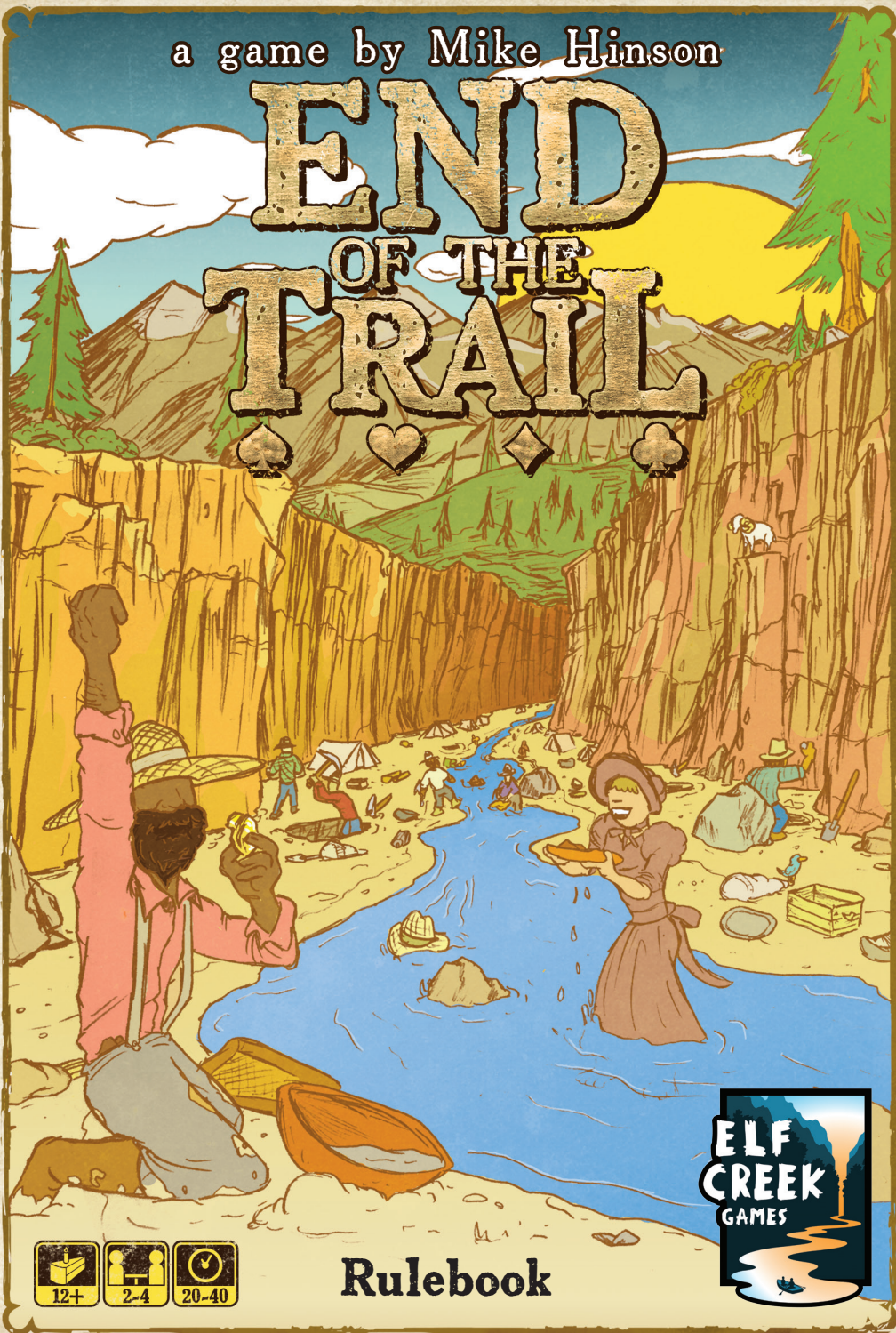


a game by Mike Hinson

END OF THE TRAIL

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣



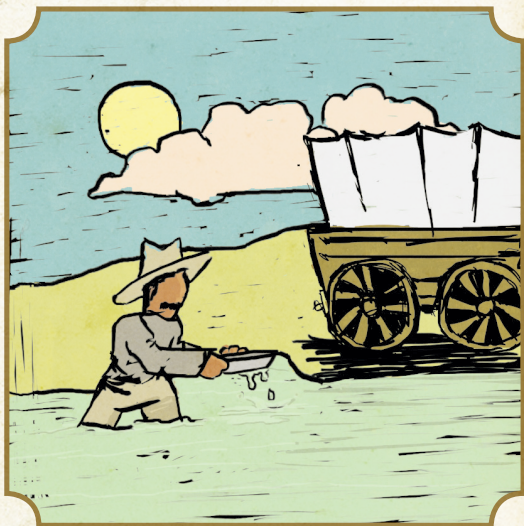
Rulebook



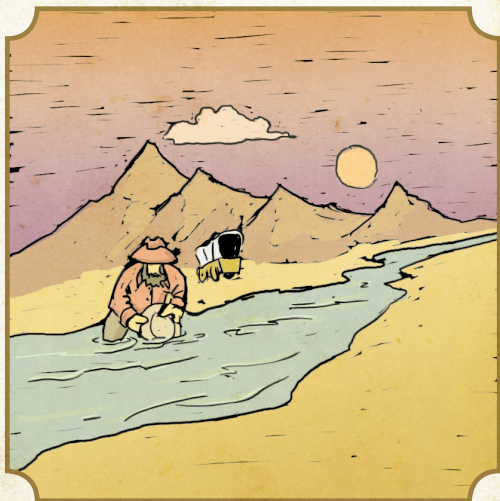


INTRODUCTION

California, 1849. Gold. Hundreds of thousands from all over the world make the long journey to America's west coast in the hope of fortune and a better life. You and your wagon train just trekked across the vast unknown of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains and have arrived in California in search of land and the promise of gold. At the end of that trail, how will you fare?



End of the Trail is a push-your-luck card game for 2-4 prospectors of the California Gold Rush. Your goal is to lay claim to territories worth the most gold, by strategically managing your hand of cards so that you can effectively prospect the lay of the land. Be warned: If you get too greedy and uncover land worth less than what you have seen before, you will be forced to claim it. So plan ahead! The cards that you use to prospect will ultimately be used again at the poker table, good for extra gold and one final shot at claiming territory at the end of the game. When the dust has all settled, the player with the most gold is the winner of the game.



COMPONENTS - REGULAR EDITION



28 Land Tiles

10 Canyons and Foothills,
8 Mountains



52 Prospecting Cards

2-10, J, Q, K, A in 4 suits



4 Turn Order Tiles



4 Prospector Meeples

1 in each player color



4 Movement Track Tiles



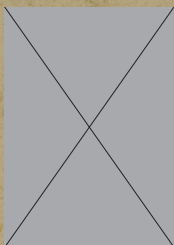
4 Prospector Camps

1 in each player color



4 Player

Reference Cards



1 Rulebook



12 Prospector Tents

3 in each player color



1 Dealer Marker

COMPONENTS - DELUXE EDITION



3 covered
wagon
meeples



16 gold nuggets



1 deluxe dealer



2 ox
animeeples



1 horse
animeeples



1 mule
animeeples

SETUP

① Sort the land tiles according to their type, into piles of Mountains, Canyons, and Foothills:



② Randomly select a number of tiles from each pile, based upon the number of players:

- **2 players:** 2 mountain, 3 canyon, and 3 foothill tiles
- **3 players:** 3 mountain, 5 canyon, and 4 foothill tiles
- **4 players:** 4 mountain, 6 canyon, and 6 foothill tiles

Return the rest of the tiles back to the box. They will not be used this game.

③ Shuffle the selected tiles together and then, without looking at their facedown values, arrange them randomly, in a grid, representing the section of California land parcels that players will be prospecting. The grid always contains 4 rows, but the number of columns is based upon the number of players:

- **2 players:** 2 x 4 grid
- **3 players:** 3 x 4 grid
- **4 players:** 4 x 4 grid

④ Place the turn order track tiles at the bottom of the grid:

⑤ Give every player 1 prospector meeple, 3 prospector tents, and 1 prospector camp in their player color.

⑥ Place the four movement tiles to the left side of the grid. The tiles with ox-drawn wagons are placed nearest the bottom of the grid, followed by the mule-drawn wagon tile and the horse tile. When placed correctly, the tiles form a connected landscape.

⑦ Shuffle the deck and determine a dealer by having each player cut the deck. The player who reveals the highest card rank (2-10, J, Q, K, Ace) is the dealer. Players who tie should follow this procedure again until there is a clear winner.

8 The dealer gives 6 cards to each player as their starting hand. The remaining cards are placed to the side as the draw deck.

⑨ After looking at their hand, each player selects 1 card to be their hole card, placing it facedown in front of themselves on the table. This card is the first card of the set of poker cards that they will develop over the course of the game.

EXAMPLE SETUP FOR 4 PLAYERS





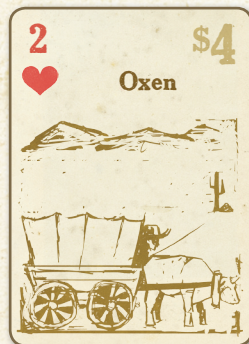
CARD ANATOMY

- (A) Card back.
- (B) Card rank and suit used to create poker hands.
- (C) Card name.
- (D) Buying power of a card, used in the Supply auction to purchase cards in a winning bid.
- (E) Prospecting action, used in prospecting phase to look at tiles.

HOW TO FIND YOUR GOLD

To find your fortune at the End of the Trail, you'll need to carefully manage both a hand of cards and your navigation of the California gold field tiles.

The central phase of the game is the Prospecting Phase. Players will select 2 or 3 cards from their hand to prospect (search), the gold field tiles. They place these cards faceup in front of themselves for all players to see. The most common prospecting cards are: **Oxen** (18 of 52 cards), **Mules** and **Horse** (9 cards a piece).



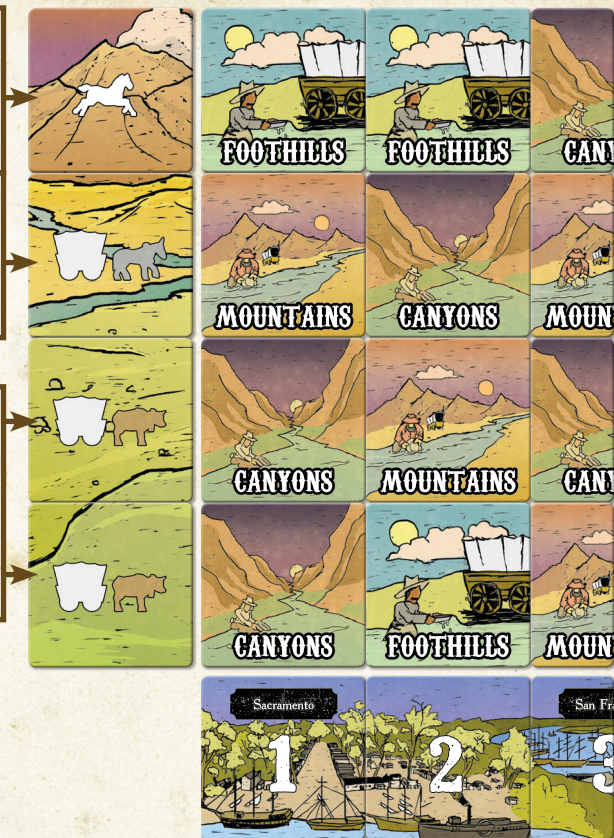
Each card represents how quickly a prospector reaches the California gold fields from the nearby cities. Slow moving Oxen reach any

tile in the first two rows, whereas faster Mules are able to reach the third row as well. And a prospector racing out to the gold fields on a Horse can reach any tile on the board.

This top row of tiles can be reached with a **Horse** card, but not a **Mule** or **Oxen** card.

Horse or **Mule** cards can reach this row of tiles, marked by the mule-drawn wagon.

Oxen cards reach any tile in these first two rows marked by the ox-drawn wagons. **Horse** and **Mule** cards also reach the tiles in these two rows.



Players turn one of their faceup cards sideways to indicate that they would like to use it. They select a tile from the available corresponding row and look at its hidden value. They commit the tile's value to memory, taking care not to reveal it to anyone else. The player must then decide if they wish to stake their claim on the tile or press their luck, hoping to find richer land elsewhere.

The facedown side of a gold field tile. Values range between 1 and 6. For a distribution of how many of each value a particular landscape type has, see your player reference cards.

If a player wishes to stake their claim, then they place their prospector's tent on top of their current tile, claiming it for themselves and preventing other players from looking at that tile's value. That player's turn is then over for the remainder of this round's Prospector Phase.

If a player decides to **press their luck**, then they place their prospector meeple on the tile that they just looked at, and play passes to the next player in turn order. This marks a player's spot, but it does not claim the tile for the player. While the player waits for their next turn, another player may investigate the tile and stake a claim.



If a player decides to push their luck, then on their future turns, they may continue to play a card to look at the value of another unclaimed tile in play or to use a special action. However, if they ever look at a tile with a **lower value** than the last tile that they saw this Prospecting Phase, then they have **busted** and they **MUST** stake their claim on that tile immediately, although they do not need to announce their reason for doing so. **If the value is the same or higher**, then they face the same choice: stake their claim or press their luck for a third time.

After every player has placed one tent, each player chooses 1 or 2 cards they used in the Prospecting Phase, selecting them for their rank and/or suit, hoping to create a certain poker set. Over the course of the game, players will slowly construct a set of poker cards for the chance to win a little more gold and a 4th and final claim among the gold field tiles.

For an overview of poker sets, see the back side of your player reference card. A more detailed explanation of which poker set beats another is found in the section of final scoring. That section also includes how much gold your final poker set will be worth, regardless of whether yours is the best.

You're now ready to setup the game, dig deeper into the rules, and find your first gold nuggets!

ROUND OVERVIEW

End of the Trail is played over three rounds. Each round is divided into three phases, played in order:

- **Supply Phase**
- **Prospecting Phase**
- **Gambling Phase**

After three rounds, players advance to the end of the game & final scoring, where they will play their poker cards and stake one final claim, then finally compare their combined territories's value to determine a winner.

PHASE ONE: SUPPLY

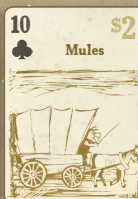
The Supply Phase is a player's opportunity to make sure that they have what they need to get their job done: a hand of cards that can help them prospect for gold and construct their set of poker cards.

The dealer begins the Supply Phase by dealing out cards as a series of faceup auctions, each consisting of three cards. The number of auctions is equal to one less than the number of players (1 auction in a 2-player game, 2 auctions in a 3-player game, 3 auctions in a 4-player game).

EXAMPLE AUCTIONS FOR 3 PLAYERS



Auction 1



Auction 2

The dealer chooses one of the auctions and bidding begins, with the player to the dealer's left making the opening bid. The minimum starting bid that a player can make is \$0. Instead of bidding, a player may choose to pass on that particular auction and not bid (but may still bid in a different auction later in the round).

Once the starting bid is made, the next player in clockwise order must then choose to raise the bid or pass. Bidding continues in this manner, moving in a clockwise direction around the table. When all but one player has passed, that player is declared the winner of the auction. **If every player except the dealer passes, then the dealer MUST make a bid to win the auction,** for \$0 or more.

***Strategy Tip:** Be sure to bid for cards that will not only benefit you during the Prospecting Phase, but will also help you create a winning set of poker cards at the end of the game.*

***Remember:** each round, up to 2 of the cards you use in the Prospecting Phase are able to be added to your poker hand during the Gambling Phase.*

The winner must pay for their bid by showing and discarding cards from their hand until the monetary value of the cards discarded meets or exceeds the value of their bid. Discarded cards are placed faceup, next to the draw pile, in a separate discard pile. **Any player may look through the discard pile at any time.** If a player must overpay for their bid, then they do NOT receive any change back. Once a player has paid, all 3 cards are placed in their hand.

A player may only win one auction per round. Once a player has won an auction, they are out of the bidding for the rest of the round. If the dealer wins the first auction, then the player to his left decides the next auction, selecting from the remaining cards on offer. If the dealer did not win the first auction, then they begin a new auction by selecting one of the remaining auctions. If the dealer wins a bid, then the dealer marker moves to the next player on the dealer's left who has not won an auction.

If you win an auction and cannot pay, the last legal bid wins. The player who could not pay forfeits any remaining auctions that round. If they are the dealer, they must pass the dealer marker to the next player on their left who is still bidding in the auctions, or to the player who won the last auction.

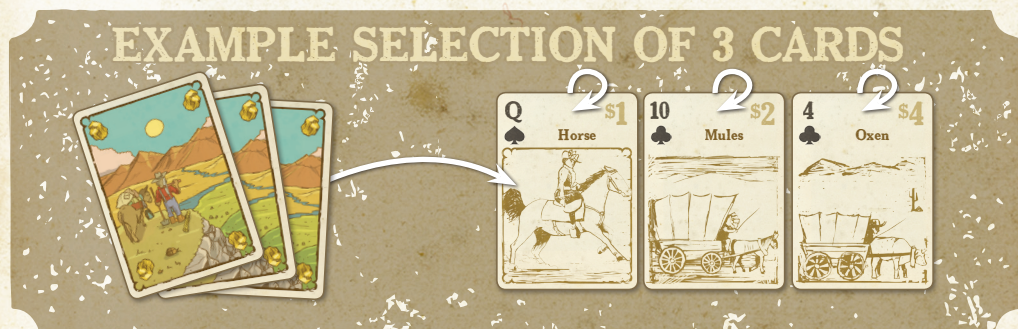
The Supply Phase continues in this manner until all auctions have been won. Because there is always one fewer auctions than the number of players, there will always be a player who does not win an auction. Once the Supply Phase is over, that player becomes the new dealer.

PHASE TWO: PROSPECTING

The Prospecting Phase is a player's opportunity to explore the land for gold, in search of the best place to stake their claim.

SELECTING CARDS

To begin the Prospecting Phase, all players simultaneously select 2 or 3 cards from their hand and place them facedown in front of themselves on the table (separate from their hole and other poker cards). When all players are ready, they reveal these cards at the same time, spreading them out, faceup on the table, for all to see. These are the cards that a player will use both to determine where they are in turn order for the round and also to navigate the gold field tiles in their search for gold.



Strategy Tip: *You want to select cards that will help you in both the Prospecting Phase and the coming Gambling Phase. But you might also want to hold back from using certain cards right now, either to use to pay for future auctions, or to play in a future Prospecting or Gambling phase.*

DETERMINING PLAYER ORDER

Players add up the total monetary value on their revealed cards. The player with the highest total value becomes the starting player for this Prospecting Phase. That player then places their prospector meeple along with one tent on the 1st position of the turn order track.

The player with the second highest monetary value places their prospector and tent on the 2nd position, and so forth, until all players have placed their prospector and tent on the turn order tiles. In the case of a tie, the player with the higher ranked card will place their prospector and tent ahead of the other tied player(s) in turn order. If this is a tie, use the 2nd highest ranked card, etc.

EXAMPLE FOR A 3-PLAYER GAME



Examining all revealed cards, we see that the blue player has spent \$6, which is more than \$4 spent by both the red and purple players. Therefore, the blue player goes first, placing their pieces on the 1st player tile. To break the tie for second, the red and yellow players compare their highest cards. Because these are both 8, the second highest card is compared, so that the yellow player places their pieces on the 2nd player tile and the red player places their pieces on the 3rd player tile.

PROSPECTING

Beginning with the first player and proceeding in the established turn order, players take turns prospecting the California gold field tiles by using any one of the cards they selected at the beginning of this phase, turning that card sideways to mark it used. After using a card, play passes to the next player on the turn order track.

Important: *Players may choose not to play all of their selected cards, but only cards played in this Prospecting Phase can be used in the Gambling Phase.*

Players now play cards and look at tiles, making the decisions outlined in the introductory section, How to find your gold. After making their decision whether to stake their claim or press their luck, play advances to the next player in turn order. Note that when a player stakes a claim, their turn is over for the remainder of the Prospecting Phase. They should then remove any remaining pieces from their place on the turn order tiles. The Prospecting Phase continues until all players have claimed 1 tile by placing one of their tents (or until players have played all of their cards). The game then proceeds to the Gambling Phase.

STAKING YOUR CLAIM

Once a player moves away from a tile, so that it no longer contains their prospector, they must play a new card to move back there and claim the old tile, if it has still not been claimed.

You may always claim a tile that contains your prospector as long as it has not been claimed by another player. You may do this at the beginning of a second or third turn, after pressing your luck on your previous turn. Or you may do this if you ever use all of your cards without staking a claim. But be careful: If the tile containing your prospector has already been claimed by another player and you are out of cards, you have lost your chance to stake a claim this round.

CAMPS



When staking a claim, you may place your prospector's camp instead of a tent. Camps are like tents, but they are harder to move. They represent not just your single prospector's tent, but a group of prospecting friends who will help you watch your claim. Staking a claim with a Camp prevents other players from targeting that tile with a **Claim Jump** or **New Prospects** card. Camps can also be used to stake a claim with the **Claim Jump** card.

SPECIAL CARD ACTIONS

Claim Jump



OCCURRENCE (4): 2♠, 6♣, King of ♦, & Ace of ♥
Place one of your tents on a tile previously claimed by an opponent's tent. You may then look at the value of this tile. Both you and your opponent will score points for this tile during end of the game scoring. However, if you place your camp with this action, then any other tents on this tile are pushed to the nearest, unclaimed, orthogonally adjacent tile of their owner's choice. If multiple players are moved, new tile are chosen in player order.



Double or Nothin'

OCCURRENCE (4): 4♦, 8♥, Jack of ♠, & Ace of ♣
Look at two orthogonally adjacent, unclaimed tiles. You must immediately claim one of these. Be careful! If there are no adjacent unclaimed tiles on the board, then this action cannot be used.



Shortcut

OCCURRENCE (4): 5♣, 9♠, 10♥, & Ace of ♦

Look at any unclaimed tile on the board. If you are pushing your luck, then the tile you look at using **Shortcut** will not cause you to bust, even if the value of the new tile is lower than the value of your previous tile. If you decide to not claim this new tile, then you must place your prospector there.



New Prospects

OCCURRENCE (4): 3♥, 7♦, Queen of ♣, & Ace of ♠

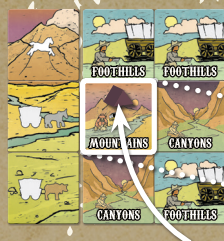
Moves any player's tent (including your own) to a new tile. The owner of the tent (not necessarily the player who plays New Prospects) picks from among the nearest, unclaimed, orthogonally adjacent tiles and moves their tent there.

Note: if all tiles touching the original tile are claimed, then the nearest tile is 2 tiles away. After placing their tent, they may then look at the value of this new tile.

EXAMPLE PROSPECTING FOR A 3-PLAYER GAME

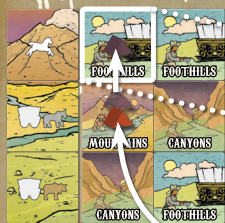


1. The blue player uses their **Horse** card in order to look at the Mountain tile in the first row. They discover a value of 6—the maximum amount of gold! They would like to stake their claim and place a tent, but then they would only be able to add this Jack of hearts to their poker cards. They also want to be able to add the 10 of hearts to their poker cards, which means that they must play it also! So they announce that they will press their luck, placing their prospector on the tile instead.

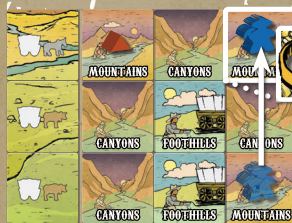


2. The purple player uses their **Mules** card in order to look at the Mountain tile in the 1st column of the Mule row. They discover a gold value of 4. They are happy with 4 gold and do not want to risk looking at another tile on their next turn. So they decide to stake a claim and place a tent, even though this will mean that only their 8 of clubs can be included in their poker hand in the Gambling Phase.

EXAMPLE PROSPECTING, CONTINUED



3. The red player wants to play both their 7 and 8 of diamonds so that both go into their poker cards. They decide to play their **New Prospects** card first, forcing the yellow player's tent to move to a new tile. The yellow player selects the Foothills tile above the original Mountain tile. They move their tent and then get to look at their new tile, discovering a hidden value of 2 gold. The yellow player may later want to play a **New Prospects** card on their tent to move it to a more lucrative tile.



4. The blue player uses their 10 of hearts (so that it goes into their poker cards) now, in order to return, next turn, to the 6-value Mountain. **Shortcut** ensures that they will not bust. They look at the only uninvestigated Mountain tile, discovering a hidden value of 3 gold. They place their meeple, biding their time for their final turn this round.



5. The purple player's turn is over this round (note that no purple pieces remain on the turn order track), so play advances to the red player. They suspect that the blue player is hiding something, so they decide to use their **Mules** to check the first Mountain that the blue player explored. Eureka! They were correct and find the 6 gold Mountain tile! Not wanting to risk losing that tile, they place their camp and remove their pieces from the turn order tiles. Their turn is over this round.



6. The blue player is the last player remaining in the round. They have one unused card, an **Oxen**. Their prospector is currently occupying a tile worth 3 gold. One of the unclaimed tiles in the Oxen rows might contain more gold, but they might contain less. So rather than gambling on an unknown tile, they decide to stake their claim on their present tile, replacing their prospector with a tent. The Prospecting Phase is now complete. Play continues to the Gambling Phase.

PHASE THREE: GAMBLING

After a hard day working the gold fields, prospectors return to town and try their luck at games of chance and skill. The Gambling Phase is when players choose 2 cards from among those they played in the Prospecting Phase to add to their end of game set of poker cards.

Take your faceup cards set aside for the Prospecting Phase and discard any that were not used. From those remaining, choose 1 or 2 cards for how their rank and/or suit contribute to your set of poker cards. Place these cards faceup, next to your facedown hole card. Note: If you used 3 cards in the Prospecting Phase, only 2 of these can go into your set of poker cards, so be sure to plan ahead.

IMPORTANT: *At the end of the game, the player with the best set of poker cards will be able to place their fourth and final prospector's tent on any remaining, unclaimed Foothills tile.*

PREPARING FOR NEXT ROUND

If this is the first or second round of play, then the dealer deals each player back up to 5 cards in their hand, and a new round begins. Recall that the new dealer is the player that did not win an auction in the round. If, at any point, the draw deck runs out of cards, then players should shuffle the discard pile to reform the draw deck.

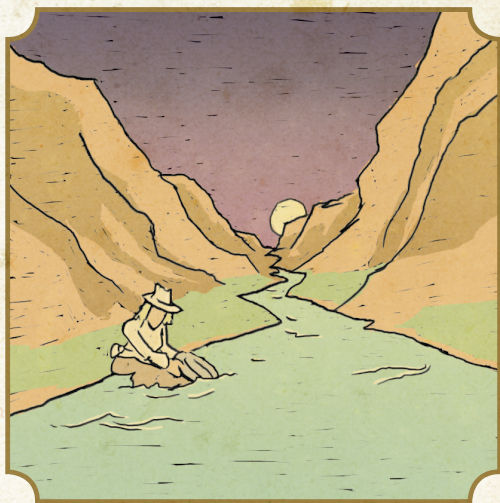


END OF GAME & SCORING

After the third round, the game is over. Players advance to end of game & scoring, where they will play out their poker cards and earn a score for their total gold from claimed land tiles.

POKER CARDS

Players create their best possible set of poker cards by choosing from among their faceup poker cards and their facedown hole card. Any remaining cards are discarded and not considered in the hand.



The player with the best set of poker cards wins the title to a fourth and final claim (this is the only way to use all 4 of a player's claim meeples). That player places their last tent on any unclaimed tile among those of the lowest remaining rank (without looking at its value). **The tiles rank: Foothills «« Canyons «« Mountains.** If they have already used all 3 tents, then they should place their camp instead.

Thus, players must choose an unclaimed Foothills tile if one is available. If not, then they choose an unclaimed Canyon tile. If all Canyon and Foothills tiles are already claimed, then they choose an unclaimed Mountain tile.

Poker sets cannot end in a tie—one hand is always better than another. When two or more players have hands of the same type, compare the highest card contributing to the poker set (i.e. the high card in a two-pair hand of 10, 10, 7, 7, Ace is 10).

In the case of two pair, if the high pairs are the same, then the second pair is compared. If these are still the same, then the final, unmatched card is compared. In the case of a numerically identical straight, flush, or straight flush, hands are compared by ranking suits. Suits are ranked, from highest to lowest: spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs. The hand with the higher ranked suit wins.

SCORING

Players reveal the gold values of all their claimed tiles (those which contain their prospector's tents). Players also receive gold winnings based upon the strength of their poker set:

SCORING CHART

4	Straight Flush 5 cards of the same suit with rank in continuous sequence
3	Four of a Kind a hand containing 4 cards of the same rank
3	Full House a hand containing three of a kind and a pair
2	Flush 5 cards, each of the same suit, with any discontinuous sequence
2	Straight 5 cards, of continuous sequence and any suits
1	Three of a Kind a hand containing 3 cards of the same rank
1	Two Pair a hand containing 2 cards of the same rank and another 2 cards of the same rank, different than the first
1	Pair a hand containing 2 cards of the same rank
0	High Card a hand containing none of the above sets

The player with the most gold wins. In the case of a tie, the player with the higher set of poker cards wins.

CREDITS



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Elf Creek would like to thank: David, Kayla & Taylor Sanders, James Munger, Miles Bensky, Molly Cooper, Andrew Stengele, Ben Moy, Brian Suhre, Elizabeth & David Sheppard, Jason Kingsley, Austin Bennett, Brenda & Kevin Heskett, Jenny & John Stratton, Kaity Bequette, Binish & Justin Propp, Mark Hewitt, Seth Lazarus, Heather McAllister, Andrew Cooper, Charlotte & Colin Winters, Zack Kiedysz, Jon Hall, Kyle McKay, Jamey Stegmaier, Brad Shankle, John Olson, Joshua Geimer, and, listed last but owed our greatest thanks, our families.

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ROUND OVERVIEW

1. Supply

Bid for new cards in auction.

2. Prospect

- Play 2 or 3 cards onto the table
- Use actions and prospect for gold
- Press your luck and/or stake claims

3. Gamble

Add 2 cards from the prior phase to poker hand.



**There's gold in
them thar tiles!**

