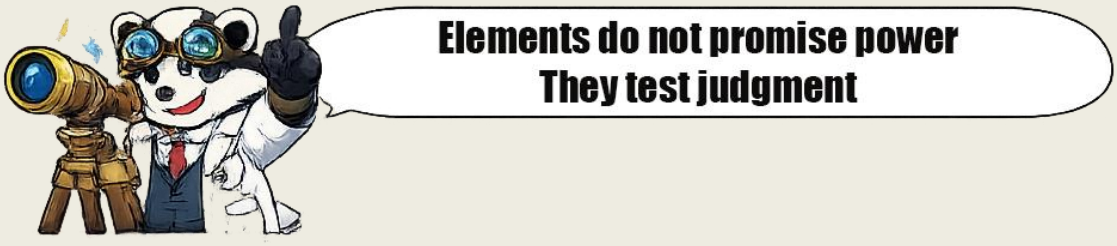


High-frequency failure patterns include: Spending Actions without a hypothesis, chaining structural decisions in volatile turns, converting Impulse reactively instead of intentionally, mistaking motion for progress. These failures rarely kill immediately but they ensure vulnerability later.

CHAPTER 5

Elements as an Economic and Design System

In Chaos Agents, Elements are not a secondary resource nor a simple currency for acquiring Skills. They are the material core through which the game expresses identity, progression, and risk. Every meaningful form of development, offensive, defensive or utilitarian passes through the Element system. Unlike conventional economies that only reward accumulation, the game designs Elements to reward timing, commitment and restraint.



Elements are generated by the shardstorm in a manner that is continuous, partially unpredictable and intentionally non-uniform. This randomness is not meant to create chaos for its own sake. Its purpose is to prevent deterministic build paths, forced openings and guaranteed scaling trajectories. Elements suggest directions, but they never mandate them. The Broker must decide whether to follow the suggestion, delay commitment or reject it entirely.

Each Agent has access to 6 subsets of Elements out of a total of 9 available. This exclusivity is a foundational design choice. Subsets exist to add strategy at the moment of Agent selection, establish the possible DNA of the Agent Skill Set and to make it impossible for any Agent to be universally superior. By restricting access, the game ensures that no build can cover all dimensions, every strength implies a weakness and identity emerges through what is unavailable, not just through what is chosen.

Deploying Elements is not spending, it is investing. The game uses a non-linear investment model where deploying Elements in meaningful quantities creates stronger immediate effects, faster progression within a subset and increasing commitment to a direction. Investing small amounts repeatedly without a clear justification is usually a sign of strategic indecision. It creates exposure without identity and progress without leverage.

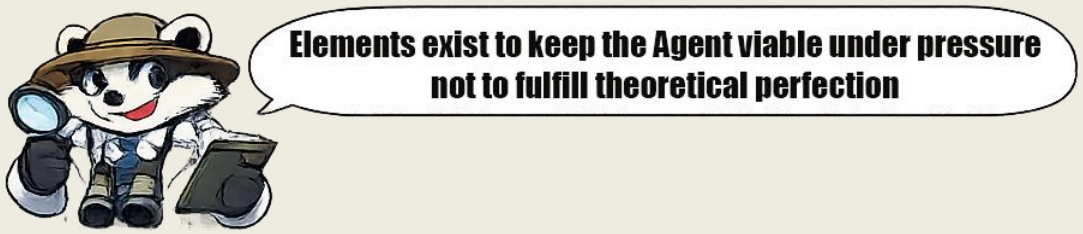
Every Element deployment triggers Temporary Effects. These effects are short-lived, they last only for the turn in which they are activated and can drastically alter immediate survivability. Temporary Effects are often undervalued because they lack permanence. This is a mistake. Many Agents survive critical turns because of Temporary Effects, not despite them. Advanced players evaluate deployments by long-term progression enabled and the impact of the temporary bonuses on immediate survival. Ignoring Temporary Effects is ignoring half of the Element system.

Elements do not exist in isolation. They coexist directly with Actions, and their deployment must always be evaluated within the context of the current turn.

Key evaluative questions include:

- Does this deployment improve my immediate position?
- Does it consume something I may need to react later?
- Does it commit me before I have sufficient information?

Many silent failures originate from Element investments that were correct in isolation but disastrous in timing.



CHAPTER 6

Skills: Progression, Risk, and Specialization

Skills are not simple statistical upgrades nor incremental rewards. They are structural decisions that help define how the Agent survives, how the Agent interacts with other Agents and which Win Conditions remain viable or become unreachable over time. Skills do not expand the player's option space, they concretize it. Every Skill narrows future decisions by reinforcing a specific interpretation of how the Agent is expected to function under pressure.

Each Skill belongs to a specific Element subset (for example: CHAOS, DARK, LIFE, SPACE). These subsets do not exist merely for thematic organization; they exist to enforce internal coherence. Across subsets, several consistent patterns emerge:

- Each subset reinforces a specific strategic axis
  (evasion, damage output, survivability, tempo control, etc.)
- Skills within the same subset scale in intention rather than raw power
- Early Skills establish foundations, later Skills define identity

Skills acquired early in a match serve fundamentally different purposes than those acquired later. Early Skills tend to stabilize the Agent, correct immediate weaknesses and improve baseline survivability and consistency. They reduce volatility and increase the probability that the Agent reaches later turns.

Late Skills tend to reinforce an already established identity, add tactical flexibility or enhance a chosen Win Condition. However, late Skills are often irrelevant if the Agent does not survive long enough to benefit from them. A frequent mistake is prioritizing "attractive" late-game Skills without considering whether the Agent can realistically reach that stage.

Analysis of real Skill behavior reveals consistent outcomes. Skills that provide direct, constant bonuses (evasion, health, damage) tend to be more reliable for early survival, Skills dependent on temporary boosts, specific conditions or non-guaranteed synergies require accurate state of the match reading to justify their acquisition. Many eliminations happen not because of insufficient damage but because of defensive instability caused by poorly prioritized Skills.

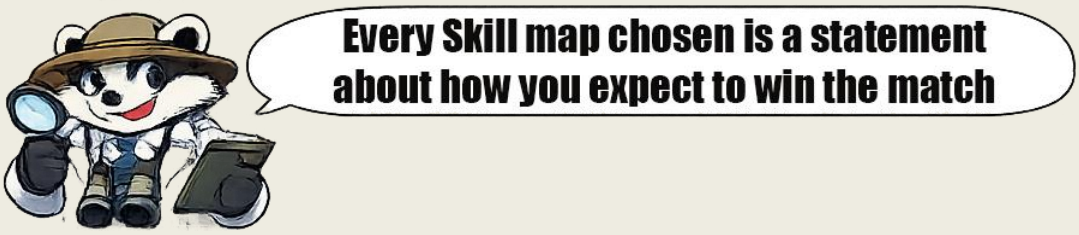
High-frequency Skill-related mistakes include purchasing Skills simply because they are available, prioritizing offensive Skills when survival is the actual bottleneck, overinvesting in a subset the Agent cannot sustain, dismissing defensive Skills as “unexciting.”

The game punishes misalignment between Skill selection and game context far more harshly than underpowered builds.

Skills do not exist in isolation. They can enable or block Win Conditions. Conceptually:

- KO-oriented Win Conditions require Skills that sustain pursuit and extended combat
- Shard-based Win Conditions require Skills to keep collecting and stabilize the agent
- Survival Win Conditions require Skills that reduce risk and improve survival
- Hybrid Win Conditions rely more on utility and flexibility than raw power

Selecting Skills without a plausible Win Condition is one of the fastest paths to inconsistency.



CHAPTER 7

Behavior Priorities: Attacking vs. Collecting

Selecting Attacking or Collecting does not issue a hard command to the Agent. These settings define behavioral bias, not scripted behavior. The Agent continues to respect cooldowns, react to proximity, respond to threat thresholds and obey survival logic. Behavior priorities influence how the Agent resolves conflicts between possible actions, not whether an action is absolutely permitted. Misunderstanding this distinction is one of the most common causes of perceived “unpredictable” behavior.

Attacking does not guarantee combat, nor does it ensure eliminations. It signals that when multiple valid actions exist, the Agent will prefer pressure over safety. This makes Attacking inherently expensive in terms of survivability.

Attacking introduces several non-obvious risks:

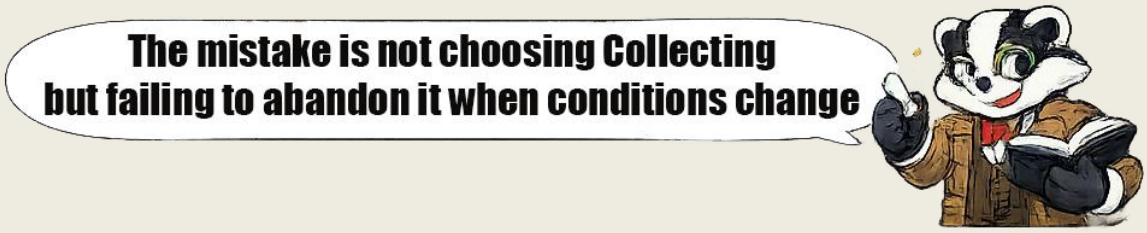
- Unproductive engagements where damage is exchanged without advantage
- Opportunity loss from ignored Shards during safe windows
- Cumulative exposure, where repeated fights erode HP faster than recovery allows.

A common mistake is prioritizing Attacking without a Win Condition that directly benefits from combat pressure.

Selecting Collect biases the Agent toward gathering Shards by proximity, avoiding unnecessary confrontations, engaging only when forced by cooldowns. Collecting is not passive play. It is a risk-minimization strategy that helps stabilize the Agent, build incremental Shard advantage and preserve optionality. Many winning matches are decided because an Agent remained alive long enough to benefit from later conditions.

Collecting also carries inherent risks:

- Lack of direct pressure, allowing others to scale freely
- Missed leverage windows, where limited aggression would have paid off
- Environmental dependence, where maps with high densities of Agents actively collecting reduce effectiveness



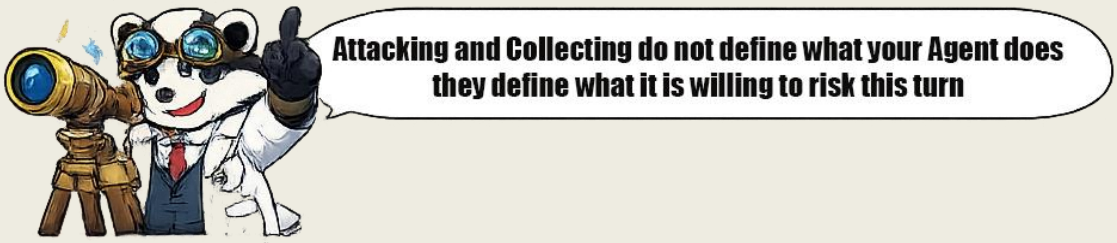
Priorities do not override cooldown mechanics. As a result an Attacking Agent may collect Shards while waiting for attack cooldowns or a collecting Agent may engage nearby enemies when recollection is unavailable. This creates hybrid behavior that may appear contradictory but is entirely consistent with system rules. Priorities tilt decisions, they do not lock behavior. Attacking and Collecting are turn-level decisions, not identity choices. Each turn requires reevaluation based on Agent state, lobby behavior, shardstorm pressure, current Win Condition viability. Rigid priority usage is often punished. Adaptive priority usage is almost always rewarded.
Behavior priorities cannot be evaluated independently of the HP slider. Common interactions include:

Attacking + low slider → high risk of premature death
Attacking + high slider → erratic pressure with frequent disengagement
Collecting + low slider → high risk of premature death
Collecting + high slider → high survivability, reduced pressure

Priorities must support the current Win Condition:

- KO-based Win Conditions require selective Attacking
- Shard-based Win Conditions require dominant Collecting
- Survival Win Conditions require controlled stabilization
- Hybrid Win Conditions require conscious alternation

Maintaining a priority that contradicts the viable Win Condition is a systemic error.



CHAPTER 8

The HP Slider (Pain Threshold) as a Survival System

In Chaos Agents, the HP slider, is frequently misunderstood as a preference or playstyle option. It is neither. The slider is a risk governance system. It defines how much damage the Agent is willing to tolerate, how long it remains exposed to danger and when survival takes precedence over objectives. Treating the slider as a cosmetic or habitual setting leads to systematic misconfiguration and repeated early eliminations or missing Win Conditions.

The slider determines the Agent's withdrawal threshold. When HP falls below the configured value, the Agent deprioritizes objectives, attempts to disengage and seeks survival-preserving behavior. This does not guarantee escape. It only increases the probability of disengagement before collapse occurs.

The slider does not exist to maximize performance in the current fight. It exists to extend temporal viability. A higher slider shortens engagements, reduces exposure, increases the likelihood of surviving to the next turn. A lower slider allows deeper commitment, increases payoff potential but raises the probability of irreversible loss.

The slider controls how much future you are willing to sacrifice for the present.

At 0%, the Agent never withdraws it prioritizes its objective until death or turn end, it maximizes pressure, it eliminates all risk management. This configuration is only justifiable when the Win Condition depends explicitly on KOs or Shards taken in that moment, when the Agent has clear contextual superiority or when death is an acceptable or even necessary outcome. Using this configuration outside those conditions frequently results in avoidable early eliminations or Snowballs into a match with no Win Conditions.

At 100%, the Agent disengage, it is always in survive mode, objectives are ignored, survival dominates all decisions. This configuration maximizes longevity but can prevent meaningful pressure, allow opponents to scale uncontested and delay commitment past viable windows.

The slider must be coherent with behavior priorities, Skill selection and current Win Condition. Incoherent combinations produce unstable behavior, aggressive priorities with high slider cause frequent disengagement, passive priorities with low slider cause silent deaths. Most perceived randomness in Agent behavior stems from slider incoherence, not system unpredictability.

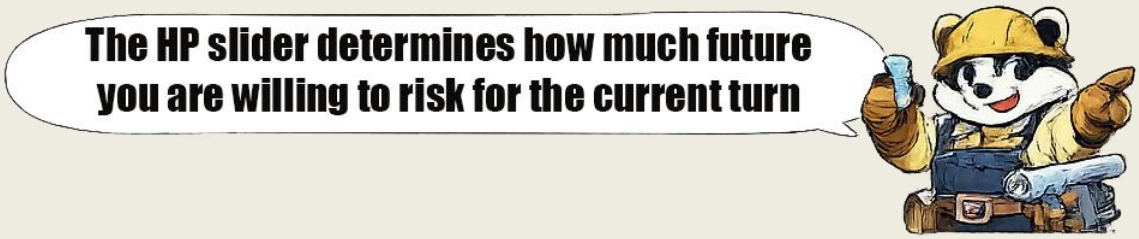
The slider should not be static. It is intended to be adjusted turn by turn. Situations that justify raising the slider include lack of immediate payoff opportunities, high state of the match aggression, weakened Agent state. Situations that justify lowering the slider include clear advantage windows, decisive Win Condition turns, controlled explosive commitments.

The slider's primary value lies in option preservation. Retreating at the correct time avoids cascading damage, prevents forced commitments, preserves the ability to pivot.

Surviving one additional turn can enable Win Condition reevaluation, favorable Element generation, avoidance of an unwinnable confrontation and repositioning after shardstorm contraction.

Time is the scarcest resource.

High-frequency mistakes include setting the slider once and never adjusting it, lowering it out of frustration rather than advantage, using extreme values without justification, treating disengagement as failure.
The slider does not make the Agent weak. It makes the Agent selective.



CHAPTER 9

Win Conditions: Strategic Victory Paths

Win Conditions are not end-of-match checkboxes. They are the meaning layer that gives coherence to every decision made before the match ends. Actions, Elements, Skills, priorities, and slider settings only make sense relative to a plausible Win Condition. Without one, even technically correct decisions drift into contradiction.

A critical misconception is believing that the Win Condition is chosen explicitly at the start of a match. In reality, Win Conditions emerge from context, Agent identity, available subsets, shardstorm behavior and state of the match dynamics. Advanced players do not force Win Conditions. They recognize which ones are becoming viable.

Although Chaos Agents allows hybrid paths, Win Conditions can be grouped into three primary categories for analytical clarity.

Win Condition by Eliminations (KOs)

This Win Condition is based on reducing the number of rival Agents, achieving victory by accumulating more KOs than the rest of the opponents.

Structural characteristics:

- High risk exposure
- Reliance on sustained combat effectiveness
- Sensitivity to HP attrition and cooldown management
- Supporting requirements:
- Skills that enable combat endurance
- Selective use of Attacking priority
- Slider configurations that accept controlled risk

Forcing KOs without contextual superiority, leads to cumulative damage and early elimination. KO-based paths reward timing, not constant aggression.

Win Condition by Shard Accumulation.

This Win Condition focuses on accumulating more Shards than opponents, doing it efficiently while exploiting low-risk windows and avoiding unnecessary confrontations.

Structural characteristics:

- Reduced direct conflict
- Heavy dependence on positioning and survival

- Strong interaction with state of the match behavior
- Supporting requirements:
- Dominant Collecting priority
- Conservative slider configurations
- Skills that reduce exposure and stabilize survivability

Common mistakes include maintaining this Win Condition when the state of the match no longer allows safe collection and risking a Low Slider when enough turns remain for an opponent to overtake in Shards. Shard-based victories are decided by consistency, not burst.

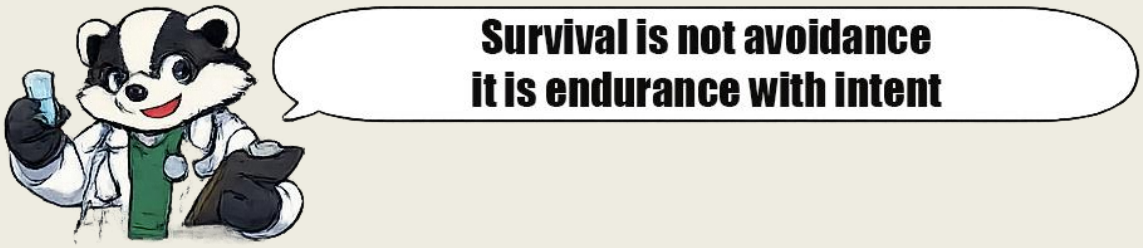
Win Condition by Survival

This Win Condition wins by outlasting all other Agents, regardless of Shard count or KOs.

Structural characteristics:

- Reactive and defensive play
- High reliance on slider management
- Capitalization on opponent mistakes
- Supporting requirements:
- Disciplined risk control
- Frequent disengagement
- Acceptance of low-pressure turns

Confusing survival with passivity and missing necessary pressure windows is a common mistake.



Most real matches do not follow a single pure Win Condition. Instead, players transition between them as context evolves. Common transition patterns include:

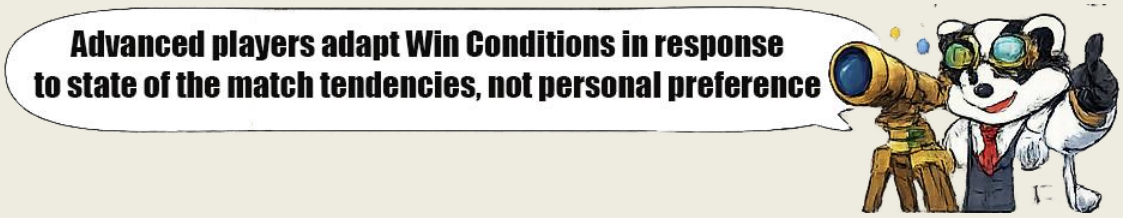
- Early Shard accumulation → late KOs
- Early survival → opportunistic collection
- Selective KOs → late-game survival

Successful transitions require accurate state of the match reading, timely priority and slider changes, abandonment of outdated assumptions. The most dangerous error is clinging to a Win Condition that has quietly become non-viable.

Although Win Conditions emerge, they can be inferred early by observing Element availability trends, early Skill access, opponent aggression density and shardstorm contraction patterns. The correct guiding question is not “How do I want to win?” But “How can I win given what is happening now?”

A large percentage of losses originate from internal contradictions such as defensive Skills paired with constant Attacking or aggressive slider usage in Shard-focused paths. These conflicts rarely cause immediate death. They erode consistency until one unfavorable interaction ends the run.

Win Conditions are inseparable from state of the match behavior. Indicators that influence correct choice include the number of aggressive Agents, frequency of forced engagements and survival patterns across turns and Agents who quietly remain alive.



Changing a Win Condition is not a failure, it is an optimization. A change is justified when the original Win Condition becomes too costly, dangerous or impossible to achieve, when the Agent’s state no longer supports it or if the state of the match begins to punish that path. Changing too late is fatal. Changing too early is inefficient. The correct timing is found by watching trends, not single events.

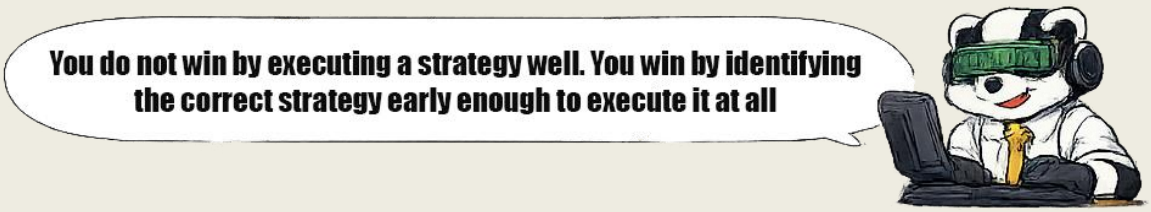
Several cognitive biases distort Win Condition decisions:

Commitment bias - continuing due to prior investment

Spectacle bias - favoring visible KOs over silent advantage

Outcome bias - judging decisions only by short-term results

Recognizing these biases is essential for consistent play. Without a viable Win Condition, even optimal micro-decisions collapse into contradiction.



CHAPTER 10

Reading the Lobby and Opponents

The state of the match must never be interpreted as a set of independent opponents. It is a single dynamic system formed by the interaction of all Agents under shared constraints. Decisions that are optimal against one opponent can be disastrous when applied blindly to the lobby as a whole. Victory depends not on beating a specific Agent, but on aligning with or exploiting the dominant tendencies of the match.

High-level play begins when the player stops asking “Can I beat this Agent?” And starts asking “What is the lobby doing, and how do I survive, and win, within that behavior?”

Although the Broker cannot intervene during the Battle Phase, this phase is the primary source of strategic information. Each Battle Phase reveals which Agents initiate fights, which Agents disengage early, who survives repeated encounters and where pressure concentrates spatially. The purpose of observation is not memorization, but pattern recognition. A single fight proves nothing; repeated behaviors reveal structure.

An aggressive lobby exhibits clear, repeatable signals:

- Frequent forced engagements
- Multiple Agents prioritizing Attacking
- Early or repeated KO attempts
- Rapid HP attrition across the field

In such lobbies Shard-based Win Conditions become fragile, survival-focused play gains relative value, slider thresholds should trend upward, Actions should favor preservation over acceleration. A common mistake is attempting to out-aggress an aggressive lobby without structural advantage.

An evasive lobby shows the opposite tendencies:

- limited combat initiation
- Widespread Collecting behavior
- Few decisive eliminations
- Agents surviving quietly across turns

In these environments pure Collecting can become inefficient if underdeveloped, selective aggression can create leverage, pressure can be applied surgically rather than continuously. The mistake here is passivity, allowing others to scale freely while assuming safety will persist indefinitely.

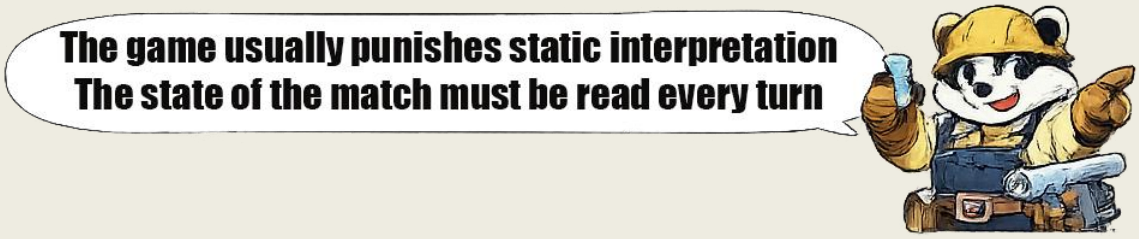
The map itself functions as a diagnostic instrument. Indicators include zones of repeated conflict, regions abandoned due to depleted shards and safe corridors that persist across turns. Observing where Agents do not go is often as valuable as observing where they do. Players who treat the map as mere geography miss its role as a behavioral heatmap.

The lobby behavior is not static. Certain turns act as inflection points: After major Element generation, when shardstorm contraction traps everyone or following multiple eliminations. These turns often precede strategic collapse or opportunity. Anticipating them allows preemptive slider adjustments, early Win Condition pivots and avoidance of forced commitments.

Not every visible Agent is a real threat. Apparent threats are loud, aggressive, and often self-destructive. Real threats are consistent, resilient, and difficult to eliminate. Overreacting to apparent threats leads to wasted Actions and poor positioning. Ignoring real threats leads to inevitable late-game elimination or losing Win Conditions. Threat assessment must be based on survival patterns, not spectacle.

Reading the state of the game has no value unless it changes behavior. Correct translation includes modifying priorities, adjusting slider thresholds, delaying or accelerating investment and reevaluating Win Conditions. Accurate reading followed by inaction due to plan attachment leads to failure.

Recurring interpretive errors include reacting to single events, overvaluing isolated KOs, ignoring quiet survivors and assuming current trends will persist unchanged.



CHAPTER 11

Mistake Analysis and Postmortem Thinking

Improvement does not primarily come from playing more games. It comes from interpreting losses correctly. For this reason, postmortem analysis must focus on decision quality not on results. The purpose of a postmortem is not to justify failure but to identify which assumptions failed and when optionality was lost.

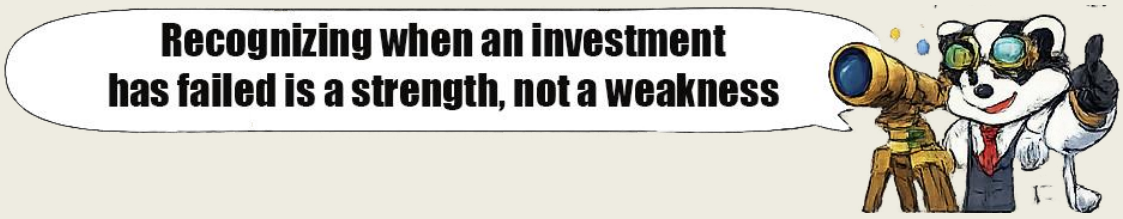
The first and most important distinction in any postmortem is between two types of mistakes:

Circumstantial Mistakes. These include unfavorable RNG, unavoidable encounters, unlucky positioning, opponent actions that could not reasonably be anticipated. Circumstantial mistakes are often unavoidable. They provide little learning value and should not dominate analysis.

Systemic Mistakes. These include repeated misalignment of priorities and slider, investing without a hypothesis, failing to pivot when context changes, overcommitting to outdated Win Conditions.

A common analytical mistake is focusing exclusively on the turn in which elimination occurred. Statements such as “I died because this Agent was too strong” “I lost that fight unfairly” are usually incomplete. In most cases, elimination is the final expression of earlier decisions, a slider left too low a Win Condition not reevaluated an investment made one turn too early or an opportunity to disengage ignored. The correct postmortem question is: Which earlier decision made this turn unavoidable?

One of the most dangerous cognitive traps is overcommitment. Common manifestations include continuing a KO-focused strategy after losing combat advantage, persisting with Shard collection after safe windows close or buying late Skills in the hope that they will correct poor earlier decisions. This behavior is driven by sunk-cost bias rather than strategic reasoning. The game actively punishes this bias by making late pivots increasingly expensive.

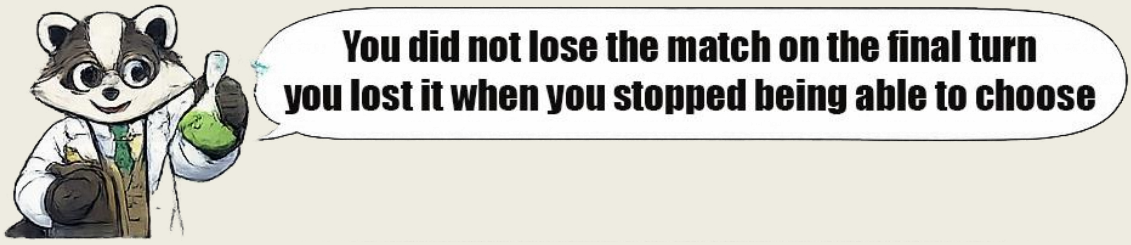


Many strategic collapses stem from incorrect state of the match reads that persist unchallenged. Typical misreads include reacting to a single aggressive Agent instead of a systemic trend, ignoring quiet survivors who accumulate advantage and misclassifying an evasive lobby as passive. A proper postmortem revisits which Agents survived consistently, which behaviors shaped the state of the match, which assumptions about opponent behavior proved false.

A recurring analytical error is blaming the Agent itself: “My Agent chose to fight” “My Agent didn’t retreat” The Agent does not make strategic decisions. It executes configurations. If behavior was undesirable the cause lies in priority settings, slider thresholds, Skill selection or their interaction with the environment. A correct postmortem always returns to configuration, never intent.

Counterfactual thinking (“what if I had…”) can be useful or misleading. Productive Counterfactuals consider alternatives that were realistically available, use information that existed at the time, evaluate expectation not certainty. Unproductive Counterfactuals rely on information revealed after elimination, assume perfect execution or rewrite the match to guarantee victory. The goal is not to imagine a win, but to identify a higher-quality decision under uncertainty.

The true value of postmortem thinking emerges across many matches. Over time, Advanced players identify recurring personal biases, configurations that repeatedly reduce optionality, Win Conditions they misread too often. The game rewards players who improve their decision models, not those who seek perfect outcomes in isolated games.



CHAPTER 12

Universal Strategic Principles

A strategic principle is universal when it remains valid regardless of balance changes, numerical tuning, nerfed Skills/Elements or evolving community understanding. Universal principles do not prescribe exact actions. They guide judgment. Their purpose is not to simplify the game, but to stabilize decision-making when information is incomplete and pressure is rising. They are anchors, not scripts.

Before damage, before scaling, before power spikes, the Agent must remain alive. Many players attempt to optimize a future state they never reach. This is not ambition, it is misallocation of effort.

Practical implications:

- Prefer configurations that preserve optionality
- Accept low-impact turns when the alternative is collapse
- Delay specialization if survival is not yet stable

Optimization only matters after survival is secured.

Elements exist to keep the Agent viable under pressure, not to guarantee dominance.

This principle manifests that:

- A theoretically perfect build that dies early is incorrect
- Temporary Effects often matter more than long-term progression
- Investment timing outweighs investment volume

If an Element investment does not contribute to survival in the current or next turn, its value must be questioned

Selecting a Skill is not acquiring power, it is making a claim about how long the Agent will live, about what the lobby will allow, about which Win Condition is realistic. When that claim proves false, the Skill becomes dead weight. Advanced players do not ask “Is this Skill strong?” They ask “What future does this Skill assume?”

Priorities and Slider Govern Risk, Not Style.

Attacking, Collecting, and the HP slider are often misinterpreted as expressions of personal playstyle. They define how much risk is acceptable this turn, how quickly the Agent disengages and how aggressively opportunities are pursued. Using these systems without reference to the current turn context is one of the fastest ways to lose control of the match.

The Correct Win Condition Is the One the Context Allows

You do not choose how you want to win. You identify which Win Condition is currently possible. Context includes state of the match aggression density, shardstorm, Agent health and capabilities, opponent survival patterns. Persisting in a Win Condition that has become costly, dangerous or impossible is a systemic mistake.

CHAPTER 13

Appendices

This chapter consolidates operational and reference material intended for day-to-day use. The information here is designed to support decision-making during play, postmortem analysis, and long-term improvement.

Turn-by-Turn Decision Checklist

Use this checklist before ending each Power Up Phase:

- What do I believe the lobby is doing this turn?
- What evidence supports or contradicts this belief?
- Which Win Condition is currently viable?
- Has my prior Win Condition become risky or impossible?
- Do my priority and slider align with this turn's risk tolerance?
- Does each Action justify its opportunity cost?
- Would delaying a decision preserve more optionality?
- Does this Element deployment improve immediate survival?
- Does it prematurely lock identity?
- If this configuration fails, do I still survive to the next turn?

These mistakes account for a large percentage of eliminations:

- Spending Actions without a hypothesis.
- Maintaining a Win Condition out of inertia.
- Using extreme slider values without justification.
- Buying late Skills hoping to fix earlier mistakes.
- Treating Agent behavior as intent rather than configuration.
- Reacting to isolated events instead of trends.

After elimination, evaluate in order:

Was elimination unavoidable given the previous turn's configuration?

Yes → systemic mistake

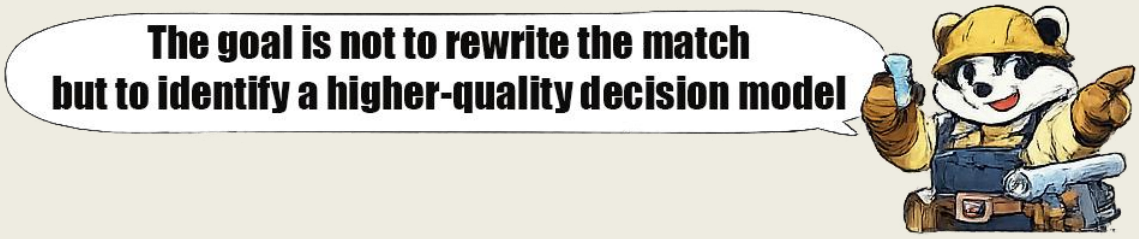
No → circumstantial mistake

Optionality Loss

Which decision reduced my ability to adapt?

- Slider
- Priority
- Skill
- Element investment
- State of the match misread

What alternative decision was realistically available with the information I had?



Every system in the game exists to ask the same question repeatedly:

Can you preserve the ability to choose long enough for the correct choice to emerge?

This guide was created to help you answer that question more consistently.