



# How to Play Teaching Guides: #35 Twilight Struggle

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 #35 of The How to Play Podcast available at [www.howtoplaypodcast.com](http://www.howtoplaypodcast.com)

1

## The Hook - What the Game is About

*"Welcome to Twilight Struggle. World War II is over. Two superpowers remain, America and the Soviet Union. Both countries seek to spread their influence, ideologies and ways of life across the world. As these two superpowers collide, tension builds as it seems the world is not large enough for both of them, and the threat of nuclear war being a very real possibility, perhaps ending the world as we know it. Which country will emerge from this conflict as the superior power? It is up to you.*

*In this game you will play either the USA or the USSR with your goal being to assert your dominance across the world. You will do this by placing influence tokens to control countries across the world. The game is played in up to 10 turns with 6 or 7 rounds each. In each turn players are dealt a hand of cards and a round is played by players taking turns playing one of the cards in their hand, typically to add these influence tokens to the board or to in some way affect the tokens already on the board.*

*The most important cards in the deck are the scoring cards. The game starts with three scoring cards, Asia, Mideast and Europe Scoring. When dealt a scoring card a player must play it during one of the rounds of that turn. Then players score victory points based on who has better control, represented by more influence tokens, in that region. The most common way the game ends is for a player to have scored 20 more victory points than his opponent. Though the game can last up to 10 turns, often a player is able to achieve victory after 4-8 turns or hands of cards. However, the game can end in other ways as well. Beware players, for if your play of a card allows for nuclear war to begin, not only do millions of people suffer and both of your countries end up in ruins, but you also sadly, lose the game."*

## 2

# The Meat - How to Play the Game

## Game Components

1. Game Map;
  - 1.1 Round, Turn, VP Tracks
  - 1.2 Defcon Track - actions reduce Defcon, Defcon 1 ends game!
  - 1.3 Locations & Stability Number (Control vs Presence)
  - 1.4 Battleground Countries
  - 1.5 Regions, Adjacency and Scoring Boxes
    - 1.5.1 (Political more than Geographic)
    - 1.5.2 West and East Europe, Southeast Asia
2. Game Cards
  - 2.1 Three Decks (Early, Middle and Late War)
  - 2.2 Operations Value (Op's)
  - 2.3 Event (Color of Star indicates beneficiary)
  - 2.4 Each turn you will have a hand of cards
  - 2.5 Each round of a turn you will play one card using Op's or event

## What Operation Points are used for

1. Add influence tokens to the board
  - 1.1 Must place adjacent to existing tokens or home
  - 1.2 Can only place where you were adjacent at start of round
  - 1.3 Double Ops to place in controlled countries
2. Coups - Roll once to remove opponents to place yours
  - 2.1 Must have opponent influence
  - 2.2 Die Roll + Op Value - 2 x Stability
  - 2.3 Defcon Level lowers after battleground coup
  - 2.4 Get Military Operations = Op of Card
3. Realignment - Roll per OP to remove influence
  - 3.1 A Roll off with Modifiers for Adjacency and more support
  - 3.2 Defcon level restricts coups and realignments

## **How to Play a Card**

1. Most often cards are played for Op's Value
2. Or you can choose to play a card for the event
  - 2.1 Yours/Split cards - choose between Ops or Event
  - 2.2 Opponents cards are played for Ops
  - 2.3 Playing Opponent's cards triggers event
  - 2.4 You choose whether event occurs before or after you execute Op's
  - 2.5 Placing Influence from events is not affected by control/adjacency
  - 2.6 Many events are removed from game after play (Asterisk)
  - 2.7 Some events have persistent effects (Red Underline)
3. Ditch card to the Space Race
  - 3.1 Once per turn - good way to get rid of nasty opponent events
  - 3.2 Minimum Op Value!
  - 3.3 Roll die to achieve required roll
  - 3.4 Advancement on track gives VPs or special abilities (if ahead)
4. Recap of Round Options
  - 4.1 Most often you play a card for Ops to add tokens to board
  - 4.2 Your Card - Play for Ops or Event
  - 4.3 Opponents Card - Play for Ops (triggering event) or ditch to space
5. Playing Scoring Cards (required by end of turn)
  - 5.1 Score for Presence, Domination or Control
  - 5.2 Score for Battlegrounds and Superpower adjacency
  - 5.3 Score difference in point totals
6. The China Card
  - 6.1 Starts with the Soviet Player face up as extra card, not part of hand
  - 6.2 Four Ops or Five Ops in Asia
  - 6.3 Gives that player extra flexibility and power
  - 6.4 If you use it, goes to opponent face down, for use next turn

## **Structure of turns**

1. Improve Defcon
2. Deal Cards (Up to 8 or 9 without China Card)
  - 2.1 Turns 4 and 7 Shuffle new decks into draw pile
3. Headline Phase - Simultaneously choose a card for the event only
  - 3.1 Resolve in Descending Ops Value (USA wins tie)
4. Action Rounds (6 or 7) USSR always goes first
5. Check for Required Military Operations
6. End of Turn (Move turn marker, flip China Card, Reset Military Track)

## **The End of the Game**

1. When a player reaches 20 on the VP track
2. If a player plays a card to allow Nuclear War they lose
3. If a player controls Europe when a scoring card is played they win
4. After 10 turns score all regions and the most points wins

**3**

## **The Hamster - How to Win the Game**

1. Board Position, Board Position, Board Position
  - 1.1 Don't get distracted by events that don't improve situation
  - 1.2 Focus on Scoring Cards in the Deck
  - 1.3 Establish Control and overcontrol battleground regions
  - 1.4 Use Ops to most efficiently improve board position
2. Generally play your own cards for Op's
3. Learn the Deck - know countries to avoid
4. Be aware of Defcon levels (Don't start a nuclear war!)
  - 4.1 Use Coups to prevent opponent coups and to gain Military Ops
5. Good Luck and Have Fun!

**Credits:** Game Design: Gupta & Matthews  
Outline Author: Ryan Sturm ©2012  
Website: [www.howtoplaypodcast.com](http://www.howtoplaypodcast.com)

Game Publisher: GMT Games  
Outline based upon How to Play Episode #35  
Email: [ryan@howtoplaypodcast.com](mailto:ryan@howtoplaypodcast.com)