



The Art of War

A game of buildup and position for two to six houses · Version 1.0.0

Two to six houses contend for an empire on a board of plain, highland and forest. There are only two kinds of piece: settlers, who raise everything you will ever own, and soldiers, who take and hold ground. On a turn you may raise levies or march, never both. Battle is settled by arithmetic rather than dice, so a campaign is won in the seasons before the fighting — by where you put your settlers, which ground you choose to hold, and whether you have brought enough soldiers to the hex you mean to take.

The board

The board is a field of hexes in three kinds. Terrain does three jobs at once: it sets the cost of entering a hex, the cover a defender gets there, and what a settler standing on it can raise. That last one is the heart of the game — where your settlers stand decides whether your house grows an economy or an army.

Ground	Cost to enter	Cover	A settler here raises
Plain	1 point	none	settlers
Highland	2 points	+1	soldiers
Forest	2 points	+2	nothing

Every house begins on a capital of its own, marked with that house's carved seal. A capital is plain ground that adds +2 to the cover of anything standing on it, and its settlers raise whichever kind of piece you set in the orders panel. Every capital is bordered by three plains and three highlands and never by forest, so no house opens with better ground than another.

Sizes of board

The board grows with the number of houses. Capitals always sit on rotationally symmetric corner sites, and the terrain is generated on one sixth of the board and rotated, so every house looks out on identical ground. Which house gets which site, and which house opens the campaign, are drawn fresh for each map seed.

Houses	Hexes	Nearest rival capital	Furthest rival capital
2	91	8 hexes	8 hexes
3	91	8 hexes	8 hexes
4	127	5 hexes	10 hexes
5	169	6 hexes	12 hexes



Houses	Hexes	Nearest rival capital	Furthest rival capital
6	169	6 hexes	12 hexes

With four or five houses the geometry cannot give everyone an identical spread of rivals — six-fold symmetry does not divide evenly by four or five. The arrangement chosen is the one that comes closest, and seats are shuffled each game so no chair is favoured over repeated play.



A turn

On your turn you give one order and one only. This is the whole of the game's structure, and the choice between the two is the decision you will spend the campaign making.

Raise levies

Every settler you own that stands on productive ground, is not blockaded, and has an open hex beside it puts one new piece into the field. A settler on plain raises a settler; on highland, a soldier; in forest, nothing. A settler standing on your capital raises whichever kind the orders panel is set to. A settler with an enemy soldier alongside it is blockaded and raises nothing that turn, and a settler hemmed in on all six sides has nowhere to put a new piece. New pieces appear on the open hex nearest a rival capital, so strength flows toward the front on its own.

March

Every piece has 2 movement points and terrain is paid for on entry. One piece to a hex; pieces never stack. Stepping into a hex beside an enemy soldier halts that piece for the rest of the turn, though it may still attack from where it stands. Because entering rough ground costs 2 points, a piece that steps onto highland or into forest has nothing left to attack with — rough country slows an assault as well as sheltering one.

You may raise levies or march. You may not do both, and giving one order ends the possibility of the other until your next turn.

Battle

There are no dice and no combat results table to consult. Attack strength is 1 for the attacking soldier plus 1 for every other soldier of yours already touching the target hex. Defence is 1 for a soldier or 0 for a settler, plus the cover of the ground it stands on, plus 2 if it is standing on its own capital. Soldiers standing beside a defender do not add to its defence — they are holding their own hexes. Massing is the attacker's only lever, and it is enough.

What you are attacking	Its defence	Attackers for an even exchange	Attackers to break it
Soldier on plain	1	1	2
Soldier on highland	2	2	3
Soldier in forest	3	3	4
Soldier on its capital	3	3	4
Settler on plain	0	—	1
Settler on highland	1	1	2
Settler in forest	2	2	3

- Attack higher than defence: the defenders break and you advance into the hex.
- Attack equal to defence: both companies are destroyed and the hex is left empty.



- Attack lower than defence: your attack is thrown back and the attacking company is lost.
- A settlement overrun by a single company is put to the sword and the raider takes the ground. A settlement taken with at least one soldier in support surrenders and changes allegiance, joining your economy intact.

Read the arithmetic before you commit. Selecting a soldier marks every hex it can reach and every hex it can strike; pointing at a target prints the attack and defence values and names the outcome.



Winning

Put a soldier on a rival capital and that house falls. Its soldiers are removed from the board, its settlers swear to you, and its capital becomes ordinary ground. Take every capital and you rule the empire. A house with nothing left on the board is also out.

A campaign runs 60 seasons. If more than one house is still standing when the last season closes, the mandate goes to the strongest, counted this way:

Counted	Worth
Each rival capital you have taken	10
Each settler you hold	4
Each soldier you hold	3
Each settlement ready to raise this turn	2

The mandate is visible from the first season, so a house that cannot reach every capital still has something to play for, and a house that is ahead on the board can be overhauled by one that keeps more settlers working. Taking capitals is worth more than anything else you can do, and taking them ends the argument outright.

How campaigns tend to end

Measured over 50 campaigns per house count, played by the shipped opponent across all three tempers:

Houses	Decided by conquest	Decided by mandate	Median conquest season
2	70%	30%	31
3	54%	46%	36
4	40%	60%	31
5	32%	68%	33
6	30%	70%	38

Taking five capitals inside sixty seasons is genuinely hard, so the larger the game the more often the mandate settles it. This is the design, not a shortfall: with many houses the campaign is a contest for standing, and outright conquest is the exceptional result it ought to be.

Playing

Controls

- Click one of your pieces to select it. Reachable hexes are outlined in a dashed pale line; hexes it can strike are hatched in red.
- Click a marked hex to march there, or a hatched hex to attack. Click the piece again, or press escape, to clear the selection.



- Point at any hex to read its ground, and at a target to read the arithmetic of the attack.
- R raises levies. Space or enter ends the turn. Escape clears the selection and closes panels.
- The rules are on the board at all times under the rules button.

Houses played by people

Set how many of the houses are played by people on the opening screen. One means you play a single house against the bots; setting it to the full count gives a hotseat game passed between people at one screen. The bots take the rest, at whichever temper you choose — cautious, steady, ruthless.

Saving

The campaign is written to this browser's local storage after every turn. Closing the tab loses nothing: the opening screen offers to resume, and tells you which season it left off in. Starting a new campaign replaces the save and finishing one clears it. The game reads and writes exactly one storage key and never touches another game's data.



Notes on play

Settlers are the whole economy

Nothing else raises anything. A settler killed is a settler that will never raise another piece, which is why an unguarded settlement on open plain is the cheapest prize on the board — one soldier takes it. Keep settlers off plain hexes within two of an enemy soldier, and remember they need an open hex beside them or they raise nothing at all. Crowding your own settlers with your own soldiers is a common and expensive mistake.

Choose what you are building

Plains compound and highlands arm. A house that sits on plains all campaign will be rich and defenceless; one that sits on highlands will field an army it cannot replace. The capital workshop is the dial you turn when the balance is wrong, and it can be turned every turn.

Bring enough, or do not come

A soldier attacking alone onto highland is a soldier thrown away. Because attack strength is the count of your soldiers touching the target hex, an assault has to be assembled before it is launched — usually over two or three turns, while the defender is doing the same thing. The turn you spend raising levies is a turn you are not massing, and the turn you spend massing is a turn your economy stands still.

Even exchanges favour the richer house

An attack equal to the defence destroys both companies. That looks neutral and is not: whoever can replace the loss first has gained. Against a house with a stronger economy, refuse even exchanges and fight from cover. Against a weaker one, trade freely — it is often the only way through a line that has settled onto rough ground.

Rough ground cuts both ways

Forest is the strongest cover on the board and produces nothing. A house that retreats into forest is safe and shrinking. Highland is the compromise: it arms you, it holds, and it is slow to cross, so a highland belt between you and a rival buys the seasons you need to raise the army that crosses it.

For developers

The package follows the Tronsoft Games Package Specification v1.4. It makes no network requests, ships no third-party code, and carries no fonts, audio or image assets — the board is drawn to a canvas at runtime and the storefront art is generated at build time.

File	What is in it
index.html	Markup only. Stylesheet linked, all four scripts deferred.
css/game.css	Every rule of presentation, extracted from the entry file.
js/game.js	The rules engine. Pure functions, no DOM, no globals beyond AOW.
js/ai.js	The opponent. Scores orders and moves; no access to hidden state.



File	What is in it
js/save.js	Local save, one key, degrades quietly when storage is unavailable.
js/interface.js	Canvas drawing, input, and panel rendering.
validate.js	The package validator described below. Node, no dependencies.

The rules engine is deliberately separable from the interface: it runs unchanged under Node, which is what makes the validator possible. Given a seed, a campaign is fully deterministic, so any reported position can be reproduced exactly.

Validation

Run **node validate.js** from the package root. It checks the package against the specification — required files, manifest schema and cross-references, the save key against the manifest slug, deferred scripts, prohibited file types, external references — and then checks the rules engine itself: hex arithmetic, map symmetry, terrain proportions, the exact movement and combat tables printed in this manual, production, conquest, the campaign clock, determinism, and a run of full AI-versus-AI campaigns with the board audited every turn.

Every table in this manual is generated from the shipped rules module at build time rather than typed, so the documentation cannot quietly fall out of step with the code.