

# microscopic

## Rule booklet



A game by Jeff Schomay

# Overview

Welcome to a world invisible to the naked eye, where cells evolve and compete to grow into the biggest, strongest, and fastest living organisms.

You will start off small and slow and weak. Choose which adaptations to focus on and which organisms will give you the best edge.

As you grow, you will need to make sacrifices to get to the next level, but everything ramps up as you race to the end and claim the most organisms to win.

## Contents



### **Gene Pool deck** (blue backs)

74 cards:

62 Cells

8 Mutations

4 Viruses



### **Organism deck** (red backs):

7 Organisms

# Basic Gameplay and Goal

**Microscopic** is a race to grow Genes into Cells into Organisms faster than your opponents.

A turn consists of three phases:

1. Play cards from your hand
2. Draw new cards  
(your **draw count starts at 2**)
3. Discard down to your hand limit  
(your **hand limit starts at 3**)

Cards in *Microscopic* have multiple uses:

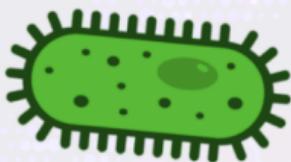
- Play a card **face down** to turn it into a **Gene**. Genes are the currency for buying Cells.
- Play a card **face up** to turn it into a **Cell**, which often have bonuses. Cells are also the currency for buying Organisms, which have even better bonuses.

The first player to **claim three Organisms wins** the game (in a 4-player game you only need two Organisms to win).

# Setup

Shuffle the **Gene Pool deck** and **deal 3 cards** to each player. Place the remainder face down in reach of all players as the draw pile.

(If you were dealt a Mutation card, play it face up in front of you and draw to replace it. Repeat if you draw another Mutation.)



Now prepare the Organism cards:

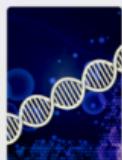
For **2 players**, choose **5 random Organisms** and spread them face up in the center of the table. The remaining 2 Organism cards will not be used this game.

For **3 players**, use all **7 Organisms**.

For **4 players**, use **5 random Organisms**.

Make room for a discard pile (cards should be discarded face down).

The next page shows a game in play.



## **Playing a Gene**

You can play **any card** from your hand **face down** as a Gene.

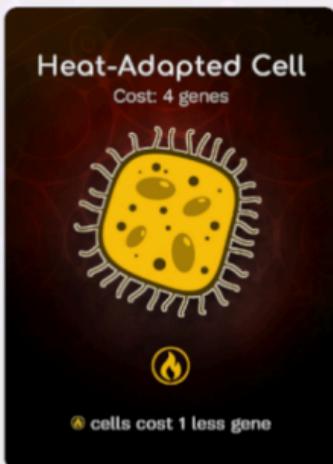
You can play as many Genes as you want, but once a card has been played as a Gene, it remains a Gene until it is discarded (to buy a Cell).



## **Buying a Cell**

When you have enough Genes to cover a Cell's cost, you can discard those Genes and play the Cell face up.

Cells come in different kinds and some give you bonuses. You need to collect various sets of Cells in order to claim Organisms.



Cell bonuses take effect immediately when they are played and stay in effect until they are discarded (or removed from play). Bonuses only apply to the player who played them.

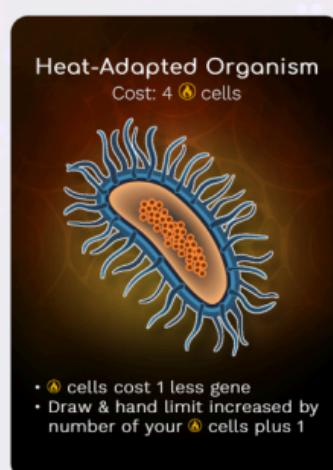
Some bonuses give discounts when buying Cells. And remember to check your Mutations, which also change the cost of Cells. However, you must always pay at least one Gene to play a Cell.

A few special Cells count as 2 Cells for the purpose of claiming Organisms and any bonus that is based on a number of Cells.

### ***Buying an Organism***

When you have enough Cells to cover an Organism's cost, you can discard those Cells and claim the Organism for yourself (place it in your play area).

You might lose some Cell bonuses, but you will be able to build up again even faster.



The Organism stays with you until the end of the game. Everyone is competing for the same pool of Organisms, so choose carefully!

Organisms have bonuses that change the speed of the game in a big way. Organisms are the only way to increase your hand limit. And ultimately you need Organisms to win.

Organism bonuses take effect immediately when claimed and apply only to the player who claimed it.

The game ends immediately when any player claims the winning number of Organisms.

### ***Playing a Virus***

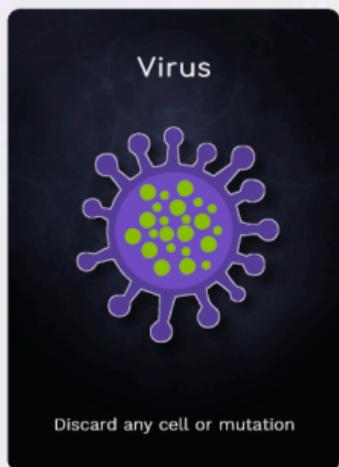
You can play a Virus card in three different ways:

**1. Face down as a Gene**

**2. Discard any played Cell**  
(Also discard the Virus)

**3. Discard any Mutation**

(Your own negative ones, or an opponent's positive ones)



## ***Playing a Mutation***

If you draw a Mutation card (or get dealt one at the beginning of the game), you must **immediately play it** face up and draw a new card to replace it.

Mutations can change a player's strategy by making certain Cells more or less expensive. They take effect immediately when played, and stay in effect until the end of the game (or until they are discarded by a Virus). Note that some Mutations can cancel each other out.



## ***Using a card's bonus action***

Some Cells and Organisms have optional bonus actions that you can take during your turn. If applicable, you can use a bonus action multiple times per turn.



# End of Turn

When you have finished playing all of the cards you want to play, you **end your turn by drawing cards**, then **discarding down** to your hand limit.

The **base number of draws is 2**. Your bonuses from your Cells and Organisms may allow you to draw additional cards. You should calculate how many draws you get at the end of each of your turns, as that number can frequently change.

If you run out of cards in the draw pile, shuffle the discard pile to replace it.

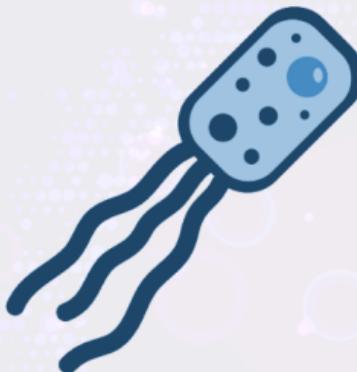
When you are finished drawing, you must discard down to your hand limit.

The **base hand limit is 3 cards**. Your bonuses from your Organisms may raise your hand limit. You should calculate your hand limit at the end of each of your turns, as that number can frequently change. The hand limit only applies at the end of your turn.



Example on how to count your draws:

"I start with **2** base draws. I have one Cell with an extra draw bonus; that's **3**. I have the Heat-Adapted Organism bonus, which brings it to **4**, plus that gives me one for each of my two Heat-Adapted Cells, bringing me up to a total of **6** draws."



Thank you for playing!

Visit **[microscopicgame.com](http://microscopicgame.com)** for:

- Solitaire variation rules
- Two-player co-op variation rules
- Alternate 4-player variation rules
- Information on future expansions

# Cell and Bonus Breakdown

## **16 Simple Cell cards** (cost 3 genes)

- 4 extra draw bonuses
- 4 replace bonuses
- 2 discount bonuses
- 2 doubles (cost 5 genes)

## **12 Cold-Adapted Cell cards** (cost 4 genes)

- 2 extra draw bonuses
- 4 discount bonuses
- 2 doubles (cost 5 genes)

## **12 Heat-Adapted Cell cards** (cost 4 genes)

- 2 extra draw bonuses
- 4 discount bonuses
- 2 doubles (cost 5 genes)

## **12 Water-Adapted Cell cards** (cost 4 genes)

- 2 extra draw bonuses
- 4 discount bonuses
- 2 doubles (cost 5 genes)

## **10 Photosynthetic Cell cards** (cost 3 genes)

- No bonuses
- No doubles