

Merkator



1618 - 1648: thirty years of war throughout Europe. The Hanseatic city of Hamburg, ever a center of commerce, is booming. Her merchants deal with all warring parties: here the Catholics, supporting the Emperor; there the rebellious Protestants.

You are one of those merchants. On your travels throughout Europe, you collect and deliver goods to fulfill your contracts. Your rewards are additional, more lucrative contracts that can be used or sold. If you are efficient, you can also save back time which can be spent during other players' turns to join their travels and fulfill even more contracts.

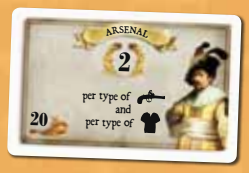
Who will be the player with the best trade network?

CONTENTS

- *1 rulebook and 1 game setup sheet*
- *2 game boards*
- *4 office boards*
- *4 scoring overview tiles*
- *4 supply tiles*
- *1 time chart*
- *1 white Merkator token*



Bonus card



Building card



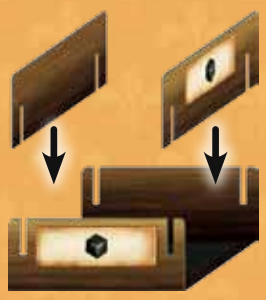
Contract

- ***120 Cards:***
  - *16 Bonus cards*
  - *26 Building cards*
  - *78 Contracts (5x "2", 11x "3", 13x "4", 12x "5", 11x "6", 9x "7", 7x "8", 5x "9", 4x "10" and 1x "14")*

- ***Approximately 320 wooden cubes:***
  - *~ 40 green goods from Hamburg: Livestock and Muskets*
  - *~ 40 yellow goods from Danzig: Grain and Saltpeter*
  - *~ 40 black goods from Sweden: Iron and Copper*
  - *~ 40 purple goods from Russia: Ham and Fish Oil*
  - *~ 40 orange goods from the Dutch Republic: Vegetables and Calfskin*
  - *~ 40 gray goods from England: Fabric and Coal*
  - *~ 40 blue goods from France: Plums and Wine*
  - *~ 40 red goods from Spain: Citrus Fruit and Spice*

- ***66 cardboard tile:***
  - *42 Time counters*
  - *24 coins (9x 1 Taler, 6x 2 Taler, 9x 5 Taler)*

- *9 easy to assemble cardboard boxes*



Please read the Game Setup sheet first!

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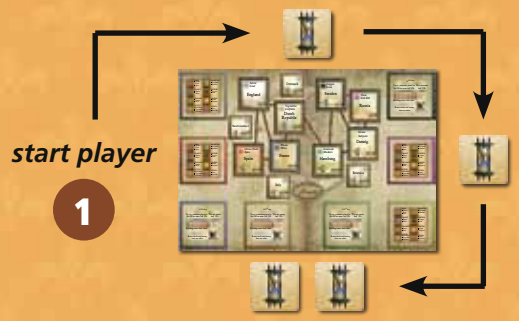
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CHOOSE A START PLAYER

Merkator is played in clockwise order.

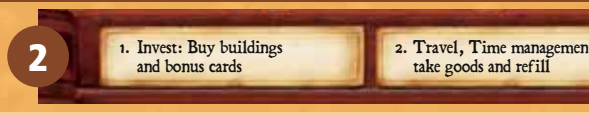
The player who was last in Hamburg will be the starting player. In case of a tie, or if none of the players have ever been to Hamburg, the player who most recently ate a hamburger will be starting player.

The starting player gets no Time counters. The player sitting to his right gets 2 Time counters, and all other players get 1 Time counter from the supply 1 .



A PLAYER'S TURN

Each player's turn consists of four steps that are played in order. There's a short turn overview on the players' office boards 2 .



1. INVESTMENT

In this first step, the player has the opportunity to make investments. As long as the player has 5 Contracts or fewer, this is optional. If a player has 6 or more Contracts 3 at the beginning of the Investment Step, it is mandatory to sell some of them and to invest the revenue. *(This is called a forced Investment.)*



The value of a Contract is shown on the card. When selling a Contract, the player gets that many Taler for it.

The player can invest in Bonus cards and/or Building cards 4 .
Bonus cards help the player to collect additional goods. Building cards give Victory Points.



- Players have a cash limit of 15 Taler. If they have more than that, they have to invest in Bonus cards and/or Building cards immediately or discard down to 15 Taler.
- Any cards bought are placed face up next to the player's office.
- Whenever a player buys a card, a new card of the same kind is immediately turned face up. There are always 4 cards of each kind in the open offer. The player then may buy another card, including the new card.
- Sold Contracts are put on the face down discard pile.
- The player may buy more than one card in this step.
- The player must not sell his last remaining Contract, as there is no way to obtain new Contracts other than fulfilling existing ones.

See "Hints for faster play" on page 7 for more information about investing.

! *It doesn't matter if the sold Contracts were on the office board or next to it. All Contracts in a player's possession are equivalent.*

2. TRAVELING

In this second step, the player chooses one of the 12 locations on the board and places the white Merkator token on that space 5 . *(The player doesn't have to move the Merkator token – the location can be the same the previous player chose.)*



A player traveling to Spain, Italy or Newfoundland has to pay Time counters for the travel 6 ; this cost has to be paid by the active player only, and not by other players joining him *(see page 3)*. If a player doesn't have enough Time counters for a destination, that player can't travel there.

Travelling is the most important mechanism in the game. It is merely outlined here. See the section "The Travel phase" on page 4 for detailed information.

2.1. The player takes all goods in that location plus bonus goods from Bonus cards of that location. The new goods are sorted onto the Storage (A-D) and Depots (E-F) spaces of that player's office.

2.2. The player places new goods on certain major locations.

2.3. The player eventually gets Time counters from the time chart 7 or has to pay some.

2.4. If one of the Time counters taken from the time chart is the last of the row, a loss-of-goods check is made.



3. FULFILL CONTRACTS

In this third step, the player can fulfill Contracts. Contracts can only be fulfilled if the location printed on the card 8 matches the current location.



To fulfill a Contract, the player returns all goods listed on the card from his office board to the general supply.

As a reward, the player gets the topmost Contract from the stack of the next higher level. This card is put onto the office board (or next to it if all 5 slots are full).

*For a fulfilled **level 5 Contract**, the player gets a **level 6 Contract***

The fulfilled Contract is not discarded, but stays in that player's office and can be fulfilled again on future turns.

- Each Contract can be fulfilled once per turn
- If a player has several Contracts for the same location, all of them can be fulfilled at the same time 9
- In the ideal case, even a Contract just gained can be fulfilled

9



If the stack of Contract cards of the level needed is empty, the discard pile is searched for all cards of that level. Shuffle them and set them up as the new stack, then the player draws a Contract from the newly formed stack.

If there are no Contracts of the level needed in the discard pile, the player draws a new Contract of the same level as the one just fulfilled.

Trading 4:1

To fulfill a Contract, players can trade goods at a 4:1 ratio for any good needed for that Contract 10 . Those 4 goods have to be of the same kind. *(These goods can consist of goods the player just got. Different goods of the same color can't be used together for a trade.)*

Alternatively, players can also trade **4 Time counters** for 1 good 11 .

11



- Players can only trade for goods that are needed for the Contract to fulfill.
- It is not possible to trade for Time counters.
- A player can trade for a good even if it is still in storage, in a depot, or on the Supply tile *(see page 4)*.
- Any number of 4:1 trades can be done for a single Contract.

It doesn't matter where the player puts the Contracts – onto or next to the office boards. It also doesn't matter if the new Contracts a player gets are put onto or next to the office board.

10

Strength in numbers: the 4:1 trade option makes trips to locations with lots of goods a great alternative



4. JOINING TRAVELS

In this fourth step, other players (in clockwise order) can decide if they want to join the active player's travel. Any player who chooses to join pays to the active player:

- 1 Time counter if the current location is a Major location
- 2 Time counters if the current location is a Minor location *(see map 12)*.

See "Hints for faster play" on page 7 for more information about joining travels.

12



Any player joining the travel can fulfill Contracts at the current location. If a player owns Bonus cards from this location, the player gets only 1 good, instead of the 2 given to the active player. *See the Bonus card illustration below.*

The active player may not prohibit other players from joining.

It is possible to negotiate joined travel before the active player chooses the destination. *Any agreements made are non-binding.*

Major locations have larger frames that are colored. See the illustration: France (blue large frame) is a Major location, Italy (uncolored small frame) is a Minor location.

There's one action that any player can do at any time during the game:
Take a cube from the supply tile 13 and put it in a storage or depot area, thus transforming it into a good. *(This makes it possible to fulfill a Contract on the first turn.)*

13



Each player starts with one cube of each color.

THE TRAVEL PHASE

As the Travel phase is the most important part of the game, it gets an even more detailed description here. After choosing a location for the turn, the active player does the following actions:

2.1. TAKING GOODS

If the current location is a **Major location**, the active player takes all cubes that have accumulated there and converts them into goods by placing them onto the office board into storage or depot areas. Each good has a distinctive space on the board.

Minor locations do not offer goods.

- If a player gets exactly 1 cube, it can be converted into either of the two possible goods.
- If a player gets exactly 2 cubes, they must be converted into 1 each of the possible goods 14 .
- If the player gets more than 2 cubes, the distribution between both types of goods is arbitrary as long as at least one of each type of good is created.

It is not possible to put goods collected during this action back onto the Supply tile.

Additionally, the player gets 2 goods for each Bonus card showing the current location. These goods are placed on the appropriate space of the office 15 .



14

If the player gets 2 black cubes in Sweden, 1 will be Copper, 1 will be Iron.

15



This Bonus card gives the player 2 yellow cubes that must be placed on the Saltpeter space, for each visit to Hamburg.

2.2. DISTRIBUTE NEW GOODS

Depending on the travel location, new goods are placed on some or all Major locations. Each location always gets cubes of its own color.

- If the current location is a **Major location**, 1 new cube is placed on each adjacent location. Locations are considered adjacent if they're connected by a line 16 .
- If the current location is a Minor location, 1 new cube is placed on each Major location that already has at least the number of cubes that is depicted on that Minor location 17 .

The supply of goods is unlimited. In the rare case where the approximately 40 cubes per color aren't sufficient, please use proxies.

See "Hints for faster play" on page 7 for more information about distributing new goods.

16

Example: *Russia is the chosen location. New cubes are placed on Sweden and Danzig.*



2.3. TIME COUNTERS

At some locations, the active player gets Time counters if travelling there. Those locations have a + sign next to the hourglass symbol.

- Choosing Sweden, Danzig, the Dutch Republic, Bohemia, and Denmark gives the player 1 Time counter, choosing Hamburg gives 2 Time counters.



- These Time counters are taken from the Time chart. They are taken always from the topmost row that has Time counters left
- A player gets these Time counters even if the location is the same one as the previous player had chosen.

At other locations, players have to pay Time counters if they travel there. These locations have a - sign next to the hourglass symbol. These counters are returned to the supply.

- Travelling to Spain costs 1 Time counter, Italy costs 2 Time counters, and Newfoundland costs 3 Time counters.



- If a player doesn't have enough Time counters to travel to a location, another location must be chosen.
- A player always has to pay Time counters to go to Spain, Italy, and Newfoundland - even if the previous player had chosen the same location *(as it is considered a new travel)*.

17



Example: *Bohemia has **3+**. If a player travels there, all Major locations that already have at least 3 cubes get another one.*

*Newfoundland has **0+**. Therefore, **all eight** Major locations get 1 cube.*

2.4. LOSS-OF-GOODS CHECK

Whenever the last Time counter from any row is taken *(see 2.3)*, the active player flips over that Time counter and reveals the letter(s) printed on it.

- The letter indicates which storage or depot will suffer from a loss of goods 18. All players must return 1 good of their choice from the respective column of their office 19. If the counter has a double letter, all players lose 2 goods of their choice from that column.
- The loss of goods applies to all players, not only to the player who triggered the check.
- If there's just one letter on the counter, the player has the option to ignore the result and to flip over the first counter of the next row. That counter's letter(s) is (are) used instead. *(The replacement counter then is put back on the time chart.)*
- A player with no goods in the affected column doesn't have to give up any goods.
- A player with just 1 good in the affected column only has to give up that good, even in the case of a double letter being flipped.
- Cubes on the Supply tile are never affected by the loss-of-goods check.



THE FINAL ROUND

The game ends with a final round, if one of the following two things happens:

- a player fulfills a value 10 Contract 20, thus earning the Peace of Westphalia card
- the last Time counter is taken from the time chart 21. *(If a player travels to Hamburg to take 2 Time counters, and there's just one left on the time chart, the second one is taken form the supply.)*

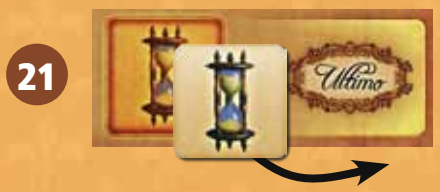
In this final round, **each player has one more turn** – including the player who triggered the final round.

- The Forced investment rule *(see page 2)* doesn't apply in this final round
- Players get Time counters from the supply

(If the final round was triggered by the last Time counter and later during the final round the Peace of Westphalia card is gained, this second condition has no additional effect. This is also true if the Peace of Westphalia triggered the final round and during that round the last Time counter is taken.)



*One of the four value 10 Contracts asks for **12 different goods** delivered to Hamburg. The Hamburg goods Cattle and Muskets may be among those.*

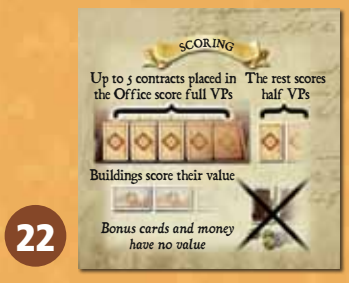


GAME END AND SCORING

After the final round, scores are tallied 22 . The player with the most VP wins the game. A player with more than 5 Contracts places the 5 most valuable ones (including the Peace of Westphalia card) onto his office board and the others next to it.

(As there are no forced investments in the final round, players can have more than 5 Contracts.)

- Each Contract placed on the office board scores its Taler value in VPs. That's even true for the Peace of Westphalia card that's worth 14 VPs.
- Each additional Contract placed next to the office scores ½ VP per Taler value. *(Use ½ VPs, no rounding)*
- Each player gets the VPs shown on his Building cards.



The Scoring overview tile emphasizes that only Contracts and Building cards score VPs

- For most buildings, the Victory Points depend on the amount of goods and Time counters the player has. Players can use their goods and Time counters to score for more than one Building card. *For example: 8 Time counters score 5 VPs for "Fleet at sea" and 4 VP for "Seeamt".*
- Cubes that are still on the Supply tile can still be moved onto the office board to help scoring some buildings.
- Goods and Time counters have no VP value other than scoring on Building cards.
- Coins and Bonus cards have no VP value.
- The phrase "per type of good" means "per good the player has at least 1 unit of in storage/depot".
- At the end of game, no 4:1 trades to improve a player's score are allowed. Players can trade 4:1 just to fulfill Contracts *(see page 3)*.
- In case of a tie, use Time counters as a tiebreaker.

Summary

It is not easy to find the best location to travel to. Several things have to be considered:

- *how many goods of which color can be gained*
- *which Contracts can be fulfilled and which new Contracts can be gained*
- *if Time counters should be spent, gained, or saved for later occasions*
- *if it makes more sense to travel to Minor locations if the Major locations just have few goods*
- *if other players benefit from certain travel locations*

SOLITARY VERSION

The solo game has a limit of 17 turns.
Use the standard rules with the changes listed below.

SETUP

- You need approximately 15 Time counters. The time chart and the letters on the flip side will not be used – there's no loss-of-goods in the solitary version.
- As in the standard game, put 1 cube on each Major location. You get 2 random Bonus cards – one each of value 3 and of value 4.
- The five Building cards with the phrase "the sole player" are removed from play. Those cards have a different illustration on the right side 23 .
- Remove all coins from play. Instead of selling your Contracts for coins and spending those coins on Bonus Cards or Building cards, you pay directly using your Contracts as coins. Beware that you don't get change, so don't overpay too much.
- Prepare a face-down stack of Contract cards. Put the Peace of Westphalia card on the bottom of that stack, then add the shuffled value 10 Contracts, the shuffled value 9 Contracts and the shuffled value 8 Contracts. This stack is called "the Solo stack". *(Place the remaining Contract cards as in the standard game.)*
- As in the standard game, you get one Contract each of values 2, 3, 4, and 5.



PLAYING THE GAME

- Whenever you buy a Building card in the Investment step, put all 4 face up Bonus cards under the Bonus card stack and reveal 4 new cards. *(You also reveal a new Building card, of course.)*
- In the Travel step of a turn, the topmost card of the Solo stack is drawn and put onto the appropriate pile for Contract cards. In this way, the stacks for Contracts with values 8, 9, and 10 build up during the game.
- Consequently, the topmost card on those stacks can change from turn to turn.
- The game ends after the last card of the Solo stack is drawn, the Peace of Westphalia card. The current round is played without forced investments. Therefore, you have just this last round to gain the Peace of Westphalia card.
- You can't join other players' travels as there are no other players. Don't be ludicrous.
- If one of the stacks of Contract cards is empty and/or not yet existent, and you need to draw a Contract of that value, you draw a Contract of the same level as the one you just fulfilled instead. Do not search the discard pile for cards.
- We recommend that you ignore the Hand Card rule *(see page 8, Rules for experienced players)* until you consider yourself a seasoned Merkator.

GAME END AND SCORING

Score Victory Points as in the standard game. Benchmarks are 55 VP for beginners, 60 VP for more experienced players and 80 VP for Über-Merkators.

HINT

Make sure that you always draw the top card from the Solo stack whenever you move the Merkator token in the Travel step. This ensures that the game just takes the 17 turns it is supposed to.

HINTS TO SPEED UP PLAY

- **Investment -** The Investment step is the first step of a turn. This way, a player has plenty of time in the previous player's turn to think about investing and what to buy. *(In Merkator, you can theoretically plan your whole turn while the player to your right takes his/her turn.)*
- **Invest -** If a player skips the Investment step and chooses a location while the forced investments rule is in effect, that player immediately has to sell Contracts for coins and gets no chance to buy Bonus cards or Building cards this turn.
- **Distribute goods -** If a player travels to a Major location, it is easy to check if the distribution of goods has been overlooked. Check the adjacent Major locations. If any of those locations has no goods, something is wrong. *(Two connected Major locations can never be emptied of goods at the same time.)*
- **Distribute goods -** If a player travels to a Minor location, also check the Major locations to see if the distribution of goods was missed. For example, if the player traveled to Bohemia (3+), there may never be exactly 3 cubes in any of the Major locations afterwards.
- **Joining travels -** Players joining the travel to one of the Major locations don't have to wait for the active player to finish his actions. The can fulfill their Contracts immediately, as Major locations never have 2 Contracts of the same value.
- **End of turn -** Players should announce that they're done. Players joining the travel should declare this early.
- **Building and Bonus cards -** Most Building cards score fewer VPs than players paid coins for them. But as surplus Contracts have to be sold anyways during the regular rounds anway, and score just half their coin value in the final round, investing in Buildings is still profitable. To invest in Bonus cards is normally profitable if you get goods from that card at least twice.

VARIANTS

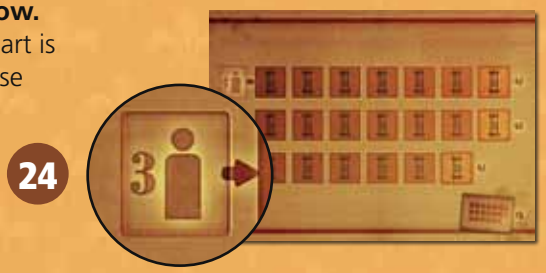
THE LONG GAME OF MERKATOR

Use the standard rules besides the changes in the game setup listed below.
With 3 or 4 players, flip the Time chart onto its backside. With 4 players, the chart is filled completely; with 3 players, just the third line is filled 24 . With 2 players, use the ULTIMO side and fill the chart except the upper row.

The players initially get:

- **no** cubes onto the Supply tile
- **no** Bonus cards,
- only one value 2 and one value 3 Contract
- **no** Time counters to make up for the starting player's advantage

With 3 or 4 players, as soon as the backside has no Time counters left, turn it over and re-fill it completely with Time counters. *(Ignore the 3-player logo.)*



This symbol (long outline) shows where to put additional Time counters for the long version of the game.

2 PLAYER GAME

The 2 player game can be smoother if joining travels is banned. But your mileage may vary.
To give the game even more depth (and more thinking time), don't ue coins as in the solitary version.

EXPERT RULES

Players have a hand limit of 1 card. During a player's turn, that player can take one of the cards that are on one of the open stacks. This might be a Bonus card, a Building card or a Contract with a value between 3 and 10.

- The Peace of Westphalia card can never be a card held in a player's hand.
- It is a valid tactic to take a Contract to gain access to the card below it.
- By taking a card in hand, a player can deny other players access to this card.

Players can buy a Building card or a Bonus card from their hand during the investment step of their turn.

If a player has a Contract card in hand and fulfills a Contract of the next lower level, that player can choose to take the topmost Contract from the open stack or to take the card in hand.

Hand cards can not be discarded.

- Having a hand card at the end of the game has no effect.

ADDITIONAL VARIANTS

A To reduce the luck factor, ignore the loss-of-goods rule *(see page 5)*. The flip side of the Time counters then has no effect.

B The standard rules have a cash limit of 15 Taler. This rule can be replaced by this one: Whenever a player buys a Building card, all players have to check their cash value. If a player has enough Taler to possibly buy the most expensive Building on offer, that player immediately has to purchase one of the 4 open Building cards. Then a new Building card is revealed and again the cash of all players (including the active player) is checked. Repeat this until no player could possibly buy the most expensive Building in the offering.

C The Bonus cards can be revalued so that a player buying a Bonus card immediately gets 1 good of the respective kind.

D To make it easier to optimize Contracts, add this rule: Whenever a player takes a new Contract card and the next card from the stack is revealed, any players can offer the active player coins and/or Time counters. If at least 1 coin or 1 Time counter is offered, the active player may take the newly revealed Contract (plus all items offered to him) and put back the Contract he just took. No goods may be offered.

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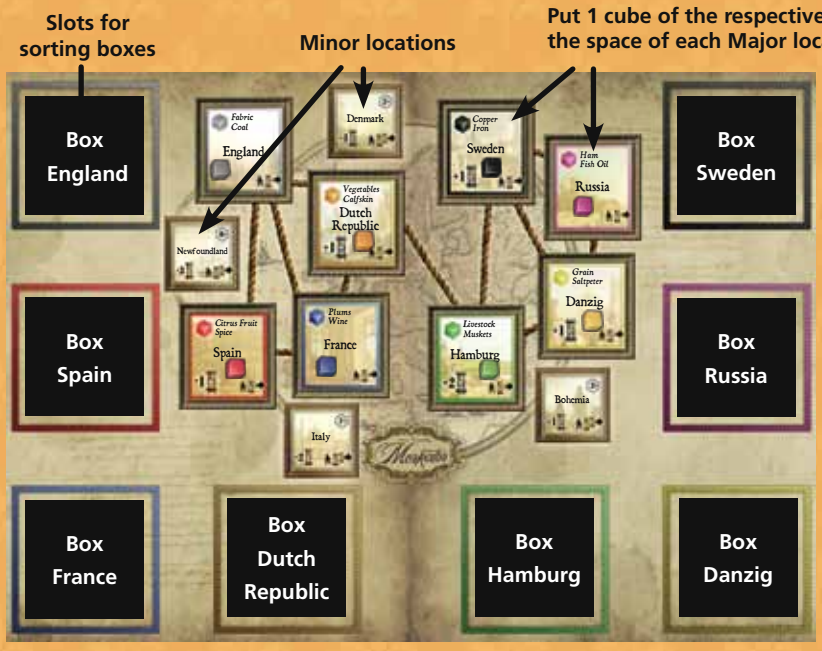
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GAME SETUP

Punch out the overview cards and assemble the sorting boxes. Both parts of the game board are placed next to each other, and the colored boxes are put in the respective slots. Sort the wooden cubes by color and put them into the boxes.



Time chart





Shuffle the Time counters with the hourglass side up



Place the Merkator token and the coins next to the board

Use the ULTIMO side of the time chart and put it next to the game board.
Depending on the number of players, fill it with Time counters:

- with **4 players**, all rows are filled 4
- with **3 players**, the top row is left empty 3
- with **2 players**, the two topmost rows are left empty 2

The remaining Time counters are put in the sorting box, unsorted.

Contracts





Face down discard pile

- Sort the **Contracts** by their value (lower left corner or card back) and shuffle those stacks. Deal all players four Contracts: one of value 2, 3, 4 and 5 each. Place all stacks face-up.
- Turn the remaining value 2 Contracts face down to form the discard pile. *(Those value 2 Contracts will not be needed for the rest of the game.)*

- Sort the **Bonus cards** by coin value (lower left corner) onto two piles. Shuffle those piles. All players get 1 card of each pile.
- Shuffle the two piles together face down.

- Shuffle the **Building cards** face down.



Bonus cards



- Place the top 4 Building cards face up next to the face down stack.

Building cards



- TPlace the top 4 Bonus cards face up next to the face down stack.

THE PLAYERS' OFFICES

All players have one office board to store their goods and Contracts. Additionally, they get one Supply tile A and one Scoring overview card B .



The category the good belongs to

Store your goods here

Each cube can be used for one of two goods

Players start with 0-2 Time counters, depending on starting order

Storage and Depots are letter-coded

Turn overview

The stack this Contracts comes from

The amount of money you get if you sell the Contract

The good(s) you need to deliver to fulfill the Contract

Some Contracts require goods from one category

The location you fulfill the Contract

You can place more Contracts next to the office

The **Bonus cards** are placed next to the office.



The bonus you get in addition if you travel to that location yourself

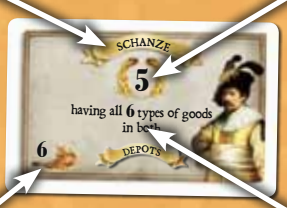
The bonus you get if you travel with another player

How much you pay to purchase that Bonus card



You start the game with 1 cube of each color on your **Supply tile**. At any time during the game, you may move any of those goods to a storage or depot space on your office.

If you buy **Building cards**, place them next to your office.

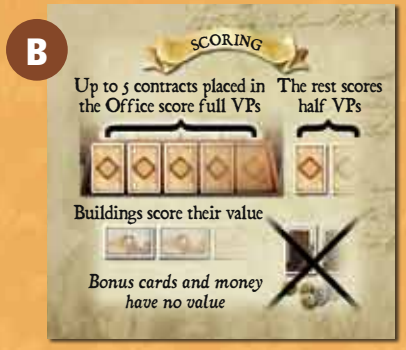


Name of the building *(Hamburg landmarks kept their German name)*

Victory Points awarded for fulfilling the condition

card cost

The condition to fulfill



The **Scoring overview** shows howVictory Points are awarded at the end of the game