

KU Alchemists: The Academic Concoction



PHASE I

Welcome to the world of KU Alchemists, a captivating board game that immerses players in the intriguing art of potion-making and deduction. Crafted with inspiration from the acclaimed game "Alchemists"^[1]. In KU Alchemists, players step into the shoes of ambitious alchemists seeking to uncover the secrets of magical ingredients and create powerful potions. To succeed, you'll need to combine wit, strategy, and a touch of intuition.

The game unfolds in the bustling Alchemical University, where knowledge is as precious as gold. Each player takes on the role of a dedicated alchemist, vying for recognition and influence. By conducting experiments, and publishing theories you'll earn reputation points and climb the ranks of the Alchemical community. But beware, for the world of Alchemy is not without its mysteries and enigmas. As you strive to unravel the properties of exotic ingredients, you'll encounter hidden truths and unforeseen consequences. A misstep in your experiments could lead to unexpected revelations, or perhaps even a brewing catastrophe.

The essence of the game lies in the ingenious methods of deciphering alchemical secrets. Through careful analysis and deduction, you'll uncover the properties of various ingredients, gaining invaluable insights into the art of potion-making. Keep in mind, your fellow alchemists are not the only challenge you face. The quest for knowledge is a race, and the first to unravel the mysteries of the Philosopher's Stone will earn the highest honor.



Photo of Philosopher's Stone: A radiant, mysterious stone emitting a soft glow, placed on a wooden table surrounded by ancient alchemical tools.

Game Objects

Board

- The game board represents the laboratory setting where players conduct experiments.
- It consists of various static locations, including:
 - **Ingredient Storage:** Holds various types of ingredients.
 - **Potion Brewing Area:** Where players combine ingredients to brew potions.
 - **Publication Track:** Displays available publication cards and their requirements.
 - **Deduction Board:** A dedicated area for forming theories about ingredient properties using alchemy markers.
- The board layout remains fixed throughout the game.



An illustration of the game board: A detailed view showing Ingredient Storage, Potion Brewing Area, Publication Track, and Deduction Board.

Player Tokens

- Each player is represented by a unique token or avatar.
- Tokens serve multiple purposes:
 - Tracking the player's current position on the board.
 - Managing their available resources, including ingredients and potions.
 - Recording their scores.

Ingredients

- The game features various types of ingredients (e.g., herbs, minerals, mushrooms), each with unique attributes:
 - Unique identifier.
 - Name.
 - Properties, including color, value, and other characteristics.
- Ingredients are stored in the Ingredient Storage area on the board.



Potions

- Potions are the primary objective of the game.
- They are represented as cards with unique recipes and point values.
- Potions are placed in the Potion Brewing Area on the board.



Publication Cards

- These cards represent theories or publications that players can contribute to.
- Each publication card has specific requirements and corresponding point values.



Artifact Cards

Artifact Cards: These are special cards that provide players with unique abilities or effects that last the entire game. Some artifacts have an immediate one-time effect, while others can be used multiple times throughout the game. Here are a couple of sample Artifact Cards:

- Elixir of Insight: Allows a player to view the top three cards of the ingredient deck and rearrange them in any order.
- Philosopher's Compass: Once per round, the player can swap the position of two alchemy markers on the Deduction Board.

Alchemy Markers

- Alchemy markers are used to track players' hypotheses about the properties of ingredients.
- Players place these markers on the Deduction Board to form and test theories.

Deduction Board

- The Deduction Board is a dedicated area where players can:
 - Place alchemy markers to develop theories about ingredient properties.
 - Make guesses and confirm theories, assisting in the deduction process.

User Interface (UI)

Main Game Screen

- Displays the entire game board, including all game objects (Board, Tokens, Ingredients, Potions, Publication Cards, and Deduction Board).
- Provides comprehensive information about each player's resources, scores, and progress during the game.

Player Dashboard

- A dedicated panel that showcases the current player's avatar, available resources, and actions.
- Offers interactive buttons for actions like collecting ingredients, brewing potions, and submitting publications.

Ingredient Storage

- Provides a visual representation of the Ingredient Storage area on the board.
- Allows players to interact with this area to collect ingredients as needed for potion-making.

Potion Brewing Area

- Offers a visual representation of the Potion Brewing Area on the board.
- Allows players to interact with this area to combine ingredients and brew potions following the game rules.

Publication Area

- Displays available Publication Cards and outlines their specific requirements.
- Facilitates players in submitting theories and claiming points upon fulfilling the card requirements.

Deduction Board

- Showcases the Deduction Board where players can place alchemy markers to create and test theories about ingredient properties.
- Provides a user-friendly interface for players to make guesses and confirm theories.

Game Log

- Logs actions taken during the game for reference, helping players keep track of the game's progress and decisions made.

End Game Screen

- Appears at the conclusion of the game, displaying final scores and announcing the winner.
- Offers an option for players to initiate a new game, ensuring a smooth transition to the next round of gameplay.

Game Play

Game Setup

For this phase (Phase I), the game will be a two-player game played on a single computer. The order of the players will be chosen randomly. The game is played in three rounds: first round, second round, and final round. In each round, each player takes 3 turns. Each round has allowed actions for players.

- Players login to the game with a unique username and select an avatar/token for themselves.
- The Ingredient Cards are shuffled and dealt two cards to each player.
- The remaining Ingredient Cards are placed face-down to form the draw pile.
- The Artifact Cards are shuffled and placed face-down to form the draw pile.
- 10 golds are given to each player.

First Round

There are four allowed actions for the first round: Forage for Ingredient, Transmute Ingredient, Make Experiments and Buy Artifacts. You may perform a list of allowed actions in a round when it is.

- **Forage for Ingredient:** When it is your turn to forage for an ingredient, you may draw 1 random ingredient from the top of the deck.
- **Transmute Ingredient:** When you play this action, discard 1 ingredient and take 1 gold piece from the bank. Whenever you discard ingredients, no one else gets to see what you discarded. Hint: This is a quick way to get the gold piece you really need ... or an inefficient way to get the two gold pieces you really, really need. Skilled alchemists, however, will make most of their money by earning grants and selling potions to adventurers.
- **Buy Artifacts:** When you buy an artifact, take one of the cards in the artifact deck and pay 3 golds. Keep your artifacts on the table in front of you where everyone can see them. Artifacts have effects that last the entire game. If an effect does not specify that it is limited to once per round, then you can use it every time it applies. Other artifacts have an immediate effect that can be used only once. Using this effect is part of your Buy Artifact action.

- **Make Experiments:** You can make experiments where you mix two ingredients and see what happens. You can test your potion on a student or yourself. The procedure for mixing a potion is the same whether you are Testing on a Student or Drinking the Potion yourself:
 - Choose 2 of your ingredient cards to mix.
 - Choose whether you want to test it on a student or yourself.
 - Click a button to mix the selected ingredients.
 - See the results of your experiment.
 - Put the corresponding result token in your results triangle.
 - Show the result to the other players. Yes, they will learn which potion you made, but they will not know which ingredients you used. Put the corresponding result token on your player board, to remind the other players that you have made that potion
 - Discard the ingredients you used.

When you mix two ingredients, you may get positive, negative or a neutral potion. If you get a negative potion and test it on a student, you will lose 1 gold. However, if the potion is negative and you test it on yourself, you get sick. If your sickness level increases to 3, e.g., you get sick 3 times, you lose all of your golds to have surgery and get well. If you have a healing potion (a positive potion), you can use it to decrease your sickness level by 1.

Second Round

In the second round, two more actions are allowed in addition to the actions in the first round: Sell a Potion and Publish a Theory.

- **Sell a Potion:** You can sell the potion that you get to an adventurer (the system) if you want. You can ask for 1 to 3 golds to sell your potion. If you guarantee that it is a positive potion, the adventurer is willing to pay you 3 gold pieces. If you say that it is either positive or a neutral potion, he pays you 2 gold pieces. He pays you only 1 gold piece in case you do not guarantee that it is not a negative potion.
- **Publish a Theory:** You can publish a theory about an ingredient when you know it's alchemical. Or when you think you know. Or when you're sure no one else knows, either. It's up to you to decide whether to take a risk and publish early or to wait until you are certain. To publish a theory:
 - Pick up one of the alchemy markers and place it on one of the books on the theory board. This is your public statement about the true identity of the ingredient depicted in that book.
 - Now pay your publisher! You give 1 gold piece to the bank.
 - Once you have published your theory, gain 1 point of reputation.
 - You can publish a theory only about an ingredient that does not currently have an alchemy marker on it. You can use only a marker that is not currently assigned to any ingredient. The reason for this is simple: Each alchemy marker corresponds to exactly 1 ingredient. Each ingredient corresponds to exactly 1 alchemical. So any other theory involving that alchemical or ingredient would contradict the published theory. You can try to tell the publisher that the other theory is wrong, but the publisher will not believe you.

That other theory is published; yours is not. Clearly, the published theory is the more credible one. You can unmask their incompetence next round. See Debunk Theory on the next round.

Final Round

In the final round, you can Debunk or Endorse a Theory in addition to the actions allowed in the first two rounds.

- **Debunk a Theory:** If you think a published theory is wrong and prove that, you gain 2 points of reputation. Of course, anyone with a seal on that theory is at risk of losing reputation. To debunk a theory, you just need to show that one of the aspects is wrong. Tap the ingredient of the theory you are trying to debunk. Tap the aspect you are hoping to prove wrong. The system will show everyone the sign of that aspect of that ingredient. Compare it with the alchemical token on that theory. If the sign on the screen matches the sign of that aspect on the token, you have failed to debunk the theory. (That doesn't mean it's correct. It just means you have failed to prove it is incorrect.) You lose 1 point of reputation for wasting your colleagues' time. If the sign on the screen is the opposite of the sign of that aspect on the token, you have debunked the theory. In either case, everyone now knows the sign of that aspect for that ingredient. They can mark that information in their deduction grid. When using this action, you are not allowed to choose an ingredient that doesn't have a published theory.

Final Scoring

When the game finishes, the final score of each player is calculated as follows:

- Each reputation point a player has at the end of the game becomes 10 score points in the final score. For example, if a player has 5 reputation points, his/her score is 50.
- If a player has any artifact cards left in his/her hand, he/she exchanges each artifact card for 2 gold pieces.
- Now score one-third of a score point for each gold piece. Or, to put it another way, buy 1 score point for every 3 gold pieces, and keep any leftover gold pieces as a tiebreaker.

The winner of the game is the player with the most score points. Break ties using leftover gold pieces. If players are still tied, they remain tied. Well done!

Game Features

The game should contain either menus or small buttons that provide the following features:

- Pause/resume: The user should be able to pause the game whenever she/he decides to and resume it later. When a player pauses a game, the game is paused for every player in the game and it resumes for every player whenever it is resumed by the player who pauses.
- Help screen: There should be a help screen explaining the game objects, features, and how to play.
- Login screen: Appears before the game starts. Every player should have a unique nickname and an avatar or token.
- Game over screen: Appears when the game ends. It should show the winner.

References:

[1] Czech games edition | boardgame publisher. (n.d.).
<https://www.czechgames.com/files/rules/alchemy-rules-en.pdf>