

# Tips for Your First Encounters with “The Rivals for Catan”

*Compiled and written by P. G. Bartschat and Dr. Reiner Düren*

## ***Introductory Game: Tips for Newcomers on Catan***

The emphasis of the Introductory Game is on founding new settlements and upgrading settlements to cities. Your best friends are the production booster cards, particularly the *Brick Factory* and the *Iron Foundry*. Remember: Production boosters affect only adjacent, *matching* regions.

- Did you forget to consider an adjacent production booster when rotating a region? To be reminded, simply place a small, dispensable object (coin, peanut, diamond ring) on the region.
- Don't spend too much time waiting to place a production booster between two identical regions. It is better to build the *Brick Factory* adjacent to only one brick region than to keep the card in your hand forever. Later, you can use the *Relocation* card to amend the situation.
- If you have built a *Marketplace*, you shouldn't expand your principality for the moment but upgrade the existing settlements to cities or place expansion cards.
- If you have a choice between various trade ships, take the ship whose resource you can get most of (e.g., by means of a production booster).
- If you already have built two expansions featuring trade points or strengths points, try to find at least one matching third expansion: you won't get a cheaper trade token or hero token victory point.
- A region can only accommodate three resources. You don't have use for the resources of a “full” region at the end of your turn? Consider trading them for a resource you only receive on rare occasions. You can also use resources to choose cards. Before you make a decision, check which resources you need to play the cards in your hand.
- Don't despise the *Merchant Caravans*! Especially in the Introductory Game, they are among the most important cards.

## ***The Theme Games: Tips for Catanians Who Already Got Adapted***

Each of the three Theme Games emphasizes different things. Remember the possibilities each game has to offer and make sure to use them. Play the Theme Games in the order recommended; that way, you are led from a straightforward to a more sophisticated playing style. In all Theme Games, the faceup expansion cards are of great importance. You can only build these cards on building sites in cities.

- First build only one settlement, then save up for a city.
- Build your first road at a location for whose adjacent regions you have the matching production boosters in your hand (or know in which draw stacks to find them).
- Once you can foresee that you'll soon build a city, draw from the theme stacks when replenishing your hand or exchanging cards.
- If you have cards you know you can't use within the next two or three rounds, discard them. Maybe you draw a card that is of little use to you – but a card you can't play is of no use to you at all.
- Only city expansions earn you direct victory points. You should, therefore, build your first city

on the settlement with the fewest expansions.

- When you take resources from your opponent, check which resources he would need to build a city or one of the faceup expansion cards. This is an important criterion, especially if his resources are of no use to you.
- Some buildings give you an advantage as soon as they are built, either by means of new resources or by means of the possibility to choose a card during your turn. Take a moment to deliberate at which moment you would get the most out of it.
- The game will soon be finished, and you don't have room for buildings depicting victory points? You may remove expansion cards you already placed and thus create space for new cards. Cards that do not depict victory points and that do not affect the trade advantage or strength advantage are often dispensable toward the end of the game.

### ***The Era of Gold***

Here the emphasis is on action cards and expansion cards that allow you to access your opponent's resources. Do not hesitate to make use of these cards, and try to prevent your opponent from snatching them from under your nose. Besides building the *Merchant Guild*, it is important to produce and use gold: you should go for at least one of the latter as early in the game as possible.

- To be well-positioned in the race for the trade advantage from the very start, you should preferentially choose cards with trade points as the starting cards in your hand. If you have at least three trade points, you can already play the two *Merchant* cards from the theme stacks.
- This Theme Game does not contain events or action cards directed against heroes, which is why *Candamir* is particularly valuable: he alone will often secure the strength advantage.
- Gold gives you more advantages and improves your trading options. Remember that each *Pirate Ship* not only sinks a trade ship of your opponent but also provides you with an additional gold when the *Plentiful Harvest* event is rolled.

### ***The Era of Turmoil***

Taking full advantage of this Theme Set's requires an aggressive playing style. Before you start the game, consult with your opponent whether the two of you want to play in this manner. For players who prefer peaceful competition, the Theme Sets "The Era of Gold" and "The Era of Progress" are more suitable. But you should definitely try this playing style, even if normally you look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth.

- If possible, add at least one hero to your starting cards; you can build him on your first turn, to be well-positioned in the race for the strength advantage.
- If you are the first to build the *Hedge Tavern*, then be ruthless when choosing what to destroy. After the game, there's plenty of time to reconcile with your sulking partner.
- Build at least one of the *Lookout Tower* or *Heinrich the Sentinel* defense cards. If your opponent builds the *Hedge Tavern* before you do, you should try to build *Irmgard*. For these defense cards you do not need a city. If you can build all three cards early on, you will - with a little bit of luck - prevail against an aggressive opponent even without *Hedge Tavern*.
- Three trade points are often enough to obtain the trade advantage. In the longer term, having the trade advantage can benefit you more than your opponent's attacks can harm you.
- Don't carelessly give your gold to the *Traveling Merchants*: in "The Era of Turmoil," you need a gold reserve to be able to save your heroes and ships from heroic death and a watery grave.

## *The Era of Progress*

Action cards that require the *University* offer you a new kind of resource production. To build a *University*, it is important to build an *Abbey* or a *Library* early on. *Abbeys* and *Libraries* can be found in the facedown expansion card stacks, so it may be worthwhile to spend resources to look for these cards.

- Besides the *University*, *Guido the Ambassador* and *Gustav the Librarian* also have two *alternative* requirements, only one of which must be met for you to play the card.
- Use *Guido* and *Gustav* to retrieve the best action cards from the discard pile. *Three-Field System* and *Mineral Mining* are particularly useful in this context, and so is the *Merchant Caravan* from the basic set.
- Three of the event cards are *Plagues*. Since they always come up at the wrong moment, you should cut your losses: build your cities next to each other, because a region between two cities only loses one resource when a *Plague* occurs.
- Another tip regarding *Plagues*: If you obtain resources by means of actions but do not spend them immediately, store them in regions that border only on settlements.
- If you have built a *Parish Hall*, you should build your first city there, so that you can build the *Town Hall*.
- Does your hand of cards contain a *Bath House* and a *Doctor*? Check which resources you need next, and build the *Bath House* at a suitable location.
- The *Parliament* can become particularly interesting if it is the last building you build. Besides its two victory points, it doesn't give you any further advantage; however, for someone who already has 10 victory points, two victory points more are certainly advantage enough.