

# TIME LINE

Strategy card game for 2 to 5 players



Congratulations! You've just invented  
a time machine!

Some day, you will use it to learn more about  
the rich history of the planet, and perhaps even  
contribute to the betterment of Mankind.

But first, you're gonna play the stock market  
and get really, stupidly rich.

## The Basic Idea:

Nothing tweaks the Council for Timeline Integrity like a bunch of kids with time machines who think they can ruin the continuum just to get rich.

The basic idea of **TimeLine** is this: you will use your shiny new time machine to go back in time to a point where some commodity, like oil or wheat, is nearly free. Then you will go forward to a point where that stuff is worth a lot. Buy cheap junk, sell for millions of dollars, repeat until satisfied, or have all the money there is, or find self in jail.

Unfortunately, when you change the past, you also change the future. And with it, the price of junk. So you can't be sure what price your stuff will fetch, until you actually go to the end of the timeline and sell it.

Luckily, you have a map of the space-time continuum that changes as fast as the real thing. So all you need to do is pick up some cheap crap, hang around until it's worth a fortune, and then race forward in time before it's too late.

Whatever that means.

## Contained in This Game:

**The Deck:** The TimeLine deck contains 54 cards (just like a poker deck, hmm.) This includes 46 Path cards, one Start card, and seven Finish cards. Instructions for making your own cards are at the end of these rules.

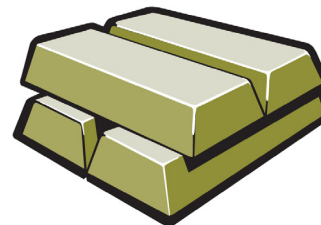
**You Will Also Need:** 2 to 5 players, a pawn for each player, and roughly 20 colored stones or chips in each of 4 colors. The ideal colors are Brown (Oilpetrol), Yellow (Milkbread), Red (Beetcandy) and Green (Nucleons). You will also need a way to keep score, such as a sharp knife and a slab of wood.

## The Game:

There are no Time Cops in this game; we just threw that in to make the story more interesting.

This game is about collecting stuff and selling it. You will build a board out of cards, representing a timeline, and then scoot up and down through time in search of high-valued stuff. The value of stuff keeps changing as you move, so you must try to control prices as well as choosing what to grab.

Gold is one thing in this world that never loses its value, so your goal in this game is to exchange other stuff for gold. The object is to be the first player to collect 21 gold.



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*Yes! I gave Cheapass Games \$\_\_\_\_\_ for this game!*

To learn more, read the last page of this document, or visit [www.cheapass.com](http://www.cheapass.com).

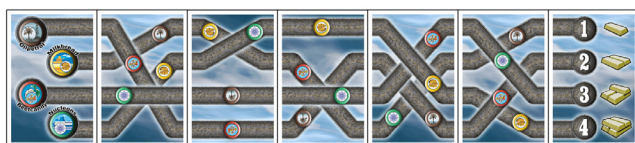
## Setting Up:

Each player needs a Pawn to represent his time machine.

Find the “Start” and “Finish” cards (see below) and take them out of the deck. Shuffle the remaining 46 “Path” cards.

Deal a line of faceup Path cards: 4 cards if there are 2 or 3 players, 5 cards for 4 players, or 6 cards for 5 players.

Put one Start card and one Finish card at the ends of this line, and you will have a starting board resembling the board below.



Start Card → 4 Cards, or 1 plus the number of players → Finish Card

### Starting Layout

Every Path card has four dots, or “waypoints,” one on each path segment. When you build the board, and every time you add a new card, place a counter of the appropriate color on each waypoint on the new cards. These represent free stuff that is waiting to be picked up.

The crisscrossing paths on the board represent the unpredictable market forces that change the values of the four commodities. Time flows from left to right, so by tracking any Start space from left to right, you can determine the current sale price of each commodity. In the board above, *Oilpetrol* is worth 2, *Milkbread* is worth 1, *Beetcandy* is worth 3, and *Nucleons* are worth 4.

The actual length of time and money values represented by this game board don’t really matter. What matters is that disrupting the timeline will change the values.

## Placing the Players:

Randomly choose a player to go first. That player will place his pawn onto the first (leftmost) Path card, choosing any one of those waypoints and taking the counter that is there.

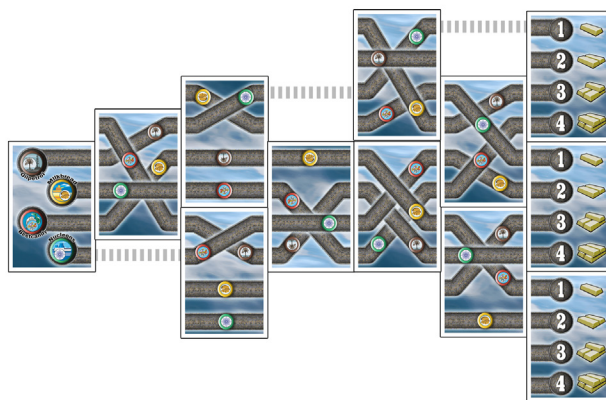
Moving clockwise around the table, the next player will move into the second Path card, and so on. These moves *do not* disrupt the time line as usual (normally, whenever a player picks up a counter, the board will change).

Players will now take turns, starting with the player who placed first, and proceeding to the left.

## On Each Turn:

On each turn, you may move your pawn. There are two types of move. Moving within a time zone (vertically) is called “local travel.” Moving along a timeline (horizontally) is called “time travel.”

Each vertical strip of cards represents one period of time, or “time zone.” As the game proceeds, more cards will be added to each time zone, and cards will slide *upwards* when players change history, as described later. The figure below shows a game in progress. Note how empty space is treated as a straight path. In this diagram, Nucleons are worth 2.



### A Game in Progress

**Local Travel:** When you make a local move, you can move to any waypoint on *any card in your current time zone*, whether it has a counter on it or not, or you can go “off the map.” If you go off the map, you will add a new faceup card, either directly above the highest card in the zone, or directly below the lowest card, depending on which way you go.

When a new card enters the board, fill the waypoints with counters, as you did when setting up the starting board. The player who is moving must then stop on one of the four waypoints on the new card.

When you stop on a waypoint with a counter, you must pick it up. This will alter the timeline as described below.

**Time Travel:** Each path represents a direction that you can travel with your time machine. When you travel through time, you can move to any waypoint *along the path that you’re currently on*. Just as with local travel, if you land on a counter, you must pick it up.

Open table space is filled with straight lines. When you use time travel, you can stop in this space and add a new card to the board. As with local travel, you place this new card in contact with the existing cards. Load it with counters, and then stop on the waypoint that’s on your line.

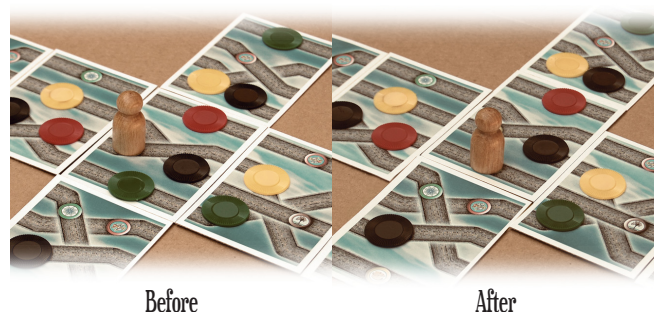
You can only time travel between the existing time zones; you can't move beyond the Finish cards, and you can't move into the time zone containing the Start card.

It's possible, though rare, that you will move into a space that's *more than a full card length* above or below the existing cards. If you do this, place facedown cards ("blanks") in the empty spaces, until you can add a card that connects to your line. A blank can be pushed like a faceup card, and it will be flipped over when someone stops on it.

### Shifting the Timeline:

Whenever you move to a waypoint with a counter, you must pick the counter up. This is how you will collect the items you need to sell, and it's also how the board changes shape.

When you pick up a counter, you also slide all the cards in your time zone *up by one quarter of a card*. This is how the time lines change. An example is shown below.



**Picking up a counter changes the timeline.**

Landing on an empty waypoint *does not* change the timeline. The line only changes when you pick something up.

All the cards in the time zone move up by a quarter step. (Note that in older versions of TimeLine, only the cards above you moved up. This created gaps in the board, which were interesting but needed a lot of extra rules to clarify.)

### Other Movement Rules:

**The Start Card:** There is only one Start card. You cannot move into the Start card or affect it in any way.

**The Finish Cards:** The Finish cards are actually a repeating line of identical Finish cards stretching up and down as far as necessary. Each finish card represents a different set of four markets, which determine the values of the four colors.

Like the Start card, these cards never move. However, you can move into them to sell your goods.

You can move into a market only by traveling through time, *not with a local move*.

Once in a market, you may immediately sell any amount of the commodity that is connected to that market (tracing back to the Start card), for an amount of gold equal to the value written in the market. For example, in the example game board, Nucleons are connected to a 2-Gold market. If you travel into that specific market, you can sell any number of your Nucleons for 2 gold each.

By the end of the game, many markets may connect to nothing! To sell a commodity, you must walk into the one market that's actually connected to that commodity, not a market with a matching number. (Other markets are connected to other invisible commodities that are not part of the game.)

Selling at the market doesn't affect the timeline. You don't have to sell anything in a market, and you can even sit still and sell something on the following turn if you so desire. For example, you expect that the 4 you're now sitting in will be connected to Oilpetrol on the next turn, so you wait there in hopes of selling your Oilpetrol next turn.

**Other Players:** You can move through other players, but you *can not share the same waypoint with another player*. Market spaces, however, can hold any number of players.

### Winning:

The first player to collect 21 gold (or more) wins the game.

You will learn that this game requires thoughtful planning. The only random elements are the few new cards that are added to the board, and the unpredictable moves of the other players.

*When thinking about strategy, remember that changing the timeline affects everyone!*

# TIME LINE

**TimeLine** was designed and made to look nice by James Ernest. ©2003, 2012 James Ernest and Cheapass Games, Seattle WA: [www.cheapass.com](http://www.cheapass.com).

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# Free? Seriously?

*Tell me a little more about that.*

Okay, here's the deal. If I made a great game and sold it to you for ten bucks, I'd probably keep about a dollar. If I sold it to a big game company, they'd probably make a nicer version for thirty bucks, and I'd still get about a dollar.

The rest of your money would go to printers, distributors, retail stores, and freight companies. And most of those guys don't know anything about what makes a great game.

Mass-producing entertainment is a gamble. It's a convoluted way for creators to protect their intellectual property, by selling it in a way that is prohibitively expensive to counterfeit. And it's getting a little old.

Why do you pay \$30 for a board game? The story goes like this: the retail price of a game covers the cost of manufacturing it, and there is no way you could make your own copy for that price, to say nothing of the hassle of finding little wooden men in six colors. So, it's worth \$30 because it costs \$30, *QED*.

But the value in a board game isn't the manufacturing cost. It's the play value. Unfortunately, this means that some games are priced way out of whack with what they are worth. And because the big gamble doesn't always work out, some of your money helps pay for the stuff that goes straight to the dump.

I've decided to try a different gamble. I'm giving my games away for free. This way, you can read the rules, make a copy, and even play the thing, before you decide what it's worth.

If you do like my games, I hope you will send me some money. But I'm also hoping you will share this experiment with your friends. You are my sales force, my marketing department, my demo team.

You're also my testers, so if you can think of ways to improve my games, please share them with me. I'm easy to find at big gaming conventions, and even easier online. Look for Cheapass Games on Facebook, or drop me a line at [cheapassjames@gmail.com](mailto:cheapassjames@gmail.com).

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And nothing has to go to the dump.

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## How to Make your TimeLine Cards:

*The PDF of TimeLine cards contains 54 cards: 46 Path cards, one Start card, and 7 Finish cards. They fit nicely on 6 sheets of paper. But what then?*

*Here are a few reasonable methods for making your own cards.*

### Method 1: Labels on Playing Cards

*Print the cards on full-sheet labels, then cut the labels and affix them to a deck of playing cards.*

Full-sheet mailing labels are great. Get white ones, not clear, suitable for your type of printer. You can get them at any office supply store for about 25¢ each (in packs) and they will be very handy for making cards and game boards.

Print the card sheets on full-sheet labels. **Print the file at 95% so that the labels will fit easily on the cards.**

You will be applying these labels to playing cards. The better the cards, the happier you will be. Good playing cards have rounded corners, laminated card stock, and a textured finish that keeps them from sticking together.

You can buy a new poker deck for around \$3, or you can find canceled casino decks for around \$1. Some casinos and card rooms give away their canceled decks for free, so keep your eyes open. Make sure that the cards are poker sized (2.5 x 3.5) and not bridge sized (2.25 wide).

Trading card games are usually printed on poker-sized cards, and sometimes your game store will have a blowout price on these cards. Sometimes they are even free. Compare the price of 54 junk common cards to the \$3 you'd pay for a new poker deck, and decide accordingly.

Apply the cut labels to the card fronts. Your cards should now be fairly easy to shuffle and deal.

You will probably want to skip the card backs, since adding another label to the back of the card will make the deck thicker and harder to shuffle. Instead, use a few extra cards as stand-ins for the few face-down cards you will have to add to the board.

### Method 2: Card Sleeves

*Print the cards on plain paper and insert the paper, along with a stiffening card, into trading card sleeves.*

Sleeves that are made specifically for trading card games can be found online and at most hobby stores. To build this deck, print the cards at 100% on plain white paper. Thicker paper helps keep the images bright.

Cut them down to 2.5 x 3.5, keeping the white borders. As with Method 1, you probably don't want to print all of the card backs, since sleeves are usually opaque on the back.

Strengthen each card with a stiffener: a poker card or trading card behind the printed paper. This deck may be slightly more durable than the label deck described above, depending on the quality of your card sleeves. But it wouldn't hurt to have some extra sleeves on hand just in case.

### Method 3: 110-lb Index

*Print the artwork directly on heavy cardstock, and then trim the sheets down to card size.*

I have experimented with a few different card stocks for printing playable cards. Most of the Cheapass Games were printed on 110-lb Index, which is a grade that you can find at your local office supply store.

If your printer has a straight paper path, you're more likely to have good results with this paper. Also, inkjet ink tends to show through this stock, just barely, so this is a time where you are better off printing the card backs just to keep the cards from being marked.

Aligning the backs with the fronts can be a challenge, depending on your printer. Hold the pages up to the light to make sure that your registration isn't too far off.

The challenge with this method is cutting the cards. You need a decent paper cutter, or access to one (at your job or the local copy shop).

Although it is tempting, do not begin by trimming off the outside of each page. Instead, make a single vertical and a single horizontal cut through the interior of the pages, creating four sub-sheets with multiple cards and raw edges.

Then, set the cutter depth (using the backstop that your cutter hopefully has) to 2.5," and trim each card or strip of cards to exactly this width. Next, set the back stop at 3.5" and finish the cards the other way.

### The Rest of the Bits:

A Pawn can be anything, from a piece you stole from another game, to an origami crane, to a lovingly painted lead miniature. We usually strip games from the thrift store.

Counters can be a little harder to come by, but here is what you are looking for: Your counters should be colored flat pieces or beads, approximately 0.75 to 1 inch across. They should be large enough to cover the waypoints, but small enough to fit 4 to a card.

You can use glass beads, plastic micro-chips, 2x2 Lego plates, or whatever you can steal from your least favorite game. There is no fixed number of counters, but we think 20 of each should be plenty.

If you use the plastic Micro-chips that we used to sell, you will have to substitute black chips for brown. That's okay; that's the real color of Oilpetrol anyway.

