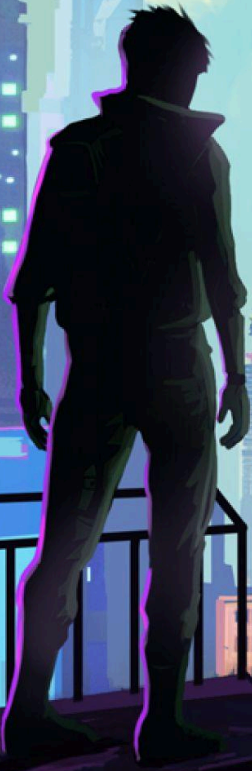


# NEON HOPE

QUICKSTART RULES



# QUICKSTART RULES Version 1.1

Web Page:

[neonhopegame.com](http://neonhopegame.com)

Comprehensive Rules:

[rules.neonhopegame.com](http://rules.neonhopegame.com)

Tabletop Simulator Demo:

[demo.neonhopegame.com](http://demo.neonhopegame.com)

## Overview

### Story and Concept

NEON HOPE is a cooperative game that tells a story in which you are the main protagonist. You and your friends take on the role of an everyday person in the not-so-distant future, stumbling into an affair much bigger than what you are prepared for.

Each game in **NEON HOPE** represents one part of an overall story. Imagine it like an episode of a TV show that culminates in a grand season finale. After every episode, your characters recover their strength, improve their abilities, and continue their adventure in the next game.

The places you visit, the people you meet, as well as the forces that work against you are represented by cards. On your turn, you will spend actions to interact with these cards (namely investigating leads, fighting enemies, hacking computer systems, or asking for support). After all players have acted, the surveillance increases, and you'll have to face new challenges.

### Winning or Losing the Game

Each episode has a stack of chapter cards. Your current objective is on the top card of this stack. If you fulfill it, flip the card and advance to the next chapter. If you fulfill the objective of the last chapter card, you win the game together!

You lose the game together when one character exhausts – by taking too much Stress – or when the Surveillance becomes too high.

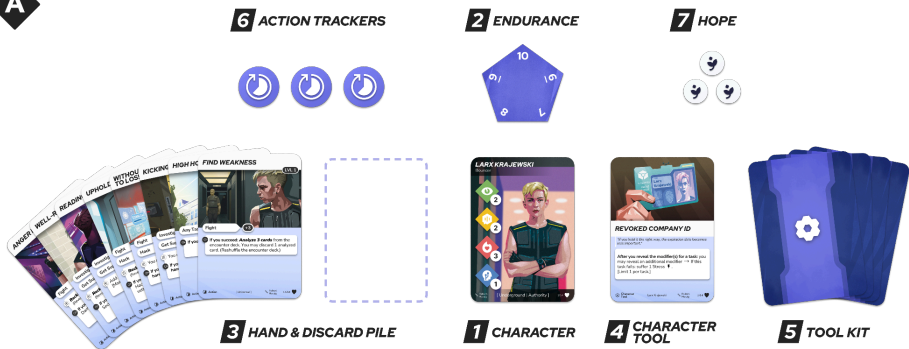
Until the final episode, the story continues, regardless of whether you win or lose. However, your luck, misfortune, and the decisions from your previous game will impact the next – and how the grand finale will play out.

### Playing Your First Game

Follow these steps to set up the game:

- A. Each player chooses and sets up their character.**  
*(Play »Larx Krajewski« and/or »Deniz Yilmaz« in your first game before adding other characters to your group. These are also the only characters available in the demo.)*
- 1.** Place your Character card in front of you.

# A



2. Take an endurance tracker and set it to your starting Endurance. The starting Endurance is based on the number of characters:

- Solo play: 10 Endurance.
- Two characters: 8 Endurance each.
- Three characters: 7 Endurance each.
- Four characters: 6 Endurance each.

*(The demo can only be played with a maximum of 2 characters.)*

One character takes the purple endurance tracker. They are the responsible character for this episode. This does not have an effect on its own but can be referenced by other effects.

*(If possible, »Larx Krajewski« should be responsible in the first episode.)*

3. Take the 8 Action cards that share your character's set icon (♠, ♥, ♣ or ♦). From these, select a number of Action cards equal to your

Endurance. These cards form your starting hand. Place the remaining Action cards into your discard pile.

- Solo Play: Add 2 Action cards with the [Universal] trait from other characters to your Action cards.

4. Decide which side of your double-sided Character Tool you want to use.

5. Place the other 8 Tools that share your character's set icon under your Character Tool. They are considered out of play. *(The demo only includes 4 Tools per character to ensure a better intro experience.)*

6. Take 3 action trackers. Flip them to their unspent side (purple).

7. Take 3 Hope.

# B



## B. Set up the episode.

1. Assemble the staging deck (🎮) and the encounter deck (🎲) by combining all cards with the respective set icons listed in the storybook.
2. Stack the Chapter cards from the staging deck face up on top of each other in ascending order, starting with the front of Chapter card 1.
3. Decide what level of difficulty you want to play on.

Find the 10 difficulty cards (🎲) and shuffle the set of cards corresponding to the chosen difficulty level into the encounter deck. Place the encounter deck face down next to the Chapter cards.

- **Normal:** 4x »At the Darkest Hour«, 1x »A Rigged System«
- **Hard:** 2x »At the Darkest Hour«, 3x »A Rigged System«
- **Hopeless:** 5x »A Rigged System«

4. Decide if you want to play Story or Challenge Mode. Find the corresponding Surveillance Threshold card and place it next to the encounter deck with its front side up. This zone is called the Network.

5. Set the surveillance dial to 0 and place it above the Network.

## 6. Introduction

Read aloud the introduction from the storybook in the section of the current episode.

*The demo uses an introduction card instead.*

### Episode Setup

Follow the additional setup instructions listed in the storybook in the section of the current episode.

*The demo uses a setup card instead.*

*This card is on the back side of the introduction.*

For the first episode, the instructions are: Put the **»Syphon«** setting into play from the staging deck. (Follow the instructions on its front, then flip it over.)

*Whenever you put a setting into play you are instructed to bring specific Lead cards into play either at the top or the bottom of the setting.*

*In this case, you place the »Barkeeper« and the »Bar« at the top of the »Syphon« and the »Dance Floor« at the bottom.*

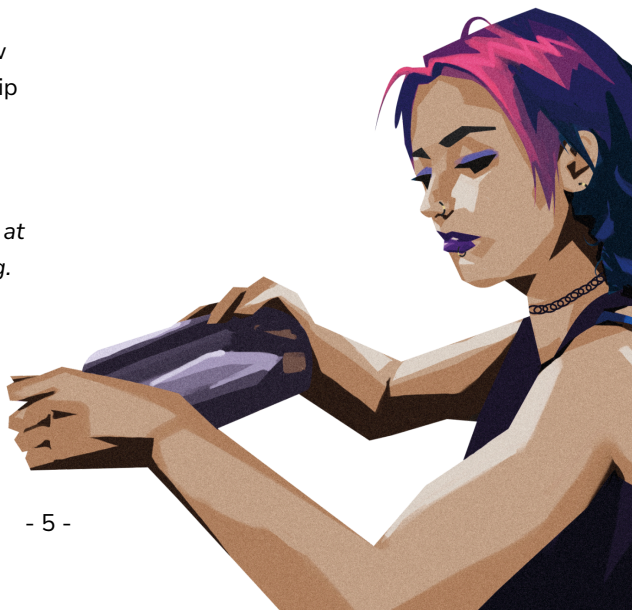
*Leads come into play with their front side. The front side can be recognized by the card number in the bottom right-hand corner beginning with A. There are two versions of the »Bar« and the »Dance Floor«. Choose one at random and return the other to the staging deck.*

7. Search the encounter deck for 1 copy of **»Data De-Anonymization«**.

It appears in the Network (next to the Surveillance Threshold card). Reshuffle the encounter deck.

8. The characters start at the **»Syphon«** (top). Place the character standees at the top of the »Syphon«.

9. Place the appropriate Secrets and support markers on each Lead in play. The appropriate type and number are shown in the top right-hand corner of a Lead.



**C****1** MODIFIER POOL**2** ARCHIVE**2** GRID**C. Set up the Grid and the supply**

1. Assemble the modifier pool according to the image above.
2. Shuffle all modifiers from the modifier pool. Take 3 modifiers at random and place them on the Archive card. The remaining modifiers form the Grid.
3. Set all other tokens, cubes and dice aside out of play. They form the supply.



# Gameplay

Each episode is played over several rounds until the characters fulfill the objective of the final Chapter card or lose by either taking too much Stress or increasing the Surveillance to the highest threshold. Each round consists of a character phase where the characters act (taking their individual turns) and an encounter phase where the game acts.

## Settings, Locations, and the Network

The world, places and people of **NEON HOPE** are all represented by cards. **Settings** represent large areas and form the basic structure of the board. **Settings have a top and a bottom location** where several characters, Enemies, and Leads can be at. In addition to settings and their associated locations, there is a global zone called **the Network**. The Network contains cards that are active regardless of the location. In general, characters can only interact with cards at their location or in the Network, but can support each other as long as they are at the same setting.

# Character Phase

During the character phase, each character can perform 3 actions during their turn. The characters can choose the order in which they take their turns. However, a character must finish their turn before another character starts theirs.

The available actions are:

- Change Location
- Activate
- Perform a Task
  - Investigate
  - Get Support
  - Fight
  - Hack

## Change Location

To change the location, move your character standee to another location in play. This location can be at any setting.

## Activate

To use certain abilities on cards, you need to take the Activate action indicated by the action icon.



# Perform a Task

Performing a task is the main way you interact with the game. When you perform a task, you will use one of the four attributes of your character. You then modify your attribute by revealing a random modifier from the Grid and compare it to the difficulty of the task. To increase your chances of success, you can play an Action card.

Tasks can be found on Leads, Enemies, States, and Tools. You can perform a task on a card at your location, in your play zone, or in the Network.



There are four different tasks (Investigate, Get Support, Fight, Hack) which have different effects but follow the same procedure. To perform a task, follow these steps in order:

1. Determine the type, attribute, and difficulty of the task. Your base value is equal to your attribute matching the attribute of the task.



PERCEPTION



COURAGE



CHARISMA



TECHNOLOGY

2. Optionally, modify your attribute by:
  - playing an Action card matching the type of the task.
  - spending a charge of an Attribute Marker matching the attribute of the task. This adds +2 and can be done by you or other characters at your setting.
3. Reveal one modifier from the Grid and modify your attribute by the revealed number. For details, see [the Grid](#) in the following section.
4. Check if you succeed or fail. If your modified attribute is equal to or higher than the difficulty, you succeed. Otherwise, you fail, and there is no effect. (There is no penalty for failing a task unless it has a threat value.)
5. If the task has a threat value, check if you must resolve the threat. For details, see [Threat](#) on page 11.
6. If you succeed, resolve the basic effect of the task. This depends on the type of the task and is explained in the following section.
7. If you complete the task, gain 1 Resource. For details, see [Completing a Task](#) on page 13.



## The Grid

When you perform a task, you must reveal a random modifier from the Grid, which modifies your attribute by adding or subtracting a value.

Revealed modifiers stay revealed until you reset the Grid. You must reset the Grid when all modifiers – except those in the Archive – are revealed.

To reset the Grid, place all modifiers – including those in the Archive – facedown and shuffle them. Then, place 3 random modifiers on the Archive card and organize the remaining modifiers as the Grid.

In addition to the Number Modifiers, there are three Symbol Modifiers which have the following effects:

- **Epic Win:** You immediately succeed, stop revealing modifiers, exceed all threat levels, and get 1 additional Impact. For details on Impact, see [Playing an Action Card](#) on page 12.
- **Epic Fail:** You immediately fail, stop revealing modifiers, and activate Enemies after the action. See [Enemy Activation](#) on page 11.
- **Skull:** You modify your attribute by -1, reveal an additional modifier, and activate Enemies after the action. See [Enemy Activation](#) on page 11.



EPIC WIN



EPIC FAIL



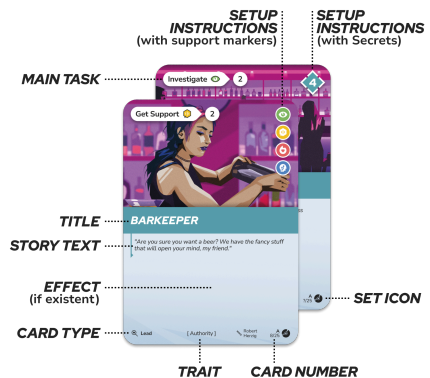
SKULL

## Leads

Leads are double-sided cards that represent the places you visit and the people you talk to.

When a Lead enters play or is flipped, place Secrets or support markers according to its set-up instructions (top right-hand corner) onto it. Attribute Markers come into play with 2 charges.

When the last Secret or support maker is removed, flip the Lead if it is on the front (card number starts with A) or place it on the trash pile if it is on the back (card number starts with B).



## Investigating Leads

You can Investigate Leads with Secrets.

When you successfully Investigate a Lead, you remove 1 Secret from it.

Return the removed Secret to the supply.

## Getting Support from Leads

You can Get Support from Leads with support markers.

When you successfully Get Support from a Lead, you obtain 1 support maker of your choice from it. Place it in your play area. There are different kinds of support makers you can spend for various effects.

## Support Markers

**Attribute Markers** enter play with 2 charges. You can spend 1 charge during a task matching the attribute of the support marker to add +2. This can be done by you or other characters at your setting. For a single task, characters may spend charges from any number of Attribute Markers, but only 1 charge from each individual marker. After you spend the last charge of an Attribute Marker, return it to the supply.



2 CHARGES



1 CHARGE

**Hope** can be spent to prevent Stress. Each Hope spent prevents 1 Stress. For details, see [Stress and Surveillance](#) on page 11.

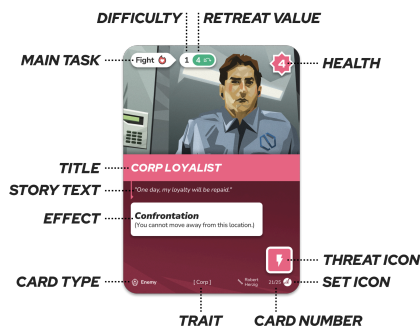
**Resources** can be spent at the beginning of the game or whenever you Focus to purchase Tools. For details, see [Focus](#) on page 13.

## Fighting Enemies

When you successfully Fight an Enemy, you deal 1 Damage to it. If an Enemy has Damage equal to or higher than its health, the Enemy is defeated and placed in the encounter discard pile.

In addition to difficulty, many fight tasks have a retreat value. During the resolution of a task, when your modified value is equal to or higher than the retreat value, the Enemy retreats:

Flip the Enemy face-down. This is not optional. As long as an Enemy is face-down, it can not attack you, its effects are inactive, and you cannot fight it. In the encounter phase, the Enemy will flip back.



## Enemy Activation

When you reveal a Skull from the Grid, you must activate Enemies after the action. For each Skull you revealed, perform the following steps in order:

1. All Enemies at your location attack you. Ignore retreated Enemies. Resolve Enemy attacks in any order. For each Enemy that attacks, you must resolve their threat. Each other character at your location can intercept up to 1 attack from a single activation, meaning that they resolve the threat instead of you.
2. One Enemy at a location without a character moves to your location. Ignore retreated Enemies. Prioritize Enemies at the opposite location of your setting. Use the highest remaining health as tiebreaker if multiple Enemies would be eligible to move.

Enemies are only activated after all other effects of an action have been resolved. This includes defeating or retreating Enemies.

## Stress and Surveillance

For each **Stress** icon, discard 1 card from your hand.

For each **Surveillance** icon, increase the Surveillance on the surveillance dial by 1.



STRESS



SURVEILLANCE

## Hacking States

When you successfully Hack a State, you place 1 Hacking Cube on one of its empty hacking cube slots. If all hacking cube slots are covered, the State is defeated and placed in the encounter discard pile.

Hacking Cubes are also placed automatically on States in the Network during the encounter phase, see [Encounter Phase](#) on page 14.



## Threat

In addition to a difficulty value, some tasks have a threat value. During the resolution of a task, when your modified value is lower than the threat value of the task, you must resolve the threat: According to the threat icons, you must suffer Stress or increase the Surveillance.



THREAT ICONS  
FOR STRESS AND  
SURVEILLANCE

## Hacking as a Secondary Task

In addition to the main task, some Leads and Enemies have a secondary Hack task. Just like when hacking States, you place 1 Hacking Cube on an empty hacking cube slot when you successfully hack a Lead or Enemy. Those hacking cube slots can be part of a threat icon or inside a retreat box.

When a threat icon is covered by a Hacking Cube, that icon is ignored when you resolve the threat.

When a retreat box is fully covered by Hacking Cubes, discard all Hacking Cubes and retreat the Enemy.




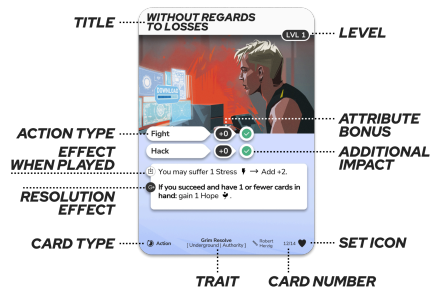
## Playing an Action Card

When you perform a task, you may play 1 Action card from your hand. The action type of the Action card must match the type of the task. If you played an Action card, place it in your discard pile at the end of the task.

An Action card can provide an attribute bonus, additional Impact, and special effects:

The attribute bonus of the Action card is added to your attribute.

For each additional Impact (each ) , you resolve the basic effect of the task an additional time if you succeed, e.g., you remove an additional Secret during an Investigate task.



Special effects can apply directly when the card is played (indicated by the when played icon) or during the resolution of the task after the modifier was revealed (indicated by the resolution icon).



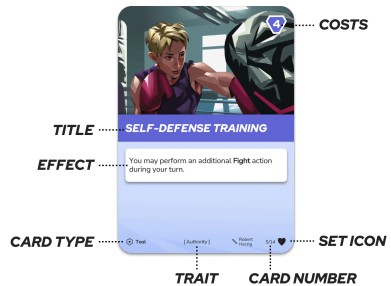
## Completing a Task

You gain 1 Resource as a reward after you complete a task. A task is completed if you remove the last Secret from a card, obtain the last Attribute Marker from a card, deal the last point of damage to defeat a card, or place enough Hacking Cubes to fill the final hacking cube slot on a card.

## Focus

Whenever you have no cards in your hand, you must automatically Focus. When you Focus, perform these steps in order:

1. Recover cards
  - Lower your Endurance by 1.
  - Take a number of Action cards from your discard pile back into your hand equal to your new Endurance.
2. Purchase Tools
  - To purchase a Tool from your Tool Kit, spend Resources equal to the cost of the Tool. Purchased Tools are placed in your play zone.
  - You can purchase any number of Tools as long as you have enough Resources.



If you reach 0 Endurance, you become exhausted. If one character exhausts, the current episode ends. Read the conclusion on the Surveillance Threshold card.

If you have to discard more cards than you have in your hand, you recover fewer cards. For each card you had to discard, but were unable to, you recover one fewer card – but you always recover a minimum of 1 card.

You can also Focus voluntarily during your turn by discarding all cards in your hand. This is not an action and can be done at any time while you are not performing an action.

# Encounter Phase

After all characters have taken their turn, the encounter phase starts. Perform these steps in order:

1. Resolve all effects that happen "At the beginning of the encounter phase" in an order of your choice.
2. Place 1 Hacking Cube on each State in the Network.
3. Increase the Surveillance by 1 per character. Increase it by 1 additional point for each Enemy that is at a location with one or more characters. (Ignore retreated Enemies.)
4. All retreated cards flip face up.
5. Flip all action trackers to their unspent side.
6. Each character draws 1 encounter card.
7. In clockwise order, starting with the responsible character, each character resolves their encounter card.

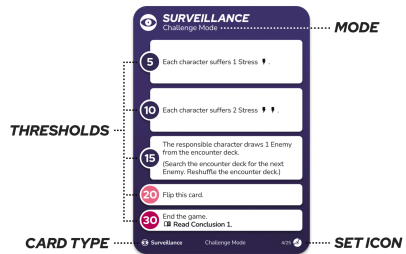
While characters are normally allowed to discuss their cards and strategy freely, in steps 6 and 7 of the encounter phase, they are not allowed to consult with each other and must make all decisions on their own.

# Surveillance Thresholds

Whenever the Surveillance meets or exceeds one of the thresholds on the Surveillance Threshold card, the threshold effect is activated.

At a certain threshold, the Surveillance Threshold card is usually flipped to its escalation side. While flipped to the escalation side, the Epic Fail modifier will gain an additional negative effect when revealed.

If the final threshold is reached, the episode ends. Read the conclusion as instructed.



# Other Rules

## Recycle & Trash Tools

Some Tool effects instruct you to **Recycle** or to **Trash** the Tool. Unless otherwise stated, such effects can only be activated during your turn.



When you **Recycle** a Tool, return it to your Tool Kit. It is not in play anymore, but can be purchased again when you Focus.

When you **Trash** a Tool, place it on the trash pile. It is permanently out of play. Only effects that explicitly name trashed Tools can interact with them.

## Effect Boxes

Some cards have colored boxes that indicate standardized effects. They are highlighted by the words: **Revealed**, **Completed**, and **Follower**.

- **Revealed** effects are resolved when the card enters play or is flipped to the side showing the effect.
- **Completed** effects are resolved when the main task of the card is completed.
- **Follower** effects are also resolved when the main task of the card is completed: Move the card to the play area of any character at your setting, granting them a permanent bonus.

## Attribute Die

Some effects instruct you to roll the attribute die to determine a random attribute. If the die shows 2 attributes, you must choose one of them. To indicate this, flip the die to your chosen side.

## Regular & Elite Cards

Some encounter cards are **Elite**.

This has no gameplay effect, but it can be referenced by other effects. A card that is not Elite is regular.

*Example: An effect that retreats a regular Enemy **cannot** retreat an Elite Enemy.*

## Solo Rules

All effects that instruct you to “choose another character” allow you to choose yourself when playing solo.

*Reminder: You start with 10 Endurance and 10 Action cards as described in the character setup rules.*

# Round Overview

## 1. Character Phase

Each character takes their turn by performing 3 actions.  
(characters take turns in any order, but must finish their turn before passing.)

## 2. Encounter Phase

- a. Resolve all abilities on cards that happen "At the beginning of the encounter phase".
- b. Place 1 Hacking Cube on each State in the Network.
- c. Increase the Surveillance by 1 per character. Increase it by 1 additional point for each Enemy that is at a location with one or more characters.
- d. Each retreated card is flipped face up.
- e. Each character flips their action trackers to their unspent side.
- f. Each character draws 1 encounter card. (Characters resolve their card without consultation.)

# Enemy Activation

After any action or effect that revealed one or more Skulls ends: you activate Enemies once for each Skull revealed. Perform the following steps individually each time:

- Each Enemy at your location attacks you. (Each other character at your location can intercept up to 1 attack to resolve the attack against themselves.)
- 1 Enemy without a character at their location moves to your location. (Prioritize Enemies at the same setting as you before moving Enemies from other settings. Use their remaining health as tiebreaker.)

## Credits

### **Visual Design & Art Direction**

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*Consuelo Pecchenino (Cover)*

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*Tyler Scott Sanchez*

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### **Playtesting**

*Christopher Steinbiß*

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# Keywords

The following keyword effects can be found on encounter or player cards.

- **Confrontation**

You cannot move away from a location with a card with the **Confrontation** keyword.

- **Follow-Up**

After you are done with fully resolving this encounter card, draw 1 additional encounter card from the encounter deck.

- **Unpredictable**

If you reveal a Skull during the task, you treat it as the Epic Fail instead.

- **Countermeasure**

After an effect discards or ignores this card, the active character suffers 3 Stress.

- **Analyze Modifiers**

Look at the specified number of unrevealed modifiers from the Grid. If instructed to archive modifiers, place those on the Archive card. After you have looked at unrevealed modifiers from the Grid, shuffle them back into the other unrevealed modifiers in the Grid.

- **Analyze encounter cards**

Look at the specified number of cards from the top of the encounter deck. If instructed to discard cards, place those in the encounter discard pile. After you have looked at cards from the encounter deck, shuffle the encounter deck.

- **Reckless**

This task reveals 1 additional modifier from the Grid. (Apply all modifiers that are revealed for a task.)

- **Teamwork**

You may spend 1 matching Attribute Marker to get 1 additional Impact instead of +2.

- **Flexible**

You may spend 1 Attribute Marker of any type as if it were matching.