



Twilight Sparkle's Secret Shipfic Folder

The Silly Card Game About Badly Written Pony Romance

"Shipping is what happens when I decide two ponies love each other very much."

For news and updates, check us out at <http://www.secretshipfic.com>!

This document is always available at <http://tinyurl.com/tsssf-rules>.

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1. Objective

In order to help fulfill Twilight Sparkle's dream of writing the perfect fanfic, you take turns expanding the shipping grid, joining new Ponies to the ever-more-complex network of relationships with Ship cards. If you are first to make one of Twilight's narrative Goals a reality, you earn the points for that Goal.

You also earn shame for enabling Twilight's horrible penchant for shipping her friends, but nopony's perfect.

Winning Points

The number of points needed to win changes based on the number of people playing.

2-3 Players	11 points
4 Players	9 points
5+ Players	7 points

II. A Brief Explanation for Those Unfamiliar With "Shipping"

Terminology

Fan fiction is when fans of a show, book, movie, or any other work of creative fiction (or even sometimes non-fiction) write stories that take place in that same universe. Often times, it's for wish fulfillment, such as fleshing out events from Harry Potter's childhood that J. K. Rowling didn't; or, more on topic, writing a story about the origin of My Little Pony's changelings and Queen Chrysalis, or a story about why King Sombra was as evil as he was.

Fan fiction, called "fanfic" for short, is frequent in just about any existing fandom.

Now, shipping is just as prevalent as fan fiction. Shipping is the act of taking characters from these existing franchises and deciding they should be together. Usually romantically, but it can be platonically as well. Just think of "shipping" as short for "relationshipship."

The term can be used as a verb ("I'm shipping Applejack and Rarity."), a noun ("The RariJack ship is my favorite ship."), and even an adjective ("Wow, that fan fiction is very shippy!").

As you might be able to surmise, a "shipfic" is a fan fiction story that involves shipping.

I Don't Get The Idea Behind This Game

That's okay! It seems complicated but it's a lot simpler than it seems.

This game celebrates (and gently pokes fun at) inexperienced writers. Fan fiction is where a lot of young writers get their starts nowadays, so fanfic runs the gamut of pretty terrible to astonishingly good. But fan fiction is a great thing: it's a creative outlet that encourages people to *write* and *create*. We wanted to make a game that did the same.

At its heart, Secret Shipfic Folder is about bad writing cliches, overwrought (and poorly thought-out) romance, unlikely love triangles, the strange phenomenon of being a teenager, and the even stranger but oh-so-silly phenomenon of shipping.

Ideally, in a game you will be narrating a story with all the worst soap opera cliches you can think of to win points for making the right relationships happen.

If you're still confused, never fear. Send us an email at secretshipfic@gmail.com and we'll be happy to answer any questions you have.

III. The Nitty Gritty: Setup and Turns

Setting Up the Game

In your handy dandy deck box, you'll find you have 4 kinds of cards: a **purple** deck full of Ponies, a **pink** deck full of Ships, a **blue** deck full of Goals, and a single **black** Start card.

1. **First, set aside the Start card. Then separate all three decks. Shuffle each deck.**
The decks are always separate, and never shuffled into one.
2. **Place the Start card ("Fanfic Author Twilight") in the center of the table.**
She serves as the anchor of the shipping grid, since she's writing all of the stories. The grid can get very large over the course of the game, so be sure to give yourselves plenty of room!
3. **Turn over 3 Goal cards face-up.**
Each Goal card has an objective on it, as well as a point value. These are for the whole table, not just one person; and earning Goal cards is how you win the game!
4. **Deal to each player a hand of 4 Pony cards and 3 Ship cards.**
Hands are private, so don't reveal your cards to anyone else!

The Anatomy of a Card



On Your Turn

Play begins to the left of the dealer. Each turn proceeds as follows:

1. You must play at least one card from your hand. You may play as many cards from your hand as you'd like, as long as it's at least one.
2. The moment the requirements for a Goal are met on your turn, you win that Goal. For all the rules around winning a Goal, see **Completing a Goal** below.
3. At the end of your turn, draw back up to or discard down to your hand limit (usually 7) in any combination from the Ship and Pony decks. 4 Ponies and 3 Ships is a simple standard while you're still learning the game. You must draw all your cards before looking at them!

IV. Mechanics: Shipping for Fun and Profit

The play area is organized into several key components:

- Shipping Grid:** A central area where cards are placed. It includes cards like 'Iron Will', 'Best Foesitter Cadance', 'Nightmare Moon', 'Bon Bon', 'Fancif Author Twilight', 'Derry Hooves', 'Bulk Biceps', 'Life-Threatening Illness', 'It Was You All Along!', 'The Other Mare', 'Mahou Shoju Berpy', 'Braeburn', and 'Granny Smith'. Each card has specific text and icons (Ship, Start, Pony, Goal).
- Start Card:** A central card with the text 'Start Card' and instructions for placing cards on the grid.
- Goal Deck:** A deck of cards with a blue patterned cover, labeled 'Twilight Sparkle's Secret Shipfile Folder'. It contains cards like 'I Swear I'm Not Gay!', 'Good Enough', and 'Friendship is Benefits'.
- Active Goals:** A set of cards with blue borders, each with a 'Goal' icon and a specific objective.
- Ship Deck:** A deck of cards with a pink patterned cover, labeled 'Twilight Sparkle's Secret Shipfile Folder'.
- Pony Deck:** A deck of cards with a purple patterned cover, labeled 'Twilight Sparkle's Secret Shipfile Folder'.

A simple example of the play area.

How Do I Ship Ponies with Other Ponies?

Ship cards are the glue that hold all the ponies in this game together! They're cards with silly situations that could feasibly end in a relationship. As you play, we encourage you to create stories, but it's by no means necessary!

1. To ship ponies, first you take a Ship card from your hand and slide it beneath a Pony card already on the grid, as you can see in the diagram above.
2. Then, place a Pony card on top of the exposed half, thus connecting them through an outlandish plot device that has brought them together.

There are a few things you need to know about shipping ponies:

- There are no restrictions on who can be shipped with whom. All ships are valid, even if they're between the same pony (such as Heartless Dictator Rarity and Dramatically Wounded Rarity)!
- A Pony card can have 1 Ship card on each of its 4 sides.
- Ships can only have a maximum of 2 Pony cards attached to them.
(Please note *Pony cards*, not *ponies*, as there is, for example, a single Pony card with both Flim & Flam on it and it can be played with a Ship card.)
- Two Pony cards that are adjacent but do not have a Ship card between them are not considered shipped. Sliding a Ship card between the two to ship them is a valid play.
- If something happens that ends in Pony card(s) and/or Ship card(s) being no longer connected to the shipping grid, they must be discarded.
- If a Ship card ever does not have a Pony card attached at both ends, it must be discarded.

Let's Make This Interesting: Powers

As you can see above under The Anatomy of a Card, every Pony has a power on their card. These are what give Secret Shipfic its strategy.

Most Pony powers are activated as the Pony card is placed on the grid. If the text says "may" then you may choose whether or not you want that power to go off. However, if it says "must" then you absolutely have to do it. If it says neither, assume it is a "must."

Ship Powers

Some Ship cards have powers, as well! The same rules of "may" versus "must" apply to Ship powers.

- "Play from Discard" ships activate when they're attached to the grid.
- All other ships activate when the new Pony card is attached.

Ship powers go off before Pony powers.

Completing a Goal

If a Goal's requirements are already met when it's drawn, whether that's at the end of a player's turn or through a card's power, then that Goal is discarded and a new one is drawn to replace it.

Otherwise, the moment a Goal's conditions are met, the current player wins it!

Do note, though, that a Goal can only be achieved before or after a Pony's or Ship's power activates; not during.

You do not turn over a new Goal immediately; instead you do so at the beginning of the next player's turn. Some players like to demonstrate this by placing a face-down Goal card in the empty spot as a reminder.

How Do I Tell if my Pony Card Counts for This Goal?

Good question! A Pony card counts toward a Goal if the card's name, symbols, and/or keywords match the requirements of the Goal.

If a Pony card's name is more, shall we say, *creative* than just their name, we've added their normal name to their Keywords. We figure it's pretty obvious that "Granny Smith" counts as a "Granny Smith," but maybe "Future Fighter General Smith" is a little more ambiguous.

All Goals that require a specific Pony will call for that common keyword. For example, any Goal that required a Granny Smith specifically, both "Granny Smith" and "Future Fighter General Smith" would count, so long as the latter has the "Granny Smith" keyword.

The Deck Ran Out

If any deck runs out of cards, shuffle the discard pile and make it a new deck.

But what if you don't have a discard pile?

If either the Ship or Pony card decks run out of cards and have no discard, you will tear up Twilight's notes: which is to say, Twilight has written herself into a corner and she destroys some of her work so she can proceed.

When you go to draw a card and there is no card to draw, you select a card from the grid. Any card, as long as it's not Fanfic Author Twilight. That card gets discarded. Follow the normal discard rules. The new discard is then shuffled and it becomes the new deck.

Rinse, repeat if it becomes a problem again!

V. Confusing Concepts

As with most games, there are a few mechanics that crop up that are a little more complicated. We've explained them here a little more thoroughly.



Love Poisons

Love poisons are different kinds of ships because instead of playing a Pony from your hand, you must *steal* a pony from someone else on the grid.

When you steal a Pony card from somewhere else, there will always be Ship cards left over that will need to be discarded. This can cause huge damage to grid if you move a card that was in a key position.

Keep this in mind for strategy!

For a better look at what Love Poisons do when they're played, see the following illustration:



1

As you can see here, Black Widow Rarity is in a crime-fighting duo with Zecora, but also, due to shenanigans, marrying Trixie.



2

Zecora has always wanted Trixie for herself, and so she employs a Love Poison to steal Trixie away from Rarity.

3



Trixie is now moved over to Zecora's Love Poison ship and is no longer shipped with Rarity.

4



Because the "My Little Shotgun Wedding" ship no longer has two Pony cards attached to it, it gets discarded.

Changelings

There's a type of wildcard in TSSSF called Changelings! Any card that has the "Changeling" keyword counts as a changeling.

Changelings each have a race associated with them. For example, the card you see to the right here is the Unicorn changeling. It can become *any* Pony in the game as long as their card has the Unicorn symbol.

The changeling's disguise, however, only lasts for your turn. After that, they're just a simple changeling. To give them a new disguise, you must:

- ★ Move them on the grid, such as via a Swap power or a Love Poison, (or)
- ★ *Advanced Rules*: If you're using the Adjacent Ponies advanced rule, you can give them a new disguise by activating its power in this way.



Changelings can be used to complete Goals as if they were the Pony they were imitating.

Changelings can also only become one pony at a time. For example, even though Flim & Flam are on a single card, a Changeling can only become Flim *or* Flam, but not both.

If you don't know what ponies are in the game, that's okay! [We have a handy card list for that!](#)

Start Card

The Start card, typically Fanfic Author Twilight, is the anchor of the grid. Since she's the author and she likes a good ego-stroking, all of her fics start with her.

The Start card cannot be swapped, removed, moved, or otherwise budged from her starting position, *unless* a card's power specifically specifies the Start card, such as Derpy Hooves.

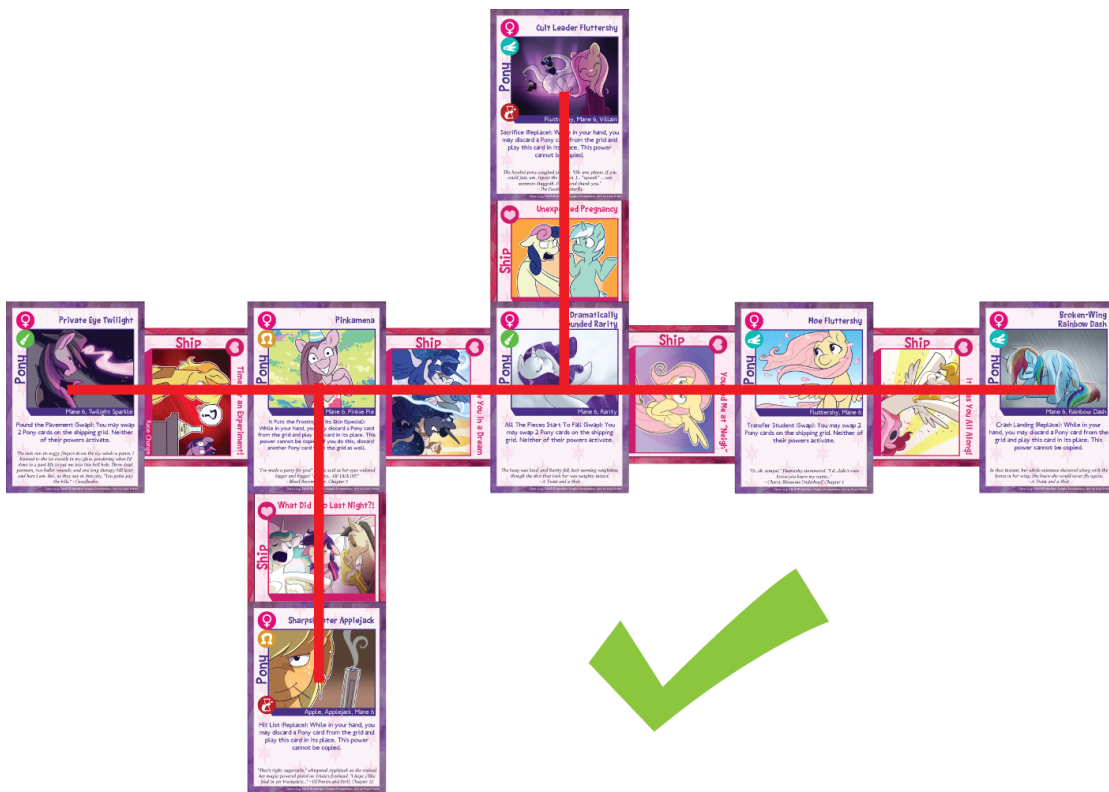
Chains

On a few cards, we mention shipping ponies "in a chain."

A chain is merely a number of Pony ships all connected contiguously, each qualifying for the Goal. It can branch off, and even have duplicates; they all just have to count for the Goal!

For example, take the Friendship is Benefits Goal.

For Friendship is Benefits, you must ship one each of the Mane 6 in a chain. So for this Goal, let's look at some example chains:



This chain has one each of the six Mane 6 ponies, all in a line, even though it branches. And although Fluttershy appears twice, there are no Ponies here that do not count for the Goal. This is a-okay!

VI. I Have the Power!: Advanced Rules

You think you know Shipfic? Let's complicate that for you!

Adjacent Ships

As mentioned before, if two Ponies are adjacent but not shipped together, you may slip a Ship beneath them.

When you do so, you may choose one of the 2 Pony cards now shipped together. That Pony's power activates.

Due to some of the powers in the game, this can be abused in a way that will let you, for example, draw the entire deck into your hand on your turn. If this is a problem, we encourage the following house rule:

A Pony card's power can only be activated once per turn.

Use of this house rule is entirely up to your group.



VII. What Exactly Does it Mean When...: A Glossary of Terms

There are a lot of terms used in this game, and they've got some very specific meanings. Confused? Don't worry! We gotcha covered!

Pony

While it has a more specific meaning in the Mundane World, in Twilight's mind of horrific pony shipping, EVERYONE is a pony! That is, when a card refers to a "pony", it will refer to any character that has a pony card. Some cards represent two ponies at once (e.g. Flim & Flam). For these cards, if another card refers to "pony", these cards count twice. For other cards that refer to "Pony card", then these cards count once.

Gender

The gender of a Pony card is shown in a symbol in the top-left of the card. If a card has the male symbol, for example, it counts for cards that require that symbol. Some ship cards can temporarily change the gender symbol on a card. If a Pony card's gender is changed, it ceases to be its old gender until the gender-changing effect expires. If a card is missing a gender symbol, it counts for neither gender. If a card has a symbol with both the male and female symbols, then it counts for both genders at once. Gender-changing cards have no effect on multi-gender or genderless cards.

Race

The race of a Pony card is shown in a symbol in the top-left of the card. If a card has the "wing" symbol, for example, it counts for cards that require that symbol. Some ship cards can temporarily change the race symbol on a card. If a pony card's race is changed, it ceases to be its old race until the race-changing effect expires. There are only four races at the moment: alicorn, pegasus, unicorn, and earth pony. Race change cards do not affect what race a Changeling can become, but it can change the race of a Changeling after it's changed. For example, an Earth Pony Changeling can become an Alicorn Pinkie Pie.

Ship

(noun) The connection created between two Pony cards that are currently adjacent to each other, face up on the table, with a Ship card between them. Two adjacent Pony cards without a Ship card between them do not constitute a ship, though a player on their turn may put a Ship card between the pony cards, thus creating a ship.

(verb) Placing a Pony card adjacent to another Pony card on the grid with a Ship card in between them. Alternately, placing a Ship card between two already adjacent Ponies.

Shipping Grid

The collection of cards laying face up on the playing surface consisting of the Start card (usually Fanfic Author Twilight), and all other Pony cards that are shipped with the Start card and/or each other. The shipping grid is mutable, and changes frequently throughout play.

Chain

A collection of Pony cards that must be connected by contiguous ships -- even if they are not all shipped on the same pony. They do not have to be in a straight line, and the chain can have multiple branches, or even loop around on itself. You should be able to follow the chain of ponies from one end to the other without running into a pony who does not count for the chain.

Breaking Up A Ship

If either or both Pony cards in a ship are moved from that ship or removed from the grid, or the Ship card is removed from the grid so that the two Pony cards are no longer shipped together, this counts as "breaking up" the ship.

Simultaneously removing both Pony cards and the Ship card from the grid counts for this.

If a power swaps two Pony cards that are already shipped together and they end up shipped with each other again, even via a different side, that does NOT count as breaking up a ship.

Play

If a card instructs you to 'play' a card, it means to connect a card from your hand to the shipping grid.

Replacing a Pony card on the grid with a Pony card from your hand (if it has that power) counts as playing it; swapping a Pony card on the grid with another does not, nor does using a power that doesn't connect a card to the grid.

Swap

Changing the positions of Pony cards already connected on the grid. Swapping Pony cards does not trigger their powers and does not count as "playing" the cards, but it does let you decide the new identity of a Changeling until the end of your turn. However, swapping ponies does count as "playing" a new ship, for the purposes of goals that require a certain number of ships on your turn.

Replace

Discarding a Pony card from the grid, and replacing it with a Pony card from your hand. This counts as "playing" a Pony card for the purpose of goals. If a goal asks you to replace a certain number of ponies on your turn, each replacement action only counts for one, and each particular card can only count once towards that goal.

Discard

To discard a card, place it face up in its respective discard pile. Pony cards only go in the pony discard pile, Ship cards go in the ship discard pile, and Goal cards go in the goal discard pile

VIII. Some Helpful Tips for Beginners

Rule #0

If any card text or rule makes the game less fun for your table, ignore it or house rule it.

Can't Achieve a Goal This Turn

If your turn comes around and there's just no way for you to get the Goals that are currently achievable, the best strategy is to play as many cards from your hand as you can in order to draw more new, possibly more helpful cards at the end of your turn. Very few powers are unique, so don't worry about saving a card for its power. It'll probably come around again.

Plus, the whole point of the game is to ship ponies in hilarious ways! A game spent making goofy stories is often more fun than strategizing to win.

Really Hard Goals

Some Goals become easier or harder as the game goes on (e.g. Friendship is Benefits, Shipwrecker). If a Goal seems impossible now, either leave it alone or ditch it with one of the New Goal powers. More often than not, when you come across that Goal in a later game, it will seem much easier.

Planning Ahead

In a word: don't. Or at least, don't plan on it, especially in a game with a lot of players. Goals are frequently in flux, swapping out for new ones before your turn arrives again. The Goal you're looking to accomplish may not even stick around.

That said, *some* planning ahead is useful, especially on the player's turn that is immediately before yours. You'll get a better feel for strategy the more you play.

Searching the Discard

Sometimes the discard piles get very full, and when you search through them, try to be speedy about it. Taking the time to carefully inspect every card can really hold up the game and is impolite to other players. Try to have an idea of what you're looking for ahead of time and scan for the requisite name, symbol, keyword, or something else.

If you don't know what's in the deck yet, you can use the handy [Pony Card List](#) as a reference.

Contradicting Previously Stated Rules

If a card's text contradicts the rules -- such as Derpy Hooves, who moves the Start card -- the contradiction counts as an exception and is A-Okay.

IX. Variants

Private Goals

For a more competitive game, you may elect not to turn over 3 Public Goals. Instead each player is dealt their own 3 Private Goals that they keep in their hand.

A Goal can be achieved at any time, even if it is not that player's turn. A player can only achieve Goals that they have in their hand.

Mahou Shoujo Derpy's power discards ALL players' unachieved Goals, forcing them to draw new ones. Card powers that let you discard a Goal to draw a new one ONLY affect your own cards.

Shipfic Bridge

Sometimes players may want to "team up." In this situation, players will group up into multiple teams. The players then organize themselves around the table, so that whenever possible, two players on the same team are not sitting next to each other.

Achieved Goals apply to the whole team and as soon as the team scores the right number of points for the number of players, that team wins!

Greased Lightning

For a faster and more chaotic game, replace Goals whenever they're achieved, even in the middle of a player's turn. In addition, if a Goal is already satisfied when it's revealed, the current player achieves it instead of discarding it. This can make for some impressive winning streaks!

Early Game Boost

Is early game too slow for you? Start the grid with four (or eight! Or sixteen!) Ponies on the shipping grid, drawn from the top of the Pony deck, shipped with Ships drawn from the Ship deck.

Only reveal the Goals AFTER the grid has been created, and redraw any Goals that are already completed, as normal.

The Long Haul

Ignore the Goal point victory condition. Instead, play until a deck runs out and there are no cards left in the discard to replace it. The player with the most Goal points wins! Combine this with the Greased Lightning variant for a longer but very high-scoring game.

The Ridiculously Long Haul

Ignore the Goal point victory condition. Instead, play until you achieve every Goal in the Goal deck. The player with the most Goal points wins. This can take a very long time, especially with a group that likes to blow up the grid!

Shipping Solitaire

Instead of playing to a point value, play for 10 rounds and see how high you can get your points!

XI. Yeah, But...: Frequently Asked Questions & Rulings

You can find all of our answered questions and rulings [here](#).

XII. Printed Deck Errata

Have a printed deck that's older than the current version? Check out our handy dandy list of [errata](#) to play your game at the most up-to-date version!

XIII. Still Confused?

Please contact us at secretshipfic@gmail.com with any questions, comments, concerns, or anything else! We're always happy to answer questions!