



How to Play Teaching Guides: #4 Age of Steam

This guide is intended for use by owners of the game looking for a quick outline with a recommended order and structure with which to teach the game. To hear a sample explanation or to learn the game yourself listen to episode #4 of The How to Play Podcast available at www.howtoplaypodcast.com

1

The Hook - What the Game is About

"Choo Choo Chugga Chugga Chugga Chugga Choo Choo!" (Yes, you should make train sounds to begin your explanation. It helps the players get into the game, wear an engineer hat if possible.)

"Business is hard. You are starting a railroad business and trying to make money. Of course you have to go into giant debt to try to build this business. This is basically a two step fight first you will have to try to make sure your business becomes profitable, then try to become the most profitable business by the end of the game.

In this game you are delivering cubes. Blue cubes want to go Blue Cities. So you will want to build track connecting those two, deliver it and then you will score income points. In this game we will follow a sequence of actions for a chosen number of turns. The sequence is; issue shares to get money, Have an auction for turn order and special actions, build track, move goods, get paid or pay bills, and put more goods on the board. We will do that sequence 6-10 times and then it's the end of the game.

To win the game, players will get some points for track, but the main chunk of points come from the difference between your income level which goes up for delivering cubes subtracted from your shares which you issue to get more money. Whoever has the largest gap between income and shares issued will most likely win the game."

2

The Meat - How to Play the Game

The Phases of a Game Turn

1. Issue Shares;
 - 1.1 You need money for the turn order auction, track and expenses
 - 1.2 Each share issued gives you \$5
 - 1.3 Take as few as possible, You will be penalized each turn and on your end of game score

- 1.4 If you don't take enough you won't be able to make money.
- 1.5 2 shares is a safe amount to get started for your first turn.
2. Turn Order Auction
 - 2.1 Players have an auction for turn order and first choice of abilities
 - 2.2 First to drop - free, 1st and 2nd pay full bid, others pay half
 - 2.3 Select abilities selected in turn order (will be explained later)
3. Building Track
 - 3.1 Each player may build up to 3 pieces of track
 - 3.2 Costs of track; \$2 clear, \$3 river, \$4 mountain, \$1+X exits of town
 - 3.3 Can cross/redirect track, must maintain other player's track
 - 3.4 Unfinished track must be added to on following turn or lose it
4. Two Moving Goods Rounds
 - 4.1 In turn order, move cubes to matching colored cities
 - 4.2 1 income for every city/town the cube goes through
 - 4.3 Must have engine level equal to # of cities/towns good travels
 - 4.4 Can skip one goods movement to increase engine one level
 - 4.5 First turn move for 1 or 2, but by end of game you want to develop your network and engine to move for 5 or 6
 - 4.6 Cannot move through a city of same color of cube
 - 4.7 Cannot move through the same city twice
 - 4.8 Can use links of other players track, giving them or splitting points
5. Collect Income/Pay Expenses
 - 5.1 Get money equal to income level
 - 5.2 Pay money equal to shares + engine level
 - 5.3 Net will be negative for first few turns hopefully positive by midgame
 - 5.4 If you cannot pay you slide back on income track, 0 = bankruptcy
6. Income Reduction
 - 6.1 Slide back number of spaces depending on the zone you are in
 - 6.2 Often good to end your turn on 10 or 20 rather than 11 or 21
7. Goods Production
 - 7.1 Roll dice = to # of players for white and black cities for more goods
8. Advance Turn Marker - Repeat 6-10 Times

The Special Abilities

1. Special Abilities are chosen in turn order as determined by the Auction
2. What the Seven Special Abilities do
 - 2.1 First Move - You get to jump the turn order and move goods first in both rounds of this phase
 - 2.2 First Build - You get to jump the turn order and build track first in this phase
 - 2.3 Engineer - You may build 4 pieces of track instead of 3
 - 2.4 Locomotive - you get an immediate engine level increase
 - 2.5 Urbanization - When you build track you get to change a town (grey disk) into a city of the color/letter of your choice
 - 2.6 Production - Pull two cubes from the goods bag and place them on the production chart to hope they get rolled onto the board (Useless on first and last turn)
 - 2.7 Turn Order - Gives you a “free pass” in the following turn order auction, (will likely get you 2nd or 3rd place for free)
3. Relative Strength of the Special Abilities
 - 3.1 Best Abilities - Locomotive and Urbanization - these powerful actions will give you a jump on other players or improve your network
 - 3.2 Situational Abilities - All the other abilities strengths depend on your position in the game, do you need a building spot?, to move a contested cube?, more cubes?, 4 track? turn order? it depends on your situation
 - 3.3 Ability strengths can vary from map to map

Winning the Game

1. Game ends after a specified number of turns (6-10)
 - 1.1 Winner is typically the player with the largest gap between income and shares, though track is worth points and can decide the winner
 - 1.2 Victory Point Formula; Profit Points + Track Points
 - 1.2.1 Profit Points = (Income - Shares) x 3
 - 1.2.2 Track Points = 1 point per track segment in completed links
 - 1.3 The Player with the most VP's wins! There is no tiebreaker

3

The Hamster - How to Win the Game

1. Take enough shares:
 - 1.1 Count carefully at the beginning of the turn make sure you have enough money for the auction, building track and your expenses
 - 1.2 Its always easier to err on the side of too much money
2. Always build 3 track if possible on your turn:
 - 2.1 Track is VPs and should improve your network for more points
3. Plan for long deliveries early in the game.
4. Have a good network shape
 - 4.1 Circles are good!
 - 4.2 “Dogbone” - Central line with spokes at the end
5. Don’t connect all of the colors together,
 - 5.1 Repeating colors in the center of your network can lead to longer deliveries
6. Don’t fall behind in the locomotive race.
 - 6.1 Keep level with the other players
 - 6.2 Get a locomotive action or two during the game
7. Don’t get yourself in a situation where you must have something.
 - 7.1 This is how bankruptcy occurs
 - 7.2 Have more than one plan on each turn
8. Good Luck and Have Fun!

Credits:

Game Design: Martin Wallace

Game Publisher: Eagle Games

Outline Author: Ryan Sturm ©2011

Teaching outline based upon How to Play Podcast Episode #4

Podcast Website: www.howtoplaypodcast.com

Email: howtoplaypodcast@msn.com

Discussion Forum: <http://www.boardgamegeek.com/guild/746>

You can show your appreciation for How to Play resources by making a paypal donation at www.howtoplaypodcast.com