XAVIER GEORGES
CARSON CITY
THE CARD GAME
ARTWORK: ALEXANDRE ROCHE

In Carson City – the Card Game, each player is in charge of developing a city. You will compete for parcels of land and valuable buildings, and you will have to place them wisely in order to make your city as prosperous as possible. You can also win support and gain help from influential people, but watch out, as your opponents will be trying to do the same!

GAME MATERIALS

66 auction cards (11 cards per player, in 6 different suits: hat, star, cactus, boot, horseshoe, and cow. Auction cards represent the risks you take – in terms of silver, influence, time, people, equipment, etc. – in order to acquire terrain and character cards).

96 terrain cards, representing the territory of Carson City (48 cards each for Era I & Era II, differentiated by Roman numerals on the backs of the cards. Each terrain card represents 4 parcels of land).

21 character cards

8 player aids (2 each in English, French, Dutch, and German).
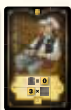
Game rules and scorepad

GOAL OF THE GAME

Your goal is to develop the wealthiest city in the region. Your city's wealth is represented by victory points (VP), which are earned through the placement of certain buildings and the elements surrounding them, as well as the presence of certain characters.

GAME SETUP

Choose a dealer; this person will reveal the character and terrain cards.

❶ **Shuffle the Era I terrain cards to form a face-down draw pile.** Shuffle the Era II terrain cards into a separate draw pile and set them aside; you will not need them at the beginning of the game.

❷ **Shuffle the 21 character cards into a face-down draw pile and place them next to the terrain card draw pile.** The player to the dealer's right then cuts the character card deck in order to reveal new tiebreaker symbols.

❸ **Each player receives 9 auction cards (numbered 1-9) in his or her chosen suit** (hat, star, cactus, boot, horseshoe, or cow). The game must always be played with a minimum of 4 players. If you have fewer than 4 "real" players, you must round out your player count with "virtual" players. Provide each virtual player with 9 auction cards (numbered 1-9) placed in a shuffled, face-down draw pile; virtual players' positions at the table do not matter. For a greater challenge, you may choose to add additional virtual players to your game, up to a maximum total player count of 6. **The game is ready to begin.**

Strength of virtual players: When playing with virtual players for the first time, we recommend playing against novice-level virtual players. Novice-level virtual players use auction cards matching those used by real players (numbered 1 to 9). In later games, you may wish

Advice for setting up the game: Competition is always stiff in the Far West; make sure to include virtual players that correspond to your skill level. Otherwise, the game may seem too easy!

to adjust the strength of your virtual players. For an intermediate-level virtual player, replace its 1 auction card with its 10 card. For an expert-level virtual player, replace its 1 and 2 auction cards with its 10 and 11 cards).

⟲ PLAYING THE GAME ⟳

The game is played over two Eras, each of which takes place over 9 rounds. On a player's turn, he or she will choose and play 1 of his 9 auction cards in an attempt to acquire a terrain or character card. Each round consists of 3 stages, described below:

❶ **The dealer draws 1 character and 4 terrain cards and places them below the draw piles, in a face-up column. At this point, certain character cards may be used; the order in which they may be played, and their actions resolved, can be found on your player aid cards.**

Skull: If the top card of the character card draw pile shows a skull, place the just-drawn character on the bottom of the draw pile and reveal the character card with the skull on its back. One skull may follow another; if this happens, repeat these steps until the top card of the draw pile does not show a skull.

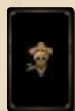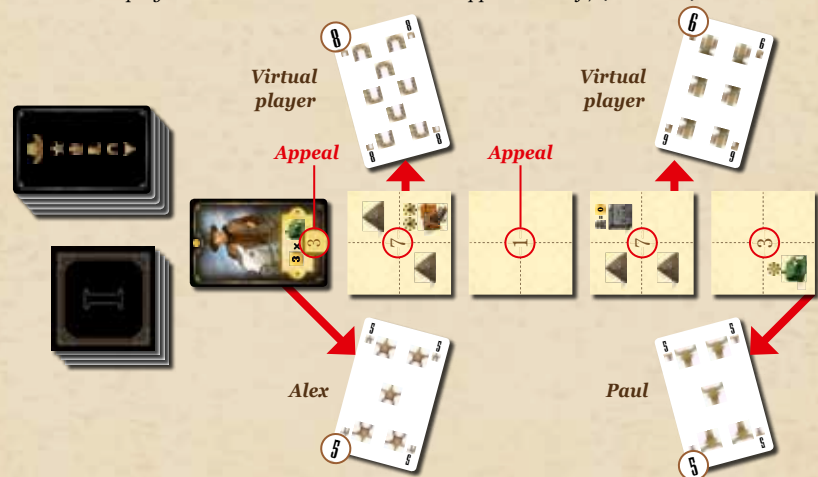**EXCEPTION:** In games with 5 or 6 players, the dealer reveals 5 terrain cards instead of 4.

❷ **Each player secretly chooses an auction card from his or her hand and places it face-down on the table.** When the players are ready, all auction cards are revealed simultaneously, along with the topmost auction card of each virtual player's draw pile.

❸ **Starting with the player who played the highest-numbered card and proceeding in descending order, each player chooses either a terrain card to add to his or her city, or the character card that was revealed this round.** The chosen card remains with the player for the rest of the game. Each player then discards the auction card he or she played; this card is unavailable for the rest of this Era. All discarded auction cards remain face-up in front of the player who discarded them. Once all players have chosen their card for the round, the last remaining card (terrain or character) is removed from the game. **EXCEPTION:** In a game with 6 players, no cards are removed from the game.

Tiebreaker: If several auction cards share the same value, the player whose symbol appears first on the back of the next character card breaks the tie. The topmost symbol on the back of the card will be slightly larger than the other symbols shown on the card, and is considered to be the strongest. From top to bottom, these symbols decrease in strength such that the symbol on the bottom of the column is the weakest.

Virtual players: On a virtual player's turn, the virtual player takes the card with the highest appeal value. Appeal values are found in the center of terrain cards and at the bottom of character cards. If two or more cards are tied for the highest appeal value, the virtual player will take the tied card that is closest to the draw piles (i.e., farthest from the bottom of the column). Virtual players keep their terrain and character cards, but they do not build cities.

To use character cards: A player who wants to use a character card must announce his or her intention to do so. A character card's ability may be played before or after stage 2, depending on which character is being used. If at least one player announces that he or she wishes to do so, follow the order shown on the player aid card, starting with the Governor. Notes: Players are never obligated to use the abilities of their character cards. Character cards can only be used once per Era, and the Governor's ability only once per game.

End-of-round example in a 4-player game (with 2 virtual players):
The first virtual player (value of 8) takes the card with the highest appeal (7). As there are two cards with an appeal value of 7, the virtual player takes the card closest to the draw pile (the Mine). The second virtual player then takes the other card with an appeal value of 7 (the Prison).

Virtual player

Virtual player

Appeal

Appeal

Alex

Paul

Alex and Paul are tied (value of 5); the back of the character card draw pile determines who wins the tie. The star has priority over the cow in this round. This means that Alex chooses first; he takes the character card. To conclude, Paul chooses the remaining Ranch.

Game tip: A city owes its prosperity to its inhabitants. In Carson City, inhabitants are represented by Houses. Don't neglect Houses when taking cards, as most buildings need adjacent Houses in order to score victory points.

❹ Era I ends after 9 rounds. The game then proceeds to the second Era:
- Any Era I cards remaining in the terrain card draw pile are removed from the game. The draw pile for Era II now becomes available.
- Each player returns his or her 9 auction cards to his or her hand. Shuffle each virtual player's cards and replace them as a face-down stack at that player's position at the table.
- Any acquired character cards that have been turned sideways are once again turned upright (see below, under 'Character Cards'). Please note that the Governor, once turned sideways, is not turned upright again.

∽ BUILDING RULES ∾

The terrain cards you play represent your city. When adding a terrain card to your city, you must observe the following rules:
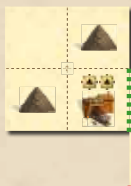
❶ The maximum size of your city is a square of 8 x 8 parcels. (Note that a terrain card is divided into 2 x 2 parcels. This means that your city cannot be larger than 4 x 4 terrain cards placed adjacent to each other.)

❷ Each new card must be joined to your city by at least one side of a parcel (it cannot be joined just at a corner). Remember, each terrain card is subdivided into 4 parcels.

❸ You may not rotate terrain cards; they must all have the same orientation. Terrain cards must always be placed adjacent to, or on top, of one or several of your cards already present on the table (see point 4, below). You may not slide a card under one or more other cards.

❹ **You may place new cards in such a manner that they fully or partially cover one or more cards already present on the table, provided that the new card only covers empty parcels. There are three exceptions to this rule:**
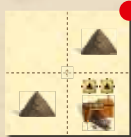
a. A building can be covered by an identical building, and a Mountain may be covered by another Mountain;
b. A House can be covered by another House, OR by a Townhouse;
c. If a player has the Sheriff (character card) or has built a Prison in his city, parcels showing outlaws count as empty parcels. Outlaws may not be covered by other outlaws.

Example of terrain card placement: Alex has to add a terrain card to his city, which already consists of a Mine, a Prison and 4 Mountains.

This placement is not legal. Although it is possible to build a Mine on an empty parcel, a player may not cover an existing building (in this case, the Prison).

This placement is legal. Alex maximizes the number of points he earns from his new Mine, which scores points for adjacent Mountains.

This placement is not legal, as the new terrain card is not joined to the city by at least one side of a parcel.
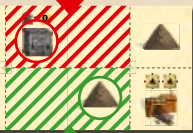
This placement is legal; you may cover one element (Mountain, or building) with another identical element (in this case, a Mountain).
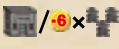
🖙 END OF THE GAME 🖙
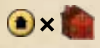
Victory points are scored at the end of Era II. Using the scorepad, calculate each player's score - don't forget to score the virtual players, too. To determine your final score, add any victory points earned for your buildings to those earned for your character cards. The player (real or virtual) with the highest score wins! In the event of a tie, the winner is determined in a rematch.

This is what Alex's city looks like at the end of the game:
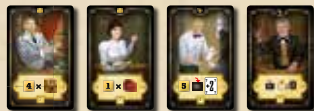
Symbol	Victory Points	Scoring example
	Ranches earn 1 victory point (VP) for each adjacent empty parcel (max. 8 VP per Ranch).	*Alex scores 6 VP for his Ranch, as it is adjacent to 6 empty parcels.*
	Mines earn 2 VP for each adjacent Mountain (max. 16 VP per Mine).	*Alex has 2 Mines that are each worth 10 VP, and 2 Mines that are each worth 4 VP. His Mines score a total of 28 VP.*
	Drugstores earn 1 VP for each adjacent House (max. 16 VP if surrounded by 8 Townhouses and/or Hotels).	*As the Drugstore is adjacent to 2 Houses, it is worth 2 VP.*
	Banks earn 1 VP for each adjacent House (max. 16 VP if surrounded by 8 Townhouses and/or Hotels).	*Based on the number of adjacent Houses and Hotels, Alex scores 15 VP for his 2 Banks.*
	Saloons earn 2 VP for each adjacent House (max. 32 VP if surrounded by 8 Townhouses and/or Hotels).	*Based on the number of adjacent Houses and Hotels, Alex scores 16 VP for his Saloon.*
	General Stores and City Hall earn 1 VP for each adjacent House (max. of 16 points if surrounded by 8 Townhouses and/or Hotels).	*Alex scores 0 VP, since he doesn't have a General Store or City Hall.*
$\bigcirc \times$	Each symbol of this type (Drugstore, Blacksmith) earns VP equal to the number of Ranches in your city.	*Alex has 1 Drugstore and 1 Ranch, so he scores 1 VP.*
$\oslash \times$	Each symbol of this type (Bank, Blacksmith) earns VP equal to the number of Mines in your city.	*Alex has 4 Mines and 2 Banks, so he scores 8 VP.*
$\bigcirc \times$	Each symbol of this type (Church, General Store) earns VP equal to the number of Houses in your city. Hotels and Townhouses count for 2 VP each.	*Alex has 14 Houses in his city, but without a single Church or General Store, he scores 0 VP.*
$3 \times$	Each Hotel is worth 3 VP.	*With 2 hotels, Alex scores 6 VP.*
$? \times$	City Hall is worth 1 VP for each building in the city that is not a House or Townhouse.	*Despite having the Lawyer, Alex failed to acquire the only City Hall in the game.*
/-6 ×	Each group of outlaws in your city costs you 6 VP at the end of the game. However, if you have the Sheriff or at least 1 Prison in your city, you ignore this penalty.	*As Alex has a Prison, he does not lose any VP for the 2 groups of outlaws in his city.*
	Certain characters are worth VP at the end of the game. See below for descriptions of these characters.	*The Doctor is worth 5 VP, the School-teacher is worth 14 VP, and the Banker is worth 8 VP. For these characters, Alex scores a total of 27 VP.*

Note: *Adjacency includes orthogonal **and** diagonal parcels. Townhouses and Hotels each count as 2 Houses.*

Final score: 109 VP.

❷ **Scoring for virtual players:** A virtual player scores points equal to the total appeal value of the different terrain and character cards it has collected during the game.

Appeal

CHARACTER CARDS

Character cards can have two types of effects:

💲 Some cards provide additional VP at the end of the game. These cards can be identified by the "$" symbol.

↪ Other cards change the way the game is played. These cards are turned sideways after use, but are turned upright again at the start of Era II. They can be identified by a curved arrow.
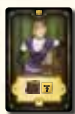
Note: Cards with curved arrows are played in a certain order, as noted on the player aid cards and described above, in "Playing the Game."
Note: Several character cards allow players to change the values of their auction cards.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS:
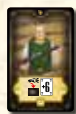
The Gunsmith: *You may decide to use the Gunsmith before players select their auction cards. You must announce out loud that you intend to use this effect. The Gunsmith increases the value of your selected auction card by 6.*
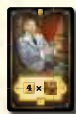
The Lawyer: *You may declare that you are using the Lawyer **after** terrain cards have been revealed but **before** players select their auction cards. Immediately take 1 of the available cards (terrain or character). When you have to select an auction card for this round, you do not play that auction card; discard it open instead.*

The Banker: *At the end of the game, the Banker is worth 4 VP for each Bank in your city.*

The Captain: *At the end of the game, the Captain is worth 6 VP. In addition, he increases the maximum size of your city to a grid of 8 x 9 parcels (9 rows OR 9 columns) instead of 8 x 8. You need to take this new maximum size (8 x 9 = 72 parcels) into account when calculating the number of VP earned by the Indian.*

The Singer: *At the end of the game, the Singer is worth the same amount of VP as your highest-scoring Saloon.*

The Settler: *At the end of the game, the Settler is worth 1 VP for each empty parcel that is adjacent to 1 or more Ranches. Each empty parcel is only counted once when scoring the Settler.*
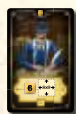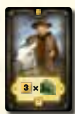
The Auctioneer: *You can use the Auctioneer to sell up to 3 terrain cards from your city. These terrain cards can be sold at different points in time, or all at once. Remove any sold terrain cards from your city and place them under the Auctioneer.*
Note: *A terrain card that covers (or is covered by) any part of another terrain card cannot be sold. When removing a terrain card from your city, you may not divide your city into two or more separate, unconnected parts. Each card sold is worth 7 VP at the end of the game (to a maximum of 21 VP).*
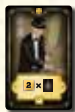
The Cowboy: *At the end of the game, the Cowboy is worth 3 VP for each Ranch in your city.*

The Grocer: *At the end of the game, the Grocer is worth 4 VP for each Drugstore in your city.*

The Undertaker: *At the end of the game, the Undertaker is worth 2 VP for each character card you have acquired, including itself.*

The Doctor: *At the end of the game, the Doctor is worth 5 VP. You may choose to use him after all players have revealed their auction cards, but before they take cards. The Doctor increases the value of your selected auction card by 2.*
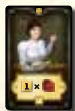
The Editor: *At the end of the game, the Editor is worth 1 VP for each character card you have acquired with the ☀ symbol (including itself), and 4 VP for each character card you have acquired that has a ➤ symbol.*

The Heroes: *At the end of the game, the Heroes are worth 6 VP. You may use the Heroes before players select their auction cards. The Heroes increase the value of your selected auction card by 3. You must announce out loud that you intend to use this effect.*

The Governor: *The Governor can only be used once in the game. If you use this character in Era I of the game, do not turn this card upright again at the start of Era II. The Governor combines the effects of the Lawyer and the Chinese Worker; reveal an additional terrain card and immediately take an available card (terrain or character), which may be the one you just revealed. The Governor's effect does not replace your normal auction card selection for this round.*

The Teacher: *At the end of the game, the Teacher is worth 1 VP for each House in your city and 2 VP for each Townhouse and/or Hotel in your city.*

The Indian: *At the end of the game, the Indian is worth ½ VP for each available parcel of land not covered by a terrain card. Round fractional points upwards.*
Example: *A standard city contains 64 parcels of land (8 x 8). If your terrain cards covered 40 of those parcels, you would have 24 remaining parcels that are "available" to cover (64 − 40 = 24). With the Indian, this would be worth 12 VP (24 x ½ = 12).*
Note: *If you have the Captain, your city will contain 72 parcels of land (8 x 9).*

The Chinese Worker: *You may use the effect of the Chinese Worker before players select their auction cards; you must announce out loud that you intend to use this effect. The dealer subsequently reveals an additional terrain card, which will be available for all players to select based on the normal order of priority. When it is your turn in the order, take 2 cards instead of 1 (2 terrain cards, OR 1 terrain card and the character card, if still available).*
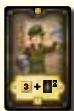
The Paperboy: *At the end of the game, the Paperboy is worth 3 VP. Furthermore, you may choose a character card to play face-up in front of you. This can be a discarded/unselected character card, or a card from the draw pile.*

The Prospector: *At the end of the game, the Prospector is worth 1 VP for each Mountain and each Mine present in your city.*

The Sheriff: *At the end of the game, the Sheriff is worth 3 VP for each Prison in your city. Furthermore, the Sheriff allows you to ignore the penalty for having outlaws in your city.*

The Mercenary: *You may use the Mercenary **after** all players have revealed their auction cards but **before** they select terrain or character cards. If you use the Mercenary, you may add 5 to the value of the auction card you played during this round.*

✦ VICTORY POINTS FOR BUILDINGS ✦

The table below indicates the number of victory points (VP) you will earn for each building in your city at the end of the game, as well as the number of buildings, Mountains, and Houses that can appear in each Era.

These symbols indicate that the building is worth 1 VP for each House, Mine or Ranch in the city. "In the city" means that they can be located anywhere in the city; they do not necessarily have to be adjacent.

These symbols indicate that the building is worth 1 VP for each adjacent House, Mountain, or empty parcel. In this game, "adjacency" is counted orthogonally **and** diagonally.

Era	I	II	Victory points	Era	I	II	Victory points
	32	12	-		1	4	A Hotel is worth **3 VP** and counts as a Townhouse (2 Houses) when scoring certain other buildings.
	18	18	-		1	1	A General Store is worth **1 VP** for each adjacent House, plus **1 VP** for each House anywhere in the city.
	2	10	A Townhouse counts as 2 Houses when scoring certain other buildings.		1	2	A Church is worth **1 VP** for each House anywhere in the city.
	10	4	A Mine is worth **2 VP** for each adjacent Mountain.		1	3	If you have at least 1 Prison, you will not suffer a scoring penalty for having outlaws in your city. All of your parcels that show outlaws are considered to be empty parcels.
	10	4	A Ranch is worth **1 VP** for each empty, adjacent parcel.				
	2	1	A Blacksmith is worth **1 VP** for each Mine and/or Ranch in the city.				
	3	8	A Drugstore is worth **1 VP** for each adjacent House, plus **1 VP** for each Ranch anywhere in the city.		-	1	The City Hall is worth **1 VP** for each adjacent House, plus **1 VP** for each building anywhere in the city that is not a House or Townhouse.
	3	8	A Bank is worth **1 VP** for each adjacent House, plus **1 VP** for each Mine anywhere in the city.		3	5	Each group of outlaws in your city carries a game-end penalty of **6 VP**. You may not cover a parcel that shows outlaws unless you have the Sheriff or a Prison.
	1	5	A Saloon is worth **2 VP** for each adjacent House.				