






The First War

Introduction

An empire-building game of discovering terrain, building up forces in four types and developing technology to their utmost efficiency. For 2 players.

Components

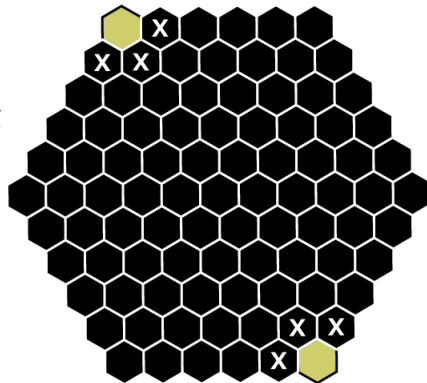
- 96 hexagonal tiles
 - 36 Lake 
 - 18 Fields 
 - 15 Mountains 
 - 14 Plains 
 - 13 Forest 
- 80 wooden cubes (20 each in red, blue, green and purple)*
- 80 "ice" cubes (20 each in red, blue, green and purple)*
- 40 transparent cubes (not limited; if you run out, stack one over multiple items and/or use pennies)
- 2 decks of 18 development cards (one blue, one purple)
- 2 population tracks
- 1 six-sided die

*The colors of these pieces have meanings as follows: **Red: Hunters, Blue: Farmers, Green: Healers, Purple: Artificers**

Setting Up the Game

Set up the game as follows:

1. Each player takes a Fields and a Plains tile.
2. Set aside 5 Fields tiles.
3. With the remaining tiles create a hexagon with 6 tiles on a side, placing the tiles face down and randomly. (A table cloth helps avoid the tiles moving too much.)
4. The players begin at opposite corners where each completes the board using their Fields tile, and

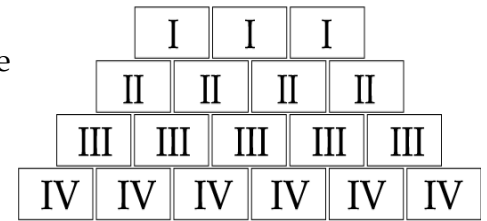


adjacent to it, a Plains tile on one of three positions marked with an X (above). These face up tiles constitute the player **starting tiles**.

5. One player takes the 80 wooden cubes, the other the 80 "ice" cubes.
6. Each player places their initial pieces as follows:
 - **Fields** tile: 1 green, 1 purple, 2 blue
 - **Plains** tile: 2 red
7. The players place the rest of their pieces on their population tracks, one piece per box, starting from the highest number. When you remove pieces from the track, move the remaining pieces down and to the right. In this way the player can easily determine the size of his population, which is the highest uncovered number. **Hint:** you can delay doing this until your population is around 20 or so.

8. Each player takes one set of 18 development cards and separates them into 4 separate decks

denominated I, II, III and IV. He shuffles each deck and lays out the 3 cards of deck I side by



side face down. Then he shuffles deck II and lays these out face down below the deck I cards as if building a pyramid. He does the same for decks III and IV.

9. The players agree which one will go first. The other player turns face up his central Level I technology card and places on it a transparent cube to indicate it is active.

Goal of the Game

The game ends when any of the following occur.

The player who performs the action wins.

- A player takes control of his opponent's starting Fields space.
- The opponent loses his last piece of any one type.
- All of the opponent's pieces are wounded.
- A player activates 3 or more of his Level IV technologies. In this case, if it is the first player who achieved this, the second player

still takes his turn. If he also activates 3 or more of his Level IV technologies, then players total up their points spent to activate technologies. The higher total wins.

Sequence of Play

A player does all of these steps in order on his turn. After his turn is complete, his opponent performs the same steps.

1. Food Emergency Declaration (optional)
2. Movement
 - a. Hunter Movement
 - b. Others Movement
3. Conflict
4. Distribute Food
5. Research and Development
6. Healing
7. Population Increase

Playing the Game

The steps in detail:

1. Food Emergency Declaration (optional)

Each turn the player may declare a Food Emergency by placing an ice cube on the “1” space of their Population track. This changes the rest of the turn as follows:

- **Conflict:** Except for Farmers, pieces ignore any development card improvements to their defense strengths and instead defend with the strengths they had at the start of play.
- Hunters do not attack as Hunters, but as Farmers.
- **Distribute Food:** all pieces act as Farmers.
- **Population Increase:** treat this phase as normal, i.e. according to actual color.

2. Movement

Speed: At the start of the game each piece may only move to an adjacent tile, i.e. each piece has 1 movement point. When a piece has more than 1 movement point, it can continue moving up the number of movement points it has so long as each tile is a face up land tile (i.e. not lake).

Move one by one: Conduct movement one piece at a time. Complete the movement of a piece

before commencing the movement of the next. (Consequently the results of the movement of one piece can inform the movement of a subsequent piece – see **Discovery**.)

Hint: If you have trouble remembering which pieces have moved, you might place moved pieces on the left side of a tile one turn, on the right side the next turn, etc.

Discovery: To move a piece onto a face down tile, the player announces this intention and replaces the tile in face up position. If the tile is not a lake, the piece moves into it. If the tile was a lake, it does not move on this turn. Place the piece on the edge between the lake and the tile it was in to show it cannot move further this turn. Treat the piece as in the original tile for all purposes. A piece may never end its movement in a lake.

Crossing Lakes: If a piece borders a revealed lake, it may move across a single lake tile to a land or unrevealed tile that touches the lake. If the destination tile the piece is not yet revealed, treat it as a **Discovery**. If the destination turns out to be other than lake, the move is successful. If the destination turns out to be a lake, return the piece to its starting point; it does not move on this turn.

Stacking: At no time during a turn may a player move so that he has more than 4 of his own pieces in a tile.

Attacks: An attack occurs when a piece enters a tile containing one or more of the other player's pieces. Upon entry, the piece(s) must immediately stop moving, even if more movement points (as a result of Research and Development) are available. Such a move results in **Conflict**. A **wounded** piece may never attack.

Attacks across lakes: At the start of the game a piece may not enter a tile by crossing a lake if the tile contains any enemy pieces.

a. Hunter Movement

During this phase, only Hunters may move and they may not move during other phases (apart from **Retreats**).

b. Others Movement

During this phase, only Farmers, Healers and Artificers may move. They may not move during other phases (apart from **Retreats**).

3. Conflict

Conflict occurs when both players have pieces on the same tile. The current player is the attacker; the opponent the defender.

Order: The Attacker conducts conflict one tile at a time, resolving each tile completely before proceeding to the next. He does not have to specify the order in advance, but can decide it on the fly.

Sequence within the Tile:

- a. **Defender Allocation.** The defender arranges his pieces into stacks. He may leave each of his pieces in a separate stack or place them all into a single stack or any arrangement in between.
- b. **Attacker Allocation.** The attacker allocates his forces by placing his pieces against the defender stacks. He must divide his forces so as to align with as many stacks as he can, even if in some cases his own pieces are at a disadvantage.
- c. **Damage Resolution.** Players compare strengths one stack at a time, using the Strengths Table below to resolve conflict stack by stack within the tile. A piece type can have a different strength depending on whether it is an attacker or a defender.

Triple advantage: If one side is at least triple that of the other, return the weaker side to their owner's population track.

Simple advantage: If a side is stronger, but not three times as strong, the weaker side is wounded; place a transparent cube on the stack to show this. This stack will have to **retreat**.

Tie: If both sides are the same strength, both are wounded; place a transparent cube on each stack to show this. The attacking stack must **retreat**.

d. Retreats. After you resolve all combats in a tile, units that must retreat do so following the rules below.

e. Further Conflict: If after conflict there remain pieces belonging to both sides on a tile (because the attacker could not cover every stack), repeat the process starting at (a) with the remaining pieces, as many times as necessary, until one player's pieces remain.

Strengths Table

Piece Type	Attacker Strength	Defender Strength
Hunter	2	1
Farmer	1	2
Healer	0	0
Artificer	0	0

Note: A piece with 0 Attacker strength may still participate in an attack; it is just unlikely to have much effect.

Consequences of Being Wounded: When a piece is wounded, place a transparent cube on it. When a wounded piece is wounded again, return it to the owner's population track. Wounded pieces cannot attack or perform their special functions.

In particular:

- Hunters and Farmers do not provide food.
- Healers do not remove wounds.
- Artificers do not generate research points.

Wounded pieces may move, perform Discovery and defend normally.

Retreat Order: The owning player decides the order of his retreats from a tile after resolving a round of conflict in a tile. If both players happen to have some pieces retreating from the same tile, the defending stacks retreat first.

Retreat Destination: A stack of retreating pieces do not all have to go to the same tile, but may split up.

Attacker Retreats: When an attacking stack retreats, it moves one space to the tile from which

it entered the conflict (which may have come across a lake) or to a space containing only its own pieces. Pieces may not retreat into a tile already containing four of one's own pieces. Return pieces having no legal retreat to the owner's population track.

Defender Retreats: The defender retreats to an adjacent land tile which does not contain any of the opponent's pieces and from which no attacker came.

Retreat Restrictions:

- A defender may not retreat across a lake.
- Pieces may not retreat into a tile already containing four of one's own pieces.
- Return pieces having no legal retreat to the owner's population track. If multiple pieces of different types are to retreat and there is only space for some of them, the owner decides which pieces retreat.
- A defender may attempt to retreat to an unrevealed tile. Should this tile should prove to be a lake, leave it face up, but return the piece(s) to the owner's population track.

4. Distribute Food

How many need feeding: Each piece on the board needs feeding. The player can use his population chart to determine this number.

How much food is available: Each player calculates this using his own pieces:

- Count the number of not wounded Farmers you have on Fields.
- Multiply this number by 3.
- Add to this the number of not wounded Hunters on Forest and Plains tiles.

The resulting total is the amount of food available.

Resolution: If the amount of food equals or exceeds the population, there is no difficulty. **In addition, each 3 food in excess of the population number can remove a wounded marker from any Healer piece.** But if there is a food shortfall, then the player must place transparent cubes on a

number of his pieces equal to the difference. He may choose any of his pieces, which are now considered wounded. If he places a cube on a piece which is already wounded, this piece is returned to his population track instead, but he may not do this unless every other of his pieces is already wounded.

5. Research and Development

Example development card text for a card having a development cost of 7:

Smelting (7)

Each additional Mountains tile your Artificers occupy increases by one your research points for the turn.

Tally research points: In the beginning of this phase the player adds together the following quantities:

- The number of tiles which contain 2 or more of his Artificers.
- Each different type of tile which contains at least one of his Artificers.

The total of these comprise the number of research and development points the player may spend in the current turn. Any points not spent in the turn are lost.

Example: A player has 4 tiles that each contain a pair of Artificers. Each of these tiles is of a different type. In addition, he has a single Artificer on a tile of the fifth type. Consequently, he earns $4 + 5 = 9$ R&D points.

Research: At the start of the game, the player may reveal only level I cards. A player reveals a card by spending research points equal to the card's level. Once any level I card has been revealed, he may reveal each level II card by spending 2 points each. This in turn would permit revealing a level III card, which each cost 3 to reveal, etc.

Development: A player performs development by spending the number of research points listed (in parenthesis after the card name) on the development card to activate it. Initially, the player may activate any face up level I card.

When a player has activated both of the level I cards above a level II card, he may spend points to activate the level II card. (Note that the level II cards at the edges only have one level I card above them and can thus be activated more easily.)

Signifier: To signify that a card is active, place a transparent cube on it.

Points are lost: Any research points not spent in the current turn are lost.

6. Healing

The player may use Healers to remove wounded markers. Each Healer may remove one wounded marker in its own tile. Healers who are themselves wounded may not perform the healing function.

7. Population Increase

A player receives a population increase on any tile where he has exactly 2 or 3 pieces, including wounded pieces. Exception: if no piece of the required type is available, he takes none in this case. The player resolves population increases in any order. Determine the type of the new piece depending on the types already there:

Case 1: All pieces the same: If all pieces are the same, the player simply places another piece of the same type in the tile.

Case 2: Two different types of pieces: The player rolls the die and consults the Types list (below):

- If the die roll falls in the range 1-3, the player places a piece that matches the one that appears earlier in the Types list.
- If the die roll falls in the range 4-6, the player places a piece that matches the one that appears later in the list.

Case 3: Three different types of pieces: The player rolls the die and consults the Types list:

- If the die roll falls in the range 1-2, the player places a piece that matches the one that appears earliest in the Types list.

Types list:

Hunter
Farmer
Healer
Artificer

- If the die roll falls in the range 5-6, the player places a piece that matches the one which is latest in the Types list.
- If the die roll falls in the range 3-4, the player places a piece that matches the one which is neither earliest nor latest.

Supplies run out: If you need to place a piece of a particular type is, but no more are available on the population track, do not place a piece.

Hint: When placing new pieces, place the new piece on top of the existing ones to help you remember which tiles you have resolved and which you have not. When you have finished the phase, place all the pieces directly on the tile. Of course this is unnecessary when the tile starts or finishes with four pieces.

Card Notes

Shoes, Chariots, Improved Chariots and Horse Riding cards: Despite owning this card, pieces still must end movement upon revealing a lake and must still stop moving upon encountering opponent pieces. Crossing a lake still uses up the piece's entire movement.

Fertility card: If the player also has developed **Magic**, the player chooses both types.

Player Notes

I provide the following notes because some may view the game as incomplete without them, but consider not reading the following, at least not until you have played two or three matches. Otherwise you deny yourself the fun of discovering all kinds of challenging aspects of play on your own.

In the early game players should focus on establishing a stable food supply. This includes the search for Fields, positioning Farmers and the possible use of Plows.

A second early goal involves the population types. An early alternate title for the game was *It Takes All Kinds* since developing healthy populations of all types seems the best approach. (You can try skewing everything to Hunters to attempt a blitzkrieg, but

you will be the first to make it work.) You have the power to guarantee the types of new pieces by keeping only the same types together or you can take a chance and mix them, which has the advantage of more flexible positioning. You'll notice that Farmers generally want to be on Fields, Hunters on Plains and Forests and Artificers in the Mountains, where they can find valuable metals and minerals.

One perplexing decision at this stage is how quickly to push directly forward versus exploring the nearer terrain on both sides of the starting point. Pushing forward may gain a lightning strike advantage on the opponent, but on the other hand may engender conflict before you're ready. Waiting too long to push forward may grant too much territory to the opponent, however.

The mid-game tasks are to establish both board and technological positions. At this time it usually becomes apparent whether the players can reach one another overland along a usable front or whether they are mainly on separate landmasses separated by water with the occasional island. In the latter case it is important to occupy every shoreline, even if only with a Healer or Artificer to prevent the opponent landing on and expanding on your shore. Of course it would be useful to achieve such a beach head in the other direction...

Establishing technology depends first on the growth and careful placement of Artificers. But there are at least a couple of approaches you can take with the cards. You might first discover where each card is and only then start buying just the ones you most need along some kind of optimal path. On the other hand, the amount of time required might make it preferable to purchase as many cards as possible as fast as you can. A middle approach emphasizes card purchases, spending leftover points on card revelations.

The endgame generally sees players aiming for a knockout blow. Board position and population composition are very important. Small advantages can develop into important ones. Be ready to sacrifice almost anything if it helps to reach the goal,

but don't neglect the food supply. Even if you fall behind, concentration on technology and/or revealing new fronts can often turn the tide.

One of the main ideas of the game is to explore the feasibility of combat without dice or any other random factor (such as cards). Of course this means interest must come from other factors such as board discovery, position and changing rules. With experience, players realize that while a four Hunter stack can be very effective, as can four Farmers, the flexibility and power of two Hunters and two Farmers is hard to best.

Positioning for combat is about more than just pushing the best stacks forward as fast as possible, however. With experience you begin to see not only how your attacks are likely to work out, but also what your opponent will be able to do on the counterattack and position backup pieces – especially Healers and defensive Farmers – accordingly. Consider carefully as well where to leave space for your own retreats.

When defending in combat, allocate depending on whether you have retreat options or whether you prefer to inflict wounds on the attacker. The decisionmaking here becomes more intricate when a side has more than one type present on the tile.

This game attempts to employ board discovery and significant technological development to make every turn a different problem to figure out. The player who can best read/forecast trends and find the best efficiencies should triumph.

– Rick Heli, January 5, 2017

Credits

Many thanks to all of the playtesters! In alphabetical order: Jeff DiCorpo, Gordon Hua, Andrew Martin, Ken Tidwell. Thanks also to Garry Haggerty for the helpful suggestions.

Game design by Rick Heli

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