

Empire

By Jonathan Prospero

Introduction

Supplies

- 2 different colored sets of 12+ d6
- A 52 card deck (No Jokers)
- A large piece of blank white paper
- A handful of index cards or a small piece of paper
- Pencils and erasers or pens (hardcore mode)
- Snacks
- Drinks
- 1-4 Players

Overview

1. Have at least one person fully read through the rules and explain them to everyone else.
2. Have all the supplies you'll need on hand, and use the bathroom beforehand. Get snacks. Get a drink.
3. Have everyone sit around a table where they can easily access the piece of paper that will be the map, and the pen or pencil.
4. One player will sort the deck of cards by card suit, shuffle the cards of each suit thoroughly, and then stack them from bottom to top: Spades, Diamonds, Clubs, Hearts.
5. Prepare two index cards; write "Stats" at the top of one, "Figures" at the top of the other.
6. Go through the worldbuilding process, described below.
7. Starting with the player who read the rules or has been playing the longest, take turns during the empire phase, building and expanding your empire.
8. Discuss your empire's legacy, and how the game went.

Narrative - Throughout Empire, you will be watching as a civilization you create goes from a small burgeoning society into a large, grandiose empire. You will do this by exploring the world around you, interacting with other empires, and by constructing projects such as buildings, scientific research, and social movements that progress your empire to greatness or despair. Empire assumes you will be playing as a group of people on a macro scale, with your map being roughly the size of the northeastern United States. Time also passes on a macro scale, with each turn passing 10 years of in-game time. You will watch as your empire grows and changes through different eras, influenced by different movements and individuals who each shape it in their own small ways.

The Player's Roles - In Empire, the players have two roles - one as the rulers and decision makers within the empire, acting on its behalf when making decisions or interacting with the world. The second role is as historians and world builders, impartially introducing new elements and challenges for your empire to navigate throughout its history. Though it's fair to want the best for your empire and its people, it's better to act as you believe the leaders of your empire would, and allow consequences for actions to play out. Telling a meaningful story is more important than winning in Empire. The goals of the game exist simply to support different ways to explore success and failure within your story. If you find that they drive your

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game into a more mechanical game that you don't enjoy, simply ignore them, or any other rule that holds back your ability to tell the story of how your empire grew and evolved over time. You are a narrator or recounting the history of an empire - of how they lived, and grew, and died.

Drawing the Map - Empire is fundamentally a map-making game. As new areas of the map are discovered and defined, draw them on the map. When significant events happen, or major projects are completed, draw something to notify that action. Whoever is taking the action should be the one to draw it on the map. When creating the map, keep text use to a minimum, symbols and icons are preferable.

Playing the Game

Starting the Game - The game begins once all of the players understand the basics of the rules, and have sat down with all of the necessary materials. First, take the blank piece of paper out to begin the world building phase of the game.

World Building Phase

1. **Select Geography** - Have a discussion about the type of geography you want to set your empire in. This should be a large biome, such as a river valley, a desert, in steep mountains, or on an island.
2. **Select Terrain Features** - Have each player draw a major geographic or terrain feature that defines the region, such as a river, a tall mountain, a lake, or a cavern. Draw basic topography and essential features. Nothing lengthy, just a sketch.
3. **Locate Capital** - Based on the geography of the area, select a location for your capital city, then draw it onto the map. The capital should be big, at least twice as large as the other features. Draw some details to make it distinctive. This is a good opportunity to come up with a symbol for your people and draw it on there.
4. **Roll Starting Wealth** - Roll 1d6 - the result is your empire's starting Wealth Score. Write this down on an index card.
5. **Roll Starting Happiness** - Roll 1d6 - the result is your empire's starting Happiness Score. Write this down on the same index card as Wealth.
6. **Modify Stats** - Each player picks Wealth or Happiness and adds +1 to it. Modify the scores accordingly.
7. **Select Resources** - On a new index card, each player selects and writes down a natural resource that the empire has access to. This might include iron, lumber, magic crystals, gasoline, cotton, ivory, or anything else that could be of value to your empire for trade and craft.
8. **Select Values** - On the same index card as resources, each player writes down a social or personal value held throughout your empire. Some values might include: liberty, individualism, security, honor, strength, peace, efficiency, free time, money, happiness, fidelity, or any other ideal.
9. **Select Starting Conflict** - On the same index card as values and resources, the group decides and records starting conflicts - a problem that exists within the empire. Perhaps there is a shortage of

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an important resource, there is an initial conflict between two groups of people, or perhaps there is an unmet need within your society.

10. **Name Your Empire** - Finally, give a name to this group you've created. Don't worry if you don't feel it's perfect on the first try, your civilization will change and grow over time, its name can change too. Write the name of your empire at the top of the third index card.

After the world building phase, the Empire Phase of the game begins. During this phase, each player takes a turn as described below. Play continues this way until either the whole deck has been drawn, or one of the ending conditions described below have been met. If any of the end conditions are met, move into the Conclusion phase of the game.

Using the Oracle & Oracle Deck - The oracle deck is the 52 card playing deck that was sorted at the beginning of the game. When preparing the oracle, separate the cards by suit, then shuffle each suit thoroughly. Once the suits have been randomized, stack them in the following order from bottom to top: Spades, Diamonds, Clubs, Hearts. At the beginning of each player's turn, that player reveals the top card of the deck, privately confers with the Oracle text that provides narrative prompts, selects one of the assigned prompts for their draw, and then narrates what happens to the empire based on that prompt.

Example: It is Jim's turn, and he flips the 6 of Hearts. Reading the two prompts, he chooses to pick "How is the kingdom ruled? Are the leaders just? What types of laws are there? **Add a ruler to Characters.**" He narrates to the group, "Our empire, Haulia, is ruled by a King. The current leader, King Goldmane is a wise and just ruler who considers the well-being of his people to be extremely important. There are laws that protect people's rights and property from theft and harm, but also laws that protect people's freedom from harassment and persecution. King Goldmane and his family will be added to Characters, and the Goldmane Regency should be added to groups too!"

Changing Eras - The first time a card of a new suit is flipped, the Empire enters a new Era. Eras are the grand passing of time, the natural result of growth on the empire. When the first card of a new era is revealed, first read the Era Effect on the Oracle and enact the effect. Additionally, make the following changes to the empire's stats each time a new era is entered:

For each Conflict: -1 Happiness

For each Value: +1 Happiness

For each Resource: +1 Wealth

For each Army: -1 Wealth

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Empire Phase

The empire phase is the growth and evolution of your empire, which you will take turns narrating. Each turn is 10 years of in-game time, which the active player will summarize through a series of prompts. Starting with the player who read the rules or who has been playing the longest, players will explore what happens to their empire during that time, how things grow and change, based on what they draw from the oracle deck, what actions they choose to take during their turn.

During a player's turn, that player chooses all actions that are taken, and no other player can interfere or interrupt that player's decisions once they are made. Discussion about the decisions made is encouraged, but if a player decides to take an action that other players disagree with, their only recourse is to lower to empire's Happiness by 1 if the decision conflicts with the empire's values.

Parts of the Turn

1. Draw a card from the oracle deck. Pick one of the prompts available, and then narrate what happens to your empire based on that prompt. Do whatever the bold text instructs you to do. Discard the oracle card at the end of this step.
2. Count down any project dice that are on the board by 1.
3. Take an action:
 - a. Start a Project
 - b. Make a Discovery
 - c. Narrate an Event
4. The turn is over, the next player starts their turn

Conclusion Phase

The game is over and enters the Conclusion Phase if any of the following conditions are met:

- The Ace of Spades is drawn and the six-turn project is finished
- If any Empire Stat is above 10, the Empire enters a Golden Age. If a golden age lasts for 10 turns, that empire achieves global dominance, and the players win the game.
- If any empire stat is 0 or lower, there is a civil uprising. If a civil uprising lasts for more than 5 turns, the empire revolts, and game is over.

During the conclusion, the players should narrate what happens to their empire and its legacy in the world. Afterwards, the players should discuss their thoughts about the empire, other potential paths the story could have gone, what they liked or disliked about their play session, what unexpected events happened, or any other concluding thoughts. Afterwards, one player keeps the map. They cannot get rid of it.

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Rules of Play

Empire Stats

Wealth - Wealth represents the affluence and liquidity of your empire's coffers, how much purchasing power it has from trade, taxes, and other sources of income. Wealth indicates the quality of life which your citizens are able to afford, and how well-equipped and maintained your empire's armies and infrastructure are.

Happiness - The general sentiment of your people about the empire and their lives. Populations who are happy have enough to eat, feel good about the future, believe in empire's values, and support its rulers' decisions. Populations who are unhappy are stressed, question the future and direction of the empire, and may resent or rise up against their leaders.

Empire Features

Resources - Resources are the natural or manufactured goods that are generated within your empire. Resources can be traded, or have inherent value that can be extracted from them. A resource could be iron, magic crystals, stone, electricity, or nearly anything else. Resources often have a significant influence on an empire's culture and lifestyle.

Values - Values are the cultural touchstones your people consider when making decisions. At the beginning of the game, each player picks one value that the Empire cares about. Values can be added or removed throughout play. When making decisions for the Empire, players must act in accordance with their Empire's values. Whenever the Empire makes a decision that is in opposition to one or more of its values, reduce the empire's Happiness by 1. If any player feels that a decision was made in opposition to the empire's values, this effect is non-negotiable.

Conflicts - Conflicts are problems that must be addressed within the empire. Conflicts might include:

- A shortage of food or clean water
- Barren, dry land
- A disagreement with the lord of the neighboring empire
- Disease ravaging your kingdom
- Social revolution
- Persecution of a sub-group within the empire
- Two religions fighting for influence

Empire Figures

Characters - Characters are influential individuals who have a significant individual impact on your empire. When a character of note rises to power within your empire, be sure to write down their name on the Figures card. Remember that each turn in Empire is 10 years worth of time, so characters will live and die throughout play of the game. Although one individual may perish during gameplay, it's possible that

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their descendents will carry on their legacy, and can continue to represent that character's perspective. Typically, characters do not survive longer than 10 turns. Characters might include:

- The King
- A religious leader
- An social revolutionary
- A brilliant researcher who discovers a new technology
- An explorer who uncovers a great secret within the empire

Groups - Groups are any organization that can influence or make decisions on behalf of the Empire. Groups might include:

- A church or faith
- Monstrous creatures controlled by a mysterious force
- Another nearby Empire
- A faction of rebels who oppose the current regime
- An aristocratic family that has significant sway within the empire

Types of Actions:

Start a Project - Projects are the steps the empire makes towards a greater and brighter future, such as construction, research, legislation or expansion. Each project takes between 1-6 turns, depending on the size of the project. Projects that would take longer than 6 turns can be divided into 1-6 turn phases. The length of a project is decided by the group. When the length of a project is decided, place a die with the number of turns remaining face-up on the location of the project on the map. This die will count down by 1 during each player's turn. When the die reaches 0, the player who began the project describes what happens upon its completion, and the project's outcome is drawn onto the map. Projects might include:

- 1 - Building a bridge
- 2 - Writing a set of laws
- 3 - Researching a new technology
- 4 - Establishing a mining operation
- 5 - Constructing a canal or dam
- 6 - Founding a new city

Projects can be used to address lots of problems within an empire. Conflicts can be addressed and solved through projects, and new groups can be organized. After a resource is discovered, a project to extract that resource is required before it can be added to the resources page.

Raise an Army - Raising an army is a special type of project. Armies can only be raised in areas where conscripts can be gathered, such as in a city. An army takes a number of turns to create equal to its army strength. The strength of an army is determined by how well equipped it is, on a scale of 1-6:

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- 1 - Barely equipped militia
- 2 - Trained but untested recruits
- 3 - Well-equipped army
- 4 - Veteran soldiers
- 5 - Elite soldiers
- 6 - Advanced units with cutting edge technology

Units can range from 1-6 for any number of reasons, including access to different technologies, training, or circumstance. Armies can also be bolstered, removing that army from play for a number of turns equal to the level of bolster being added. After those turns, the army is returned to play with a new army strength equal to its original strength plus the bolster level.

Combat - When two armies battle, reduce both armies by a number equal to the size of the opposing army. An army that has a score of 0 has been routed, disbanded, or destroyed.

Example: Army A has a strength of 6. Army B has a strength of 4. The two armies enter combat. At the end of combat, Army A will have a strength of 2 ($6-4=2$), and Army B will be disbanded ($4-6=-2$).

Discover Something New - Discovery is any new information or ideas that become a part of your empire. Discoveries can be found through exploration, scientific or social progress, or by interacting with other empires. When a discovery is made, draw it on the map. Discoveries might include:

- Locating a new resource or group of people
- Realizing how to harness electricity for power
- Using gunpowder for weapons or mining
- Finding an enemy army approaching
- Founding a new religion

Narrate an Event - Events are the fabric of the story, and are how players narrate the turns of fate that face your empire. Use events to introduce new opportunities or challenges for your empire to face, and then narrate how your empire responds to that event. Sometimes, your oracle might provide a prompt that could lead to an event. Events might include:

- A royal wedding between two noble families
- A declaration of war against a neighboring nation
- A new technology leads to a blowout conflict
- Revolutionaries demand reform and seize factories
- Adventurers are sent out to explore nearby ruins

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Hearts

Era Effect	After the struggle of unification - UNITY. Your people are now one empire, ruled by one set of guiding principles, one set of leaders. What type of empire will you become? Increase one empire stat by 1.	
2	What types of monsters once lived in this land? What force destroyed them? What keeps them at bay now?	What types of humans once lived in this land? What force destroyed them? Where are their descendants now?
3	A scouting party discovers ruins nearby. To whom do they belong? How intact are they? Is there anything of value inside? Advance one project by two turns, or make an additional discovery this turn.	A scouting party discovers a nearby civilization separate from your own. Who are these people? Are they friendly? How does the first encounter go? Add this civilization to groups.
4	What role does religion have in your kingdom? Is there a religious center in the kingdom? Do people believe in magic?	What role does wealth play in your kingdom? Are most people wealthy? What types of goods do people want the most?
5	What social classes are within your empire? How much social mobility is there? Is your empire dominated by the elite, or the populace? Increase happiness or wealth by 1.	
6	Conflict arises. Is it internal or external? Add a new conflict.	How is the kingdom ruled? Are the leaders just? What types of laws are there? Add a ruler to Characters.
7	How do your people dress? What kinds of food do they eat? What is daily life like?	What types of activities do people like to do? What celebrations or festivals are common?
8	Explorers discover a natural wonder within the kingdom. What kind of location is it? What is the most wonderful part about it? Draw the wonder on the map.	Explorers discover a man made wonder within the kingdom. What kind of location is it? What is the most wonderful part about it? Draw the wonder on the map.
9	Monsters are spotted roaming within the kingdom. What types of creatures are they? How does the community respond? How are they handled?	A criminal organization is discovered in the kingdom. What crimes did they commit? How are these offenses handled? Add this organization to groups.
10	Your people are eager for growth and discovery. Start a new project related to expansion or research.	Your people are eager for might and conquest. Start raising an army. Select the size as a group.
Jack	A new resource is discovered. What is it? How does it impact the kingdom? Draw the resource on the map.	A hero arises from within the kingdom. Who is this person? What great accomplishment do they make? Add a hero to characters.
Queen	A new faction within the kingdom demands to be recognized. What is this group? What are their motivations? Add this faction to groups.	Misfortune strikes the kingdom. What type of problem is it? Who does it impact, and how does the kingdom fare? Lower an empire stat by 1.

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King	A major event happens within the kingdom. What is it? Who is involved? How does this change the kingdom? What happens as a result?	
Ace	It is time to begin the construction of a monument to our peoples' greatness. What is this monument? Begin a 6 turn project. When it is completed, increase your empire's happiness by 1.	An abundant source of a new resource is discovered within the empire. What is this resource, and how does it impact your empire? Draw the resource on the map and increase your empire's wealth by 1.

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Clubs

Era Effect	An era of contraction befalls the empire. Nights grow long, and when once your empire felt confident at its might, now its buildings crack and crumble under years of pressure and decay. Lower each empire stat by 1.	
2	A new cultural trend takes hold of the empire. What trend is it? What caused it? What types of people take part in the trend?	Internal strife takes hold within the empire. What are people upset about? How does the empire respond?
3	A shortage is discovered. What is it of? Add a shortage to the conflicts list.	A depression grips your empire, and progress stagnates. What causes this downturn? Project dice do not count down this turn.
4	Another kingdom is discovered nearby. Who are they? Are they friendly? What do they offer our kingdom? Add this empire to groups.	A minority group within your empire is being persecuted. Why? What makes them different? Add this population to groups, and the persecution to conflicts.
5	A new leader emerges from your populace. Who is this leader? Do they support the current rulers or oppose them? How does this impact the empire? Add this leader to Characters.	Settlers from a different civilization have come to your empire seeking refuge. Do you give them asylum? What impact do they have on your empire?
6	War. It is as inevitable as it is unchanging. Where does war break out? What groups are involved? Add War to Conflicts.	Natural disaster strikes your empire, wiping out a valuable resource. What type of disaster is it? Remove an army or resource.
7	Rumors spread of an incredible new advancement being developed by another empire. What is this advancement? How do your people feel about it?	People within your empire have begun to describe supernatural events. Is there any truth to these rumors? Who is impacted?
8	An enemy force is detected nearby. Whose army is it? What do they want? Roll 1d6, then add a hostile army of that size to the map.	A major natural feature is discovered on the map. What is it? Draw the new feature on the map.
9	Social upheaval and change have taken a toll on the wellbeing of your empire. Who is suffering from these changes? What do they do about it? Reduce one of your empire's stats by 1.	Crime and corruption have begun to take hold within your empire. Resources once committed to the good of the people have been siphoned off by greedy powers that be. A project fails.
10	A traitor has been found within the empire. What did they do to betray your people? What is the response? A project fails.	Writers and thinkers from your empire have influenced your culture in a new and exciting way. What kinds of ideas are they talking about? Add a new Value.
Jack	A problem you've been ignoring cannot be ignored any longer. What is it? How does it	Disease spreads throughout the empire, wiping out the sick and infirm. How does this impact your

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	go wrong?	culture? How do the people respond? Reduce your Happiness by 1.
Queen	A territory dispute arises between your empire and a neighbor. What are the empires fighting over? How does your empire respond to the dispute?	A diplomatic breakthrough leads to a new alliance between your empire and a neighbor. What happens as a result of this success?
King	Your empire is at a crossroads, and cannot wait any longer to decide on a major issue. What choice must your people make? What do they choose to do, and why?	
Ace	A new location is discovered within the Empire that would be perfect for settling a new city. What makes this area so suitable? Begin a 6 turn project. When it is completed, add a new city to the map.	Innovation and motivation have spurred your workers to defy all expectations. A project finishes early.

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Diamonds

Era Effect	An age of progress dawns! Your people rejoice as they find new strengths and passions. Inspiration strikes, and is met with dedicated labor, resulting in a booming period of growth for your empire. Pick one empire stat and increase it by 2.	
2	What stories do your people tell about their ancestors? How do your people feel about the empire?	What do your people hope for in the future? How do they want to be remembered?
3	A trade route is established within your empire. Where does it connect to? Increase your Wealth by 1.	A new celebratory tradition takes hold within your society. What are your people celebrating? How do they honor this tradition? Increase your Happiness by 1.
4	A relationship breaks down within the empire. What causes the break? What groups are effected? Reduce your Happiness by 1.	A previously unknown threat disrupts the empire. What is the threat? What does it impact? Reduce one stat. No project dice count down this turn.
5	Someone discovers a radical new approach to solving a problem within the empire. Who is this person? What problem did they solve? Add this person to characters. Remove one conflict.	A religious leader emerges within the empire. What group do they lead? What vision do they propose? Add this person to characters. Add a value.
6	Your civilization has developed a reputation among the world's audience. What are you best known for?	What do your people envy in other cultures? What do other people have that your empire wants?
7	Your empire celebrates exceptional progress this season. Who leads the people to greatness? Reduce projects by an additional turn.	A crisis suddenly ends. What happened? Why?
8	After months of exploration, your scouts have returned with incredible news. What is it?	A treaty is signed. Who is it between? What is agreed to?
9	Market shifts have made one of your resources much higher in demand. What changed? Increase your Wealth by 1.	An alliance is formed with an outside group. What terms are arranged? Add this faction to groups.
10	An act of espionage is detected. What crime was committed? What happens as a result?	A major figure dies unexpectedly. Who was it? What happened? Remove a character.
Jack	A threat looms on the horizon. What must your people prepare for? Start a project.	A decision made earlier in your empire is suddenly very relevant. What is it? What does it change now?
Queen	A discovery is made in a place that was thought to be well-explored. What was found?	A sudden shift in priorities leads to dramatic changes. End one project, but start another.

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King	An incredible discovery advances your empire dramatically. What discover is it? Remove two cards from the top of the deck.	
Ace	A serendipitous event occurs. What is it? How did it happen?	Sensing the changing winds, your people begin to conserve resources. Reduce your Wealth by 1. Start a project related to conservation.

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Spades

Era Effect	The strength of your empire begins to wane. As stagnation saps your empire's potential, your people realize that life cannot continue to get better forever. Decrease each empire stat by 2.	
2	New challenges drive your people apart. Who is driven apart? What are they divided over?	Violence erupts within the empire. What causes it?
3	A rumor spreads about a member of your leadership. Is it good or bad?	Tragedy strikes your empire. What happens? A project fails or reduce a stat by 2.
4	A technological breakthrough provides the groundwork for a new advancement. Start a research project.	A cultural revolution reaches a crescendo within your empire. What is the movement about? Start a social project.
5	An atrocity is revealed within the empire. What is it? Who reveals it?	An unaddressed conflict causes additional problems. Which conflict was it? Add a new conflict.
6	Corruption saps at your empire's resources. Reduce your Wealth by 1.	As problems begin to accumulate, people look for someone to blame. Who is the scapegoat? Reduce your Happiness by 1.
7	With progress comes change. Remove one value and add another.	Voices within the empire try to keep the empire on the path to success. How do they do it? Start a project related to their goals.
8	As your citizens look back on their history, who do they remember well? Who has been forgotten?	What do your people miss about the past? What parts of their history do they look back on fondly?
9	As life becomes more complex, people begin to lose touch with their roots. Remove a value.	A resource unexpectedly dries up. Why? What is the impact of this loss? Remove a resource.
10	Rival empires have not been resting - word spreads they have made a major breakthrough. What is it?	New leaders rise up within the empire. Whose voices do they represent? Add them to groups.
Jack	An essential structure within the Empire collapses. Resources must be spent to salvage it. Cancel a project or end the turn immediately.	Political infighting leads to a legislative regression. Remove a value and reduce your Happiness by 1.
Queen	The youth of your empire offer hope for a better future. What makes them different than those that came before them?	Your empire wins a major victory. What is accomplished?
King	Momentum pushes your empire to embrace its strengths at the cost of its shortcomings. Increase your higher stat and decrease your lower stat by 1.	

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Ace	Your empire makes a breakthrough unlike anything that has come before - the world will never again be the same. Begin a 6 turn project. At the end of that project, the game is over.
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