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2 - 4 (-8)
30 - 60 (-90)
12+



In ESSEN, each player is a board game publisher that attends the most prestigious board game fair in the world. At that fair, new board games hit the market, visitors search for their “grail” game, and publishers’ fortunes are made.

The goal is to attract visitors, sell them games, and make the most money!

The fair lasts for 8 turns, spread over the mornings and afternoons of four days. Each turn, visitors makes their way to the booths, where demo tables display the newest games, and sales counters help board game geeks feed their habit.

Depending on how much effort they put towards selling, the players can turn those visitors into money. However, the market for games is fickle – and hundreds of new games make their debut at the fair!

But, if they have been prudent enough to set up sufficient demo tables, players will generate buzz, which will get them more visitors (and perhaps sales) in the next round.

The game publisher who earns the most money, from sales and from bonuses stemming from future prospects, will be the one who had the best fair and will win this game of games!

COMPONENTS

1 CENTRAL BOARD

The central board helps players keep track of their collective sales, the amount of bonuses that they can expect, and the available special offers, ads, and accountants that can be used.

The Sales Track is used each round to mark the **collective sales** (using a small cube), as well as the **highest-ever collective sales** (using a big cube).

Depending on the increase or decrease of collective sales, the **price table** marker (the other small cube) is moved up or down, changing the prices for the next round, and indicating if sales are trending up or down.

Depending on the times that the collective sales have reached a new all-time-high level, the **bonus** marker (the other big cube) is moved along the Bonus Track.



4 PLAYER BOARDS

The players use these boards as their exhibitor booths.

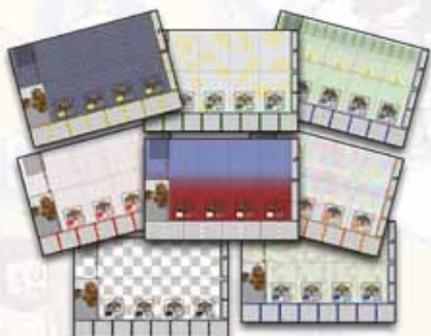
There are four spaces with **demo tables**, which attract visitors to the booth. Players may place **Seller tiles** to cover the tables and turn those spaces into sales tables.

There is a space for a **back office**, where players may keep their player token, starting money, Seller tiles not in use, as well as Special Offer and Accountant tiles waiting to be used.

Above the back office is the **queue area**, where visitors will line up to enter the booth each turn.

On the top-right there is a space where **competitors** may place their player token in order to lure visitors away to their own booths.

Along the bottom edge of the player board there is a space for storing visitors that have been converted to money, with one slot for each of the **8 rounds** of the game.





8 WOODEN PLAYER TOKENS

Available in blue, red, green, yellow, black, white, purple and orange, these allow ESSEN to be played with up to 8 players with another copy of the game.



4 WOODEN CUBES

One small cube marks the previous round's collective sales, while the other small cube tracks the current level of prices, as well as the current **visitors:money** conversion ratio (1:1 or 2:1)



One large cube marks the highest-ever level of collective sales, while the other large cube tracks the current bonus level.



16 SELLER TILES

These tiles, 4 per player, are used to cover demo tables on the player boards, to turn them into sales tables.



120 VISITOR TILES

On one side of each tile a prospective customer is depicted, while on the other side there is a **money** symbol. When players convert these **visitors into money**, they flip the tiles to the money side and stack them on the appropriate slot for the current round on their player boards.



40 EXTRA VISITOR TILES

These tiles represent local prospective customers that only enter the fair if attracted by **ads**. They are used in the same way as the regular Visitor tiles, but their entry into the game depends on player actions.



4 QUEUE TILES

The Queue tiles help the players remember the turn order at any given round.



9 DEMAND TILES

The **visitor number** depicted on one side of these tiles determines how many visitors come to the fair during each round of the game. The illustration on the reverse shows how many **sales tables** will be making sales each round, representing the fluctuations in demand by the buying public.

Both sides contain a thumbnail of what is on the other sides, to help the players plan for the next round.



3 SPECIAL OFFER TILES

Special offers represent promotions, discounts and other methods that a player may use to increase sales. They allow an exhibitor to convert visitors to money at a **1:1 ratio**, regardless of the trend in sales.



6 AD TILES

Ads attract more prospective customers to the fair (drawn from the **Extra Visitor tiles** supply), and increase the buzz rating of a player's booth.



3 ACCOUNTANT TILES

Accountants can be hired by the players to "cook the books" and help earn bonuses at the end of the game.

5 ESSEN MONSTER & SPECIAL VOLUNTEER TILES



For more information on these tiles, please visit LudiCreations.com

COMPONENTS FOR GAMES WITH 5-8 PLAYERS



4 DOUBLE-SIDED ADDITIONAL DEMAND TILES

These tiles are used to indicate how many additional Visitor tiles to draw during the Sales phase in games for 5-8 players.

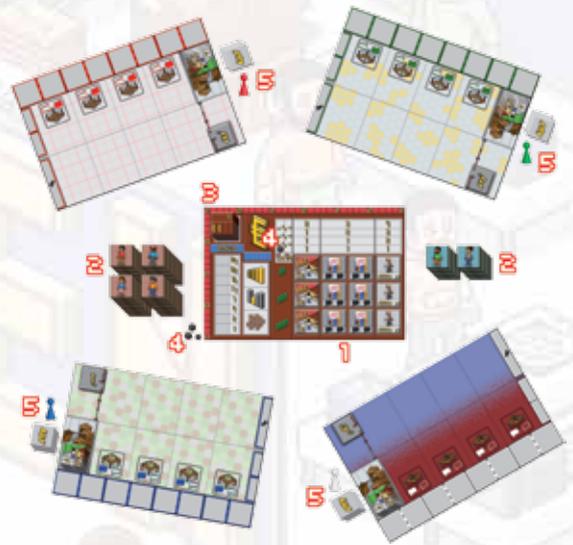


24 WOODEN BONUS DISCS

The bonuses on the reverse side of the central board are only for games with 5-8 players. The discs are used in tracking those bonuses. There are more discs than necessary, even for games with 8 players.

SETUP

1. Place on the central board the number of Special Offer, Ad, and Accountant tiles that correspond to the **number of players in the game**, as indicated by the green markers. For example, in a game with 3 players, use 2 Special Offer tiles, 4 Ad tiles and 2 Accountant tiles. Turn any extra tiles **face-down** to cover surplus spots on the board.
2. Create the Visitor tile supply by stacking 30 Visitor tiles **per player**. Create the Extra Visitor tile supply by stacking 10 Extra Visitor tiles **per player**. For example, in a game with 3 players, create a stack of 90 Visitor tiles, and a stack of 30 Extra Visitor tiles. **Keep these two stacks separate**. Return any surplus tiles to the box.
3. Taking care **not to see in which order they will come** (e.g. by shuffling them under the table), place the Demand tiles on their spot at the top-left of the central board with their **sales tables** side facing up, and their visitor number side facing down.
4. Place one **small cube** on the price table, on the **lowest square of the left-most column**. Place all other cubes near the "0" of the Sales Track.
5. Give each player 1 player board and 1 matching player token, 4 Seller tiles, and 3 starting money (3 Visitor tiles from the Visitor tile supply, turned to the money side). All tiles are placed in the **back office** space of the player board.



The player who last visited the city of Essen is the **first player, and receives the "1." Queue tile**. Alternatively, the first player may be chosen by any method the players wish (e.g. the last one to have bought a board game). The rest of the Queue tiles are distributed in order clockwise from the first player.

SETUP FOR GAMES WITH 5-8 PLAYERS

To set up the game for more than 4 players, you need another copy of ESSEN. From the second copy take:

- 30 Visitor & 10 Extra Visitor tiles per additional player, and add them to the appropriate stacks.
- The central board, placing it on its reverse side just below the bottom edge of the first copy's central board, aligning the spaces for Special Offer, Ad and Accountant tiles.
- Special Offer, Ad and Accountant tiles for the appropriate number of players, placing them on the added central board.

Give to each player 1 player board, 1 player token, 4 Seller tiles, and 3 starting money from the Visitor stack.

Take the appropriate Additional Demand tile, and set it next to the central board, showing the side which corresponds to the number of players in the game (5, 6, 7 or 8).

Finally, take one bonus disc per player, to be used on the appropriate Bonus Track(s) that are located on the reverse of the additional central board.

A TURN OF ESSEN

A game of ESSEN is played over 8 rounds, representing the mornings and afternoons of the four days of the fair. Odd-numbered (1, 3, 5, 7) rounds are the mornings, and even-numbered rounds (2, 4, 6, 8) are the afternoons.

In each of the 8 rounds of the game, the players resolve each one of these phases before moving to the next one:

1. **Booth setup:** The players decide how much effort to spend on selling or demonstrating games.
2. **Action:** Each publisher chooses to concentrate on one aspect of exhibiting at ESSEN.
3. **Sales:** The visitors buy games and are converted into money.
4. **Buzz!:** The exhibitors use the buzz they generated to attract visitors from other booths.
5. **Cleanup:** The booths are tidied up and prepared for the next round.

There is no hidden information in ESSEN, all players are allowed to inspect and count any stack of tiles, except the Demand tile stack.

1. BOOTH SETUP

Here they are! The hordes of board game geeks descend, coming from all over the place; from the U-Bahn stations, from the parking garages, from the Atlantic up the street. And, they've all skipped breakfast, to be there an hour earlier. Today, they feast on cardboard.

At the beginning of each round, the tile that is at the top of the Demand tile stack will be showing a number between **10** and **40**, which indicates the number of visitors that will be entering the fair in the **current round**.

These visitors will be **divided equally between the booths** and will either buy games or sit down for a game demonstration. Based on the number of visitors they can expect to receive, the players must decide how many sales tables to set up, by covering demo tables with seller tiles.

If the tiles can not be divided exactly, any extra tiles are given out in turn order.



The seller tiles represent the time and resources that each exhibitor will dedicate to generate sales. Only sales tables result in sales for the players.

To turn a demo table into a sales table, each player, **in turn order**, chooses between 0 and 4 seller tiles to place in their booth. Seller tiles must be placed from left to right, covering the first 1, 2, 3, or all 4 tables, or none at all.

The players must immediately pay **one money** per seller tile that they use. In the first round, players can only afford to pay for up to 3 seller tiles.

Any money spent during the game is returned to the **Visitor tile supply** (even if the front of the tile is an Extra Visitor).

When paying for any expenses, players must first use their starting money. Once that is exhausted, money may be taken from each of the 8 spaces of their player board, spending the money that was most recently earned (from the right-most stack), and continuing from the right to the left.

NOTE: While it may be difficult to estimate demand in the beginning, as more and more Demand tiles are revealed, the players will have a better idea of what kind of crowds to expect. This reflects the reality of the fair, where total sales are more or less as expected, but the timing varies from year to year, as school holidays and other events affect exactly when some visitors can come.

2. ACTION

OK, so now what? There's a decent crowd around your tables, and the sounds of wood and cardboard being shuffled about echo between cases of games to (hopefully) be sold. You should probably get on your feet and seal the deal.

After deciding how much effort to spend on selling, the players choose their action for the round, which represents their personal effort and attention on one aspect of exhibiting at the fair.

The players, **in turn order**, choose **one** of four possible actions:

- **Drive sales**
- **Create buzz**
- **Compete directly**
- **Claim Special Offer / Ad / Accountant**

✦ DRIVE SALES

If you want a job done right, you will probably have to do it yourself. Also, you may not have the money to hire others to do it for you.

To Drive Sales, a Seller tile is placed on a demo table, along with the **player's token** on top.

If a player has chosen to use all 4 Seller tiles during **Booth Setup**, this action may not be chosen.

No money is needed to use this action – the exhibitor is personally at the sales table.



✦ CREATE BUZZ

Sometimes, it is necessary to get your hands dirty and sit down and play, to show how great your games are.

To create additional buzz, the **player's token** is placed on a demo table's **empty buzz icon**, indicating that this table now generates **two buzz**, instead of one.

If all tables were converted to sales tables during Booth Setup, this action may not be chosen.



✦ COMPETE DIRECTLY

Sometimes, it is necessary to get your hands really dirty, and make sure that your games are what the visitors see – it's for their own good, really – you wouldn't want them buying the wrong game now, would you?

This action represents all the tricks that exhibitors use to attract attention to their booth – handouts, music, cosplay, Nutella.

To compete directly with another exhibitor, the **player's token** is placed next to another player's board, adjacent to the area with the **bullhorn icon**.

This will cause a portion of that booth's visitors to be allocated to the token as if it was one of the tables in the booth, during the allocation of Visitor tiles in the **Sales** phase.

Multiple tokens may be placed on one player board, each receiving a portion of the Visitor tiles distributed to that particular booth.

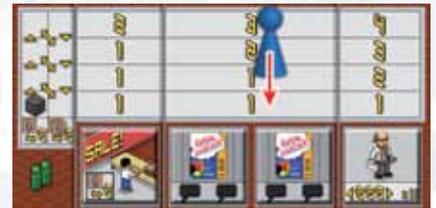


✦ CLAIM SPECIAL OFFER / AD / ACCOUNTANT

With several hundred games being released every year, it may take a little more than a promo card to get people to visit your booth and buy your games.

A player may choose, as their action, to buy one of the available tiles on the central board. To do so, the player's token is placed on the relevant column, on the current price of the tile.

The player must pay that amount, taking the money from their 3 initial money tiles, or from the latest money tiles that have been collected. Any money spent is returned to the Visitor tile stack (**even if the tile is an Extra Visitor**).



✦ SPECIAL OFFERS

Special Offer tiles represent discounts, promo items and other such actions that allow an exhibitor to sell at a **1:1** ratio, collecting one money for each one visitor no matter what the market conditions are.

The tile is immediately placed **on top of the left-most Seller tile** on the player's board. If a player has not chosen to use any Seller tiles, the Special Offer tile is held in the back office space, to be used during the next round, if the next round is an even-numbered one (afternoon).

✦ ADS

By buying ads, players generate buzz and attract more visitors to the trade show.

An Ad tile has two effects:

When claimed, it is immediately added to the board of the player that claimed it, on one of the slots for ads, **increasing buzz by two**.

During the **Sales** phase it **adds Extra Visitor tiles** to the game, as indicated on the space on the central board that is now revealed.

✦ ACCOUNTANTS

By hiring an accountant, a player can take advantage of creative accounting practices to report better results at the end of the fair, hopefully enough to earn them a bonus.

When claimed, the accountant tile is placed in the back office space of the player board, and may be used during the **Cleanup** phase to move up to **3 money tiles** between the money stacks that have been formed during the game.

When an Accountant tile is used, **it must be discarded** – it does not remain on the player's board.

3. SALES

You know the old joke about how to make a small fortune in the boardgaming business? Turns out that even if you start with a large fortune, you still don't end up with even a small one.

REVEAL DEMAND TILE

To start the Sales phase, the players pick up the top tile of the Demand tile stack (revealing the sales tables side of the next Demand tile under it), flip it and place it next to the central board, with the visitor number facing up.



DRAW VISITOR TILES

The number of Visitor tiles shown on the Demand tile (10, 20, 30 or 40) are taken from the Visitor tile stack. If there are fewer tiles on the stack than the number needed, then all remaining tiles are drawn.

DRAWING ADDITIONAL VISITOR TILES IN GAMES WITH 5-8 PLAYERS

An additional number of Visitor tiles are taken from the Visitor stack, with that number depending on the number of players in the game and the Demand tile for that round. More specifically:

Number of players	5		6		7		8	
Current demand tile	10 to 20	30 to 40						
Additional Visitor tiles added	5	10	10	20	15	30	20	40

If any **Extra Visitor** tile icons are visible on the Ad tile spaces of the central board, add that many Extra Visitor tiles to the Visitor tiles that are to be distributed to the players.

Example:

The 30-visitor Demand tile has been placed next to the central board, and 3 ads have been bought. The players will divide 33 Visitor Tiles among them (30 Visitors + 3 Extra Visitors).

NOTE: As the Ad tiles are only returned to the central board every second round (in the afternoons, at the end of each day – see **Cleanup**), an Ad claimed during odd-numbered rounds (the mornings) will result in a total of two Extra Visitor tiles to be added to the game.

Example:

Day 1 – morning: 3 ads have been bought, revealing 3 spots, therefore adding 3 Extra Visitor tiles.

Day 1 – afternoon: 2 more ads have been bought, revealing 5 spots, therefore adding 5 Extra Visitor tiles.

ALLOCATE VISITOR TILES TO TABLES / COMPETITORS

Each player takes their share of the Visitor tiles and places them in their Queue area, adding them to any tiles already there. Then, they allocate those visitors to each of their tables, placing any excess tiles on the leftmost tables first.

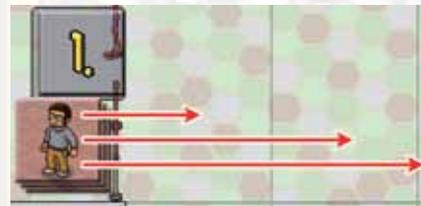
Example:

A player who received 9 Visitor tiles will allocate 3 to the 1st table, and 2 to each table after that.

If there are any other players' tokens present in the Compete space, they are each treated as a table, and are allocated tiles.

Example:

If one player's token is present where 9 Visitor tiles are to be divided, each of the tables will receive 2, while the player's token will receive 1.

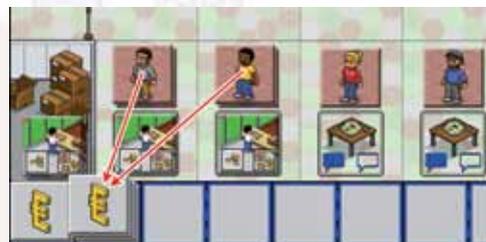


GENERATE SALES

Each player now converts visitors to money, by flipping the Visitor tiles to their money side.

The players note the number of **money icons** shown on the top tile of the Demand tile stack. This represents the general level of demand for games, and indicates the number of **sales tables (between 1 and 4)** that will be generating sales in this round, counting from the left-most table.

Each player takes the Visitor tiles that are present in front of those sales tables, turns them so that the money side is facing up, and stacks them on the sales space for **the current round**.



Only visitors in front of sales tables are eligible to be converted into money. It may be that players have underestimated demand, and they have not set up enough sales tables to satisfy demand.

Example: The top Demand tile that has just been revealed shows a demand of 2. A player has set up one sales table, and will only convert the visitors standing in front of that table into money.

Conversely, a player may have overestimated demand, placing a number of sellers higher than the level of demand. In this case, those excess sales tables (the right-most ones) will not generate sales.

Example: The top Demand tile that has just been revealed shows a demand of 2. A player that has set up three sales tables will not convert the visitors standing in front of the 3rd table into money.

If the previous round's collective sales were higher than the round before that, then **every 1 visitor will result in 1 money**, as indicated on the price table marker.

If the previous round's collective sales were lower than the round before that, then **every 2 visitors will result in 1 money**, as indicated on the price table marker. Any Visitor tiles in front of **active** sales tables that were not converted into money are returned to the **Visitor tile supply** (even if they are Extra Visitor tiles).

COUNT COLLECTIVE SALES AND ADJUST PRICE TABLE (1, 2)

1. The players calculate the collective sales for this round. Each player announces their sales for the current round, and the sum is the new collective level of sales. The small Sales Track cube is placed at that amount on the Sales Track
2. If the collective sales of the current round is **higher** than the collective sales of the previous round, then the price table token is moved **up**, either **vertically** (if it was on the left column), or **diagonally** (if it was on the right column).

If the collective sales of the current round is **lower** than the collective sales of the previous round, then the price table token is moved **down**, either **vertically** (if it was on the right column), or **diagonally** (if it was on the left column).

If it is exactly the same, then the price table token does not move.

During the first round, the level of collective sales is sure to increase (as it was set at 0 at the start of the game).

The location of the price table token has two effects on the next round:

- The column determines if the conversion ration of visitors to money is going to be 1:1 or 2:1.
- The row determines the level of prices for Special Offer, Ad and Accountant tiles.

The token may never move horizontally, and may never be set lower than the lowest row, or higher than the highest row.



If the price table token changes columns, then all players immediately flip their Seller tiles so that the appropriate side (1:1 or 2:1) is facing up.

SET MAXIMUM SALES MARKER & ADJUST BONUSES (3, 4)

3. If the new level of **collective sales is higher** than the previous one, the big maximum sales cube is moved to match it. The maximum sales token may only increase. If the collective sales do not increase to a new maximum then the cube does not move.
4. If there is a new, higher level of collective sales, then the level of the **Bonus Track token also increases**, by one level. During the first round, they are both considered to be 0, and so the Bonus Track is sure to increase to 1.

4. BUZZ!

“Bye now, hope you enjoyed the game!” Why are they walking away so quickly? Didn't they like our new zombie Cthulhu pirate deck-building game? Ah, it must be that zombie Cthulhu pirate card-drafting game...

Each player counts the amount of buzz generated by the demo tables and Ad tiles on their board. Demo tables generate **1 buzz**. Demo tables with a player token generate **2 buzz**. Ad tiles generate **2 buzz**.

In **reverse turn order** (starting with the highest Queue tile number), each player board's buzz is compared with the buzz of the player boards to its left and its right.

If a player's board has more buzz than a board next to it, then the player may collect all visitors in front of **one** table space of that board.

All visitors attracted in this way are placed in the **queue area** of the player's board.

If they have equal or less buzz, they do not take any Visitor tiles.

When taking Visitor tiles, it is recommended to take the **left-most stack**, as that will have the most tiles available. If there are no Visitor tiles available, than none will be taken.

Visitor tiles that have been allocated to a player's token in the **Compete** spot may **not** be taken.

5. CLEANUP

Sometimes it feels like half the fair took a shortcut through our booth. Wonder if our demo copies are still complete. Wait, where are our demo copies? And what's that smell?

It is now time to prepare the booths for the next round.

1. The tables are cleared of Seller tiles, placing them in the back office. Then, all remaining Visitor tiles in the booth are collected, and placed in the Queue area, ready to come back next round. Finally, any player's tokens that were used to Compete are returned, along with the Visitor tiles that they attracted, which are added to their Queue area.
2. Each player, **in turn order**, has a chance to use any Accountant tiles that they may have claimed. To do so, up to three money tiles may be moved from any of the 8 money spaces space to any other such space. Any Accountant tile used is immediately returned to the central board.
3. If it is the end of an **even-numbered** (afternoon) round, return all Special Offer, Ad and Accountant tiles to the central board. Finally, the Queue tiles are re-assigned. The player who reported the most sales (money on the current round's space on the player board) in this round, after any Accountants have been used, receives the "1." Queue tile and becomes the **first player for the next round**. Each other player receives the remaining Queue tiles in descending order of sales achieved during this round.

In case of a tie for highest sales, the relative turn order is preserved, i.e. the tie is broken according to the current round's turn order, with the player that has the lowest current Queue tile number receiving the lower number for the next round as well.

GAME END & SCORING

At the end of the 8th round, after the last Cleanup phase, the game is over, and it is time to count the points.

Using the Sales Track and their player tokens (or spare bonus discs) to keep count, the players add the sales they have made in each of the rounds of the game.

Then, the players determine who has earned each of the bonuses that mean good things in the future. A player is eligible to earn multiple bonuses. In case of a tie for a bonus, all tied players receive that amount.

The amount awarded for each bonus is the same and is indicated by the level of the cube on the Bonus Track.

BONUSES FOR GAMES WITH 2-4 PLAYERS

BONUS 1: Breakout Success: Distributors recognize the appeal of your games, determine that there is a lot of potential for growth, and strike a deal to distribute your games.

Earned by the player who had the longest streak of more sales than the previous round.

For example, if:

- HP's longest streak of sales was 1, 2, 4
- Maija's longest streak of sales was 2, 5, 7
- Sampo's longest streak of sales was 0, 2, 3, 4.

Sampo had a streak of 4 rounds of increasing sales, and therefore earns this bonus.

BONUS 2: Consistent Seller: Retailers see that even in times of low demand, your games are steady sellers, so they stock your games.

Earned by the player who had the highest individual minimum sales of any round.

For example, if:

- HP's lowest sales of any round was 1
- Maija's lowest sales of any round was 0
- Linnea's lowest sales of any round was 2

Linnea has the highest individual sales, and therefore earns this bonus.

BONUS 3: Residual Buzz: Board game geeks waited too long to get your games, but you ran out of stock, and they left with empty hands. They make orders directly from your website as soon as they get home.

Earned by the player who had the most queuing visitors at the end of the game.

For example, if:

- HP has 5 Visitor tiles remaining in his board's queue area
- Sampo has 7 Visitor tiles remaining in his board's queue area
- Linnea has 7 Visitor tiles remaining in her board's queue area

Sampo and Linnea have the most Visitor tiles remaining in the queue area, and each receive this bonus.

ADDED BONUS FOR GAMES WITH 5+ PLAYERS

BONUS 4: Well Reviewed: Your constant effort to be noticed attracts the attention of famous (and not-so-famous) reviewers, who generate word-of-mouth by their early post-ESSEN reviews.

Earned by the player who had the most "Compete Directly" actions.

At the beginning of the game, place one bonus disc per player next to the additional central board. Whenever a player takes a "Compete Directly" action, move that player's bonus tracking disc one space to the right. The player whose disc is furthest to the right earns this bonus. In case of two discs being in the same space, both earn the bonus.

ADDED BONUS FOR GAMES WITH 6+ PLAYERS

BONUS 5: Brand Awareness: Running ads has the effect of making your games known to the wider public, driving sales in department stores and other non-hobbyist sales outlets.

Earned by the player who claimed the most Ad tiles.

At the beginning of the game, place one bonus disc per player next to the additional central board. Whenever a player claims an Ad tile, move that player's bonus tracking disc one space to the right. The player whose disc is furthest to the right earns this bonus. In case of two discs being in the same space, both earn the bonus.

ADDED BONUS FOR GAMES WITH 7-8 PLAYERS

BONUS 6: Best Seller: You have outsold your competitors on more than one occasion, leading the boardgamers of the world to worry about your games going out of print, resulting in a buying frenzy after the fair.

Earned by the player who earned the "1." Queue tile the most times.

At the beginning of the game, place one bonus disc per player next to the additional central board. Whenever a player becomes the first player by earning the "1." Queue tile, move that player's bonus tracking disc one space to the right. The player whose disc is furthest to the right earns this bonus. In case of two discs being in the same space, both earn the bonus.

The player with the highest sum of total sales and bonuses is the winner!

In case of a tie, the winner is the player who holds the higher Queue tile at the end of the game.

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The publisher would like to dedicate this game to Anniina, who keeps everyone going at Essen.

Harry-Pekka: To my wife Maija who always wins the second time we play a game.