

BuilderCards  
Deckbuilding Game  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



This is a game for Cloud- and IT-professionals and those who seek to learn more about AWS Services and Architectures. It is best played in a work-related context. We won't stop you from playing with whoever you like, though. 😊

## Welcome, Builder!

This is your first day as a freshly hired IT architect! Your task: Build up a team and create lots of shiny, innovative and most importantly, cloud, native applications. This is your chance to showcase your expertise and leave your mark on the digital landscape!

The playing field is diverse, with a mix of on-premises infrastructure and the ever-expanding portfolio of AWS services. You need to navigate this environment strategically, leveraging existing resources while seamlessly integrating new technologies.

Each decision you make, from selecting the right AWS services to designing robust architectures, will contribute to your overall success. The Well-Architected points are there for the taking, but you must act quickly, as they won't last forever... Assemble your team, plan your architectures, and sharpen your Builder skills. The future of your organization is in your hands. Are you ready to take on this challenge?

## How to play

Watch the video featured at <https://buildercards.aws/> for a quick start while you learn to play. Use these written rules for reference.

## Differences between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

We featured two currencies in the first edition, one being TCO (total cost of ownership)- Credits ① . This currency does no longer apply.

The remaining credits, ④ (previously referred to as AWS Credits or AWSome credits) are now simply referred to as **credits** with a new icon: ④.

The first and second edition of the game are **not compatible**. The cards have a different background. If you play with cards from the first edition, you can **simply**

**ignore TCO credits completely**, to play it similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. However, we recommend going for a second Edition base game, as we fine-tuned and balanced the game mechanics:

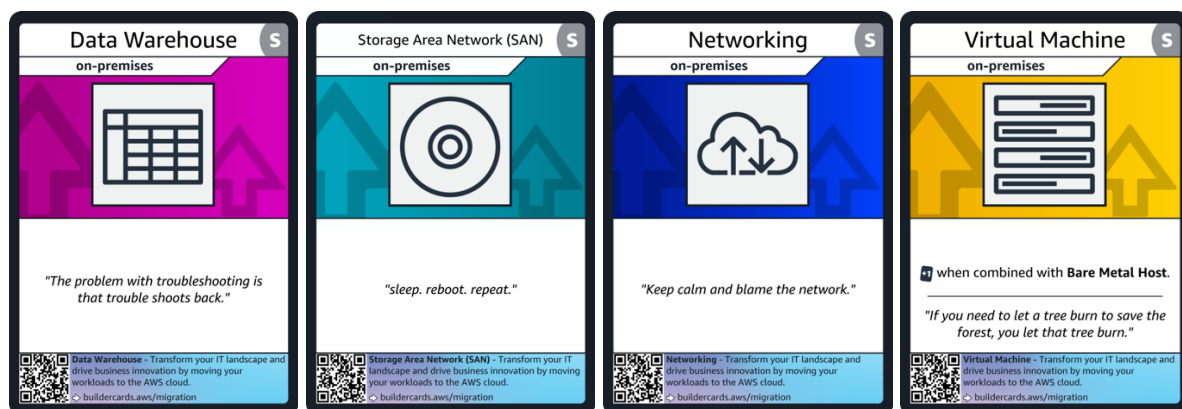
On-premises **Starter cards** now come with a dedicated **on-premises** category, which allows players to better distinguish them from **collectible Starter Cards**. We also changed the names of some of the cards to better reflect a diverse on-premises IT landscape. There is also a new combination effect with the “Virtual Machine” card.

*In the following instructions, changes between the two game editions are highlighted in blue.*

## Game setup

There are 4 kinds of cards in the game: Starter cards, Well-Architected cards, Mission cards and Builder cards.

**Starter cards** come in sets of 10 with a unique icon color for each *player*:



Each *player* chooses a color set. Place any remaining **Starter cards** aside, removed from the game.

**Starter cards** are marked with a grey S-Icon in the top right corner of the card. This allows you to easily separate the cards again after playing a game. Collectible Starter Cards are marked the same way.

*In previous versions, we used this symbol:* 




## Building the Console

*In previous versions, the **Console** was called **Marketplace**.*

**Well-Architected cards** are worth either 1 or 3 points:



To keep the game duration short, reduce the number of Well-Architected cards in the game, depending on the number of players:

- 2 Players: Only use the cards with 2 player icons: 
- 3 Players: Use the cards with the 2 and 3-player icons:  and 
- 4 Players: Include all cards

The Icons can be found on the top right of the Well-Architected cards.

Place the 1-point Well-Architected cards in a pile face-up on top of the 3-point cards.

You need Well-Architected Cards to win the game.

**Mission Cards** have a different background and size than all other cards - they can be considered as side-quests for the players: Every card illustrates an architectural

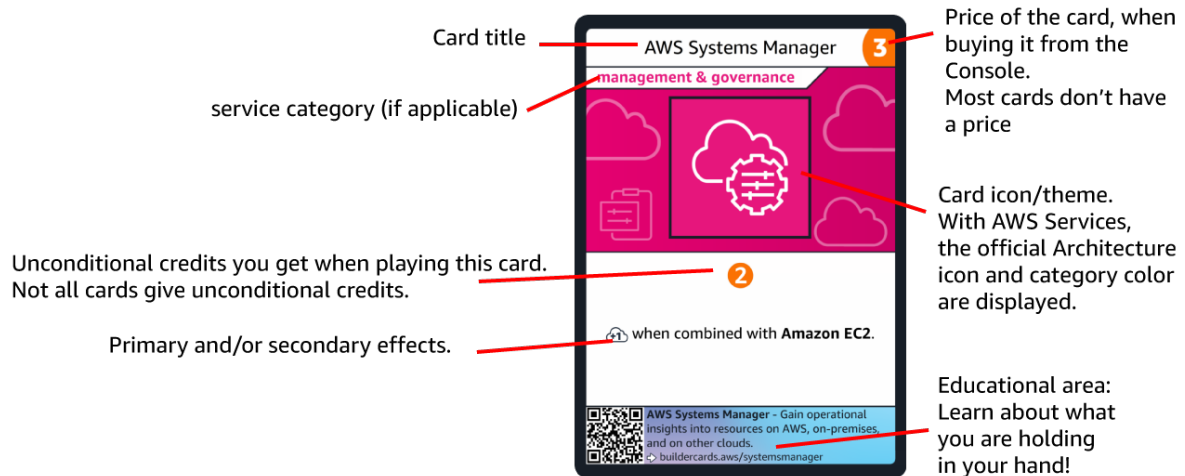


best-practice or solution. If the player can build the architecture from their assigned mission, they can put the **Mission Card** to their Well-architected pile and gain four extra Well-Architected Points.

Mission Cards apply to the base game as well as to add-on packs. Some Expansions are played without Mission Cards.

If you play AWS BuilderCards for the first time, consider playing without **Mission cards** – they are optional and add more complexity to the game, which can be distracting to new players.

**Builder cards** are all cards that are now left. These include Services, Tools, Frameworks, etc.



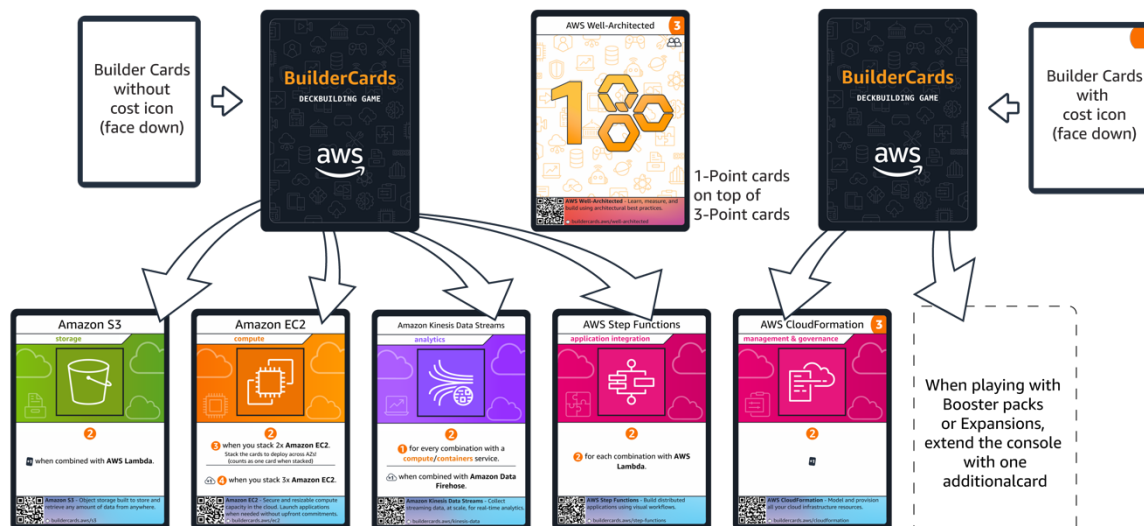
Each card has a QR code you can scan to learn more about the particular topic the card is about.

Separate the **Builder Cards** without cost and the **Builder Cards** with cost icons. Shuffle both piles and place them like in the picture below.

Create a **Console** by *drawing* the first 4 cards from the pile without cost and one from the pile with cost. Identical cards are stacked in the console slots – so you will always have five different Builder Cards to choose from. All slots with **Builder Cards** must be unique. If you draw cards with identical card titles, stack them and draw more until you have a diverse **Console**.

Place the **Well-Architected cards** between the two piles.

Whenever you empty a slot from the **Console**, it is *immediately refilled* with a new card from one of the piles.



The ready-to-use **Console** in the middle of the table.

### Before you start with the first round

Determine who will go first (we recommend the person with the least AWS certifications) and then *play* proceeds clockwise.

All players then *shuffle* their 10 cards, place them face down as their **Resources draw pile**, and draw 5 **Builder cards** from this newly created pile into their *hands*.

Play then proceeds from the first player moving clockwise.

### Draw Missions!

Every player draws a card from the **Mission Card** pile and reads it silently. Missions should be kept secret from other players.

If a player sees a mission as too complex, they can decide to publish their assigned mission by taking the Card and placing it readable for everyone next to the Console. Now, every player (including the player who published it) can solve the mission. Then, the player draws a new **Mission Card** for themselves.

- A player can only have one assigned mission at a time.
- Missions are optional. It is not required to accomplish a mission to win the game.
- A Player can solve only one mission per turn, even if their architecture would solve more than one.
- A Player can publish only one mission during their turn.

Published **Mission Cards** next to the Console can be solved by every player. As soon as a player builds the architecture described in the mission, they can take the **Mission Card** and put it to their player area.

Solving a mission card gets more realistic towards the end of the game, don't worry!

## Turn Order

Turns are organized in three phases:

### Phase 1: Build!

Retiring of on-premises cards:

If you have more **Builder cards** *in your hand* than **on-premises** cards, you can **retire one on-premises** card *from your hand*. When retiring, show your hand of cards to the other players so they can verify your action. When you retire a card, you must adopt at least one card from the console during your turn. The rule applies only at the begin of your turn, with your starting hand of 5 cards. Don't refill your hand with new cards when retiring.

Each turn you may build one or more architectures by **deploying** Builder cards from your hand to the table, visible to all players.

You may deploy single cards.

**Builder cards** have *additional effects that apply to your current turn*. Some are without conditions; with others you have to deploy an architecture to fulfill the combinations. An Architecture comprises at least two Builder Cards. These effects include:



Draw one additional card from your Resources Pile. This effect should be fulfilled immediately, as it allows you to build bigger architectures.

*in previous versions: draw a card*



Additional credits. You should keep track of all additional credits to spend them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the game.



Additional cloud adoptions. You should keep track of all additional cloud-adoptions to fulfill them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the game.

*in previous versions: +1 buy*

Here, it is important to highlight, that AWS Services have far more capabilities than we could ever illustrate in such a game! If you know AWS well, discuss with the other players if your architecture is valid. If you are learning AWS or are in doubt, if an architecture is valid, stick to the effects that are written on the cards.

After acquiring a card, empty console slots are refilled immediately: When you generate additional cloud adoptions, make sure to refill the console after acquiring a card to have a potentially better console selection for your following cloud-adoption.

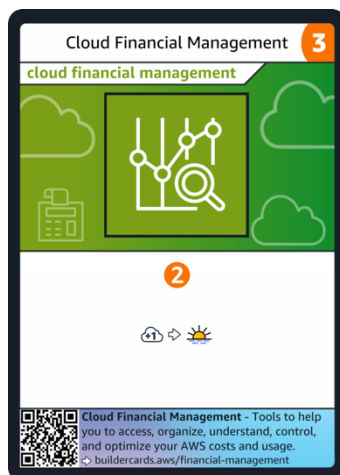
Retire a card after using the effect: 🌅 (sunset symbol)  
*in previous versions: retire this card after using this effect.*

And many more effect that are explained with words...

Conditions and additional effects are explained on the cards, so read carefully.

- You are not required to use these additional effects.
- Combination effects apply only to cards in your deployed architectures.
- You may extend your architectures at any point during your turn, so make sure to use all **+1** effects before you head to Phase 2. Deployed architectures can't be disassembled!

Some cards also have a onetime effect, that tells you to ➡ 🌅 (*retire*) the card afterwards. Retiring a card means: You remove the card from the current game.



Example:

This card will give you 2 credits every time you play it. Once you use the additional cloud adoption effect **+1**, you need to retire the card.

## Phase 2: Acquire cards

You may now adopt one card from the **Console**:

a) adopt one free **Builder Card** (no cost icon)

or

b) use your credits to buy a card with cost (**Builder Card** or **Well-Architected Card**).

If you are not happy with the console selection for no-cost BuilderCards, you can challenge your luck and use your cloud-adoption action to take a card blindly from the left, no-cost pile. However, you can't reject or return this card, you must add to your discard pile.

The number of credits you can spend is the sum of all your deployed cards, including fulfilled bonus effects.

Every player has **one cloud adoption per turn**. Taking a card from the console (no-cost, cost, Well-Architected) is considered as a cloud adoption. Combo effects in your architecture may grant you additional cloud adoptions.

Unlike in other deckbuilding games, it's intentional that you can always take a new **Builder Card** each turn. This game is designed to encourage architecture building.

Every **Builder Card** you adopt goes directly to your *Discard pile*. Every **Well-Architected card** you adopt goes to a dedicated pile in your player area.

*In the first edition, the cloud adoption was referred to as "buy action".*

The *Discard pile* contains all used **On-Premises cards** and **Builder cards** from previous turns, as well as **Builder cards** that have been acquired from the Console. The *Discard pile* is always face-up and next to your *Resources pile*.

If all players agree, you may re-shuffle and recreate the Console.

A game lasts 20-30 minutes (designed for work environments). If you like the game to be more complex and last longer, you can put acquired Well-Architected cards straight into your deck (Discard Pile). This will also slow down advanced/winning players because the Well-Architected cards do not bring any benefits in building architectures and do not give the player credits.

### Phase 3: End your turn

- Place all cards from your architecture and remaining hand into your *Discard Pile*. *Don't keep any of your cards from this round.*
- Draw 5 new **Builder cards** from the top of your *Resources draw pile*
- Whenever you are required to *draw* a card and there are no cards available, shuffle your *Discard pile* and place the cards face down as your new *Resources draw pile*.
- Start planning your architecture for your next turn

Play then proceeds with the next player.

### End of game

When the last **Well-Architected** card is purchased, the game is over. Each player adds up the **Well-Architected** points they have and the player with the most **Well-Architected** points is the winner!



If two or more players have the same amount of **Well-Architected** points, the player with the most **Builder cards** wins.

## Playing game add-ons and Expansions

Since AWS offers more than 200+ services, we decided to align the base game to fundamental services and introduce additional content in the form of separate add-ons or expansions to shift the focus of the game towards different topics.

### Add-ons

When playing an add-on (like the *Generative AI add-on*), no additional rules apply. Simply integrate all the cards from the add-on into the base game.

### Expansions

Expansions are taking the game to a different level, by transforming the gameplay or modifying/introducing additional rules. For Expansions, additional rules apply – these rules can be found on the landing page of the expansion (i.e. Resilience Expansion -> [buildercards.aws/resilience](https://buildercards.aws/resilience))

## Advanced rules

If you're playing regularly at a deep level, or if you run into a discussion about what a player is allowed to do, you might need these.

### Understanding combination effects

Generally, all combination effects are 1:1 – that means, one card is combined with one other card. If a card can be combined with more than just one card, the effect explicitly says "for every/each combination with".


A more detailed explanation with examples can be found in the **Builder's Guideline** Document, available on the game [website](https://buildercards.aws).

### Retiring cards

Retiring a card means: You remove the card from the current game and don't put it in your discard pile.


You can retire Builder Cards as well, but the following conditions apply:

- You have to acquire another Builder card before you can retire a Builder Card.
- Buying Well-Architected Cards does not enable you to retire a Builder Card.
- You can't retire a Builder Card that was deployed (used its credits and/or effects) in the same turn.
- You can only retire Builder Cards from your hand, not from your discard pile (unless a card effect explicitly allows it).

Cards with a retire icon  are exempt from the retiring rules: you can retire them once using the specified card effect and you don't need to adopt a card from the console when doing so.

## Personalizing your game with collectible Cards

You can extend your game deck or personalize your start deck with Collectible cards.

All collectible cards are marked with a small icon on the bottom right area of the card: 

### Collectible Starter cards

These cards include topics that resemble individual achievements, such as having attended a specific event or holding a certification. They go into your personal deck and complement the 10 on-premises Starter Cards. These cards are marked with the Starter card symbol

Collectible **Starter Cards** don't count into **Builder cards** when retiring on-premises cards, even though they might represent an AWS Service.

You may use a maximum of 5 collectible **Starter cards** additionally to your 10 on-premises Starter cards. You may not use more than one of the same collectible card.

In order to have a fair game, collectible **Starter cards** should only be used with players that have a personalized deck themselves.

### Collectible Builder cards

Collectible **Builder cards** that don't have the Starter Cards symbol can be included in your base game to enjoy playing with others! Just watch your overall number of **Builder cards**, as too many extra cards in the game might create an imbalance and limit your building abilities.

## Miscellaneous

### Contents

The base game of BuilderCards consists of the following cards:

1 Reference card

91 Builder Cards

6	AWS Lambda
2	Amazon EFS
4	Amazon S3
2	AWS Marketplace

2	Elastic Load Balancing
8	Amazon EC2
2	AWS Fargate
2	Amazon ECS
2	Amazon EKS
3	Amazon SNS
3	Amazon SQS
2	Amazon EventBridge
2	Amazon Route53
2	Amazon RDS
2	Amazon Aurora
2	Amazon API Gateway
3	Amazon DynamoDB
2	Amazon Kinesis Data Streams
2	Amazon Data Firehose
2	Amazon Cloudwatch
4	AWS IAM Identity Center
2	Amazon Athena
2	AWS Step Functions
2	Amazon CloudFront
2	Amazon VPC
2	AWS CloudTrail
2	Amazon ElastiCache
2	Amazon Redshift
2	Amazon CodeCatalyst
2	Amazon OpenSearch Service
2	AWS Well-Architected Tool
2	Cloud Financial Management
2	Amazon EC2 Auto Scaling
2	AWS CloudFormation
3	AWS Systems Manager
3	AWS CDK

#### 10 Starter Cards in 4 different color sets

3	<b>Bare Metal Host</b>
1	Code Repository
1	Document Store
1	Networking
1	Data Warehouse
1	Storage Area Network (SAN)
1	Corporate Identity Provider
1	Virtual Machine
1	Database Server

#### Well-Architected Cards

7	1-Point Well-Architected
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**Disclaimer:**

This game is for entertainment purposes only. The included AWS Services may have additional features and capabilities from what is illustrated in cards or game mechanics.

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