



# GAME OVERVIEW

## AN INTRODUCTION TO EMPIRE BUILDER.



*Empire Builder is a captivating game that you can enjoy hundreds of times—after you’ve learned the rules and played the first time. The best way to learn the game is from someone who has played it many times before and who can teach you more than just the rules—he can teach you how to play.*

*I will start this explanation by answering some of the most frequently asked questions.*

### What is the game about?

*Empire Builder is a game about building railroads, running trains, and making money. On the plastic-coated board, use your crayon to connect the dots to create your railroad; then, use your pawn to move up and down your railroad tracks to make money by picking up and delivering goods.*

### What is the object of the game?

You win *Empire Builder* if you’re the first player whose railroad connects six major cities and who has 250 million.

### How do I build my railroad?

#### Do I just draw on the board?

It costs money to build a railroad! As you build, you have to pay for each milepost to which you connect your railroad. The charge varies according to the type of milepost to which you are building, according to this chart:

If the milepost to which you connect is a:	It costs:
Clear milepost.....	1 million
Mountain milepost .....	2 million
Small city milepost .....	3 million
Medium city milepost .....	3 million
Major city milepost .....	5 million

In addition to the milepost cost, you also have to pay to bridge the water obstacles, the rivers, and some lake segments. Whenever your rail line crosses those water barriers, you must pay an additional cost, according to this chart:

If your track crosses a:	It costs, in addition to the milepost cost:
River (or lake channel) .....	2 million

For example, we will build a new track from Kansas City to Birmingham, by way of St. Louis and Memphis. Go ahead and follow along with the example, by using your own crayon and drawing the same route on your own board. Be sure to count out the cost as you go along. In the illustration below, look at the cost of building this route, including cities and crossing a river.

You should remember that:

1. You can always build from a major city milepost, so you start building at Kansas City.
2. You can also build from any milepost that you’ve already built to, so you branched from your line just below St. Louis. Remember, you can start building either at a major city mile-





post or at any milepost to which you have already built track.

- It costs 3 million to build into St. Louis and Birmingham since they are small cities. It costs 5 million to build to Memphis: 2 million to cross the Mississippi and 3 million to build into a small city.
- You can't spend more than 20 million building track in any turn, so you can't spend the total cost of 22 million in one turn. To build this track, you need to build to the milepost just before Birmingham on one turn and build into Birmingham on your next turn.
- Only one track can be built between any two mileposts, so no other player can later build any track where the player in this example built his. However, more than one person can connect his track to a milepost, so that your track can be "crossed" by another player if he builds his track to (and from) a milepost that you have built to (and from).

If you were short of money and did not have an immediate need to build to Memphis, you could have bypassed it. By doing this, you could also have finished the line in one turn, as well as saved the extra cash. However, only two players can build into a small city (and only three players can build into a medium city), so if two others built into Memphis before you did, you couldn't build your line into the city.

When you're done, leave the lines on the board for the next example.



## How do I make money? Is this all there is to the game?

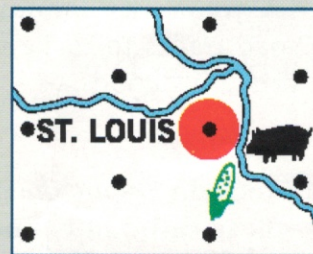
No! After you've built your railroad, you have to run your train on it to make money.

When you are playing, you will have 3 cards (called demand cards) that tell you which cities want goods and how much they're willing to pay for them. Each card has 3 "demands," but you can only use one of them and then you must discard the card. Each demand looks like this:

- Birmingham* is the **city name**
- 8 million* is the **payoff** amount
- corn* is the name of the **goods**



To make this run, you have to pick up corn and deliver it to Birmingham to earn the 8 million payoff. Looking at the board, you see the symbol for corn (🌽) near St. Louis. That symbol means that you can pick up corn in St. Louis. You already have a railroad line that connects St. Louis (where you can pick up the load) and Birmingham (where your demand card says you can deliver the load for an 8 million payoff). All you need to do is to run your train along your railroad to pick up corn in St. Louis and deliver it to Birmingham.



As in the last example, follow along on your own board. First put your pawn in Kansas City; you can start your pawn at any city at the beginning of the game. (We're starting here so that I can show you how to run your train; normally you would start in St. Louis.) Your pawn represents a freight train, which goes at a speed of 9 mileposts per turn and carries up to 2 loads at a time. Start by moving your pawn down your railroad and counting the mileposts as you go along. When you get to St. Louis, you will have moved 4 mileposts (of the 9 that you can move this turn).



In St. Louis, pick up 2 loads of corn. The “loads” are the plastic chips; they are kept in the sorting tray in the box. With your remaining 5 mileposts of movement, you can continue moving your pawn toward Birmingham. On your next turn, you arrive in Birmingham after moving 6 mileposts.



There you deliver the corn by returning 1 load to the tray (only one load can be delivered with one demand card) and receiving 8 million from the bank. Discard the demand card, since only one demand on each card may be used. Note that you should automatically pick up the extra load since it costs nothing (either in cash or in movement) and it acts as cheap insurance in case an event card turns up.

### Are these all the rules?

That’s the basics on how to play *Empire Builder*, but that’s not all the rules! So you should take a moment to scan the rulebook to pick up the rest of the rules. Keep an eye out for these:

1. You can upgrade your train to a fast freight, heavy freight and super freight to enable them to carry more loads and/or go faster.
2. You should be prepared for an event card to turn up instead of a demand card. The worst are the Flood cards, which wipe out your bridges and force you to rebuild them (at 3 million or more per bridge).
3. You don’t have to build track in the red area of major cities. When you run your train, you can travel from one major city milepost to another (including the center milepost) as if it were part of your railroad.
4. You can run your train on another player’s track, but you must pay 4 million per turn to every player on whose track you run.
5. No more loads are available than the number included in the game. You may not make any more loads.

Remember, this is a friendly game, and you should be able to pick up the rest of the rules as you play along. Before going on, take a paper napkin or paper towel and wipe the board clean.

### Help! How do I get started?

You start the game with 50 million, 3 demand cards and an empty board. Simply, you need to find a route for your railroad track that you can afford with your 50 million (plus any earnings from early deliveries) and which links the load pickup and delivery cities that are on your demand cards.

**Remember:** *You can only use one demand on a demand card; after delivering one demand, you discard the card.*

As you make your initial builds, keep these points in mind:

1. Don’t guess about your route! Count it out. It may seem complex and confusing, but examining the alternatives and making the best choices are what this game is all about.
2. Count your money. Keep your flexibility. You never know what card will next turn up, whether demand or event card. A Flood card could turn early, costing you money to rebuild your bridges; if you don’t anticipate, you could be trapped.
3. Pay attention to the order of your building. Make sure that the line you build lets you make the run on your first demand card before worrying about the next one. Remember, you can’t build without money, and so always be certain how you’re going to get the money for your next build. Make sure you are running for enough payoff to build for your next run; otherwise you should consider dropping your cards and getting a new set before using up your cash on unworkable cards. You can trap yourself with no makeable runs if you don’t watch out.
4. Never build track that you don’t have an immediate, specific plan on using, including track in anticipation of demand cards that can’t be completed for a run. Some exceptions to this guideline need to be made to ensure later entry into small and medium cities and to build defensively (and occasionally, offensively), but be very careful with your available cash.



5. Be careful with your actual building. Don't jog your line to avoid mountains; it is rarely any real benefit. Watch how you build through cities; jogging around a small or medium city may yield only a 1 million benefit and later additional cost to build into the city. Also, it only costs 1 million to 3 million to build out of a major city (depending on the milepost to which you're building), but it always costs 5 million to build into a major city. The only limit is that you can only build two track segments from major city mileposts in one turn; so, plan your building to build out from major city mileposts to meet your oncoming rail line.
6. Remember, when you finish with your first demand cards, they will be replaced, and you will be building your railroad and running your train in response to these unseen demands. Keep some flexibility for these unforeseeable cards.
7. To win, your railroad must connect six of the seven major cities. As you build, be sure to include any major city in the vicinity to meet this requirement to win.

So now you've got a start on the game, a plan of attack for future moves and some suggestions on how to build.

### How do I set up to play?

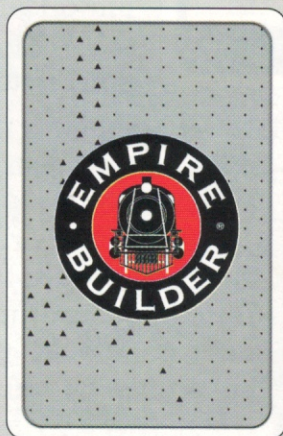
Now its time for you to begin. Lets set up the game for the first time:

1. Make sure you've cleaned the board after the examples; you just need a dry paper napkin or paper towel to wipe the crayon off. **Don't use soap and water!** The board is only plastic covered paper, after all.

Put the board in the middle of the table, so everyone can reach it.

2. Open up the card packs. This first time, you need to separate out the loco cards (put them with the money).

Shuffle the deck thoroughly.



3. Deal 3 cards *face up* to each player. Return all the event cards to the dealer and get new cards, until every player has three demand cards to start with. The dealer shuffles the event cards back into the deck and puts the deck on the board.

Each player now looks at his demand cards. The player who has the largest single payout for a demand goes first (break ties based on the next largest payout).

4. Give every player 50 million and a pawn and crayon of the same color. Every player gets a freight loco card to start with.
5. Choose one player to act as banker, who holds the box with the money, the load chips and the loco cards.

You're ready to start! You play two rounds of turns without moving, to build your initial track. After those two rounds, start running your trains.

### Are we ready to start?

Now you're on your own. If you have specific questions, consult the rulebook, which states all the rules to the game. If you think there is any conflict between my explanation and the rulebook, follow the rulebook and ignore me!

That's the end of your introduction to *Empire Builder*. I'm sure you'll find it to be the most captivating game that you've ever played.

Thanks and enjoy the game!