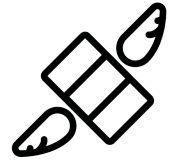


# Meritocracy

The Board Game (version 0.81)



**Players :** 2-4

**Age Range :** 10+

**Play Time :** 20-40 minutes

## Navigate a Society Where the Playing Field is Anything but Level

Start from different social backgrounds — each with unique advantages and resource allocations — then compete to climb the economic ladder.

- Will you invest your money for long-term gains or learn new skills to improve your wages?
- Will you choose the safe route with modest rewards or brave the risky path with potential for greater returns — or devastating setbacks?
- In the end: which players will prosper — and which will struggle?

## COMPONENTS

*Included:*

**Game Board :** Branching path with illustrated spaces

**Lucky Stars :** 12 square tokens representing advantages

**Learn Tokens :** 12 square tokens representing knowledge and learned skills

**Share Tokens :** 24 square tokens representing ownership shares

**Smacker Tokens :** square tokens in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$50

**Start Cards :** 8 cards representing different family backgrounds

**Chance Cards :** 20 cards with varied economic outcomes

**Rule Book :** Setup and gameplay instructions with discussion guide

*Not Included:*

**Six-Sided Dice :** 1

**Character Tokens :** 4 distinct player pieces

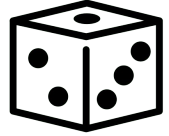
# Setup



1. Place the game board in the center of the play area
2. Each player selects a CHARACTER TOKEN\*
3. Shuffle the START cards and deal one to each player
4. Each player receives:
  - The starting money shown on their START card
  - The number of LUCKY STARS shown
5. Place all player tokens on the START space
6. Shuffle the CHANCE cards and place them face down
7. The youngest player goes first, then play continues clockwise

*\*Not included. Be creative!*

# Gameplay



## TURN SEQUENCE

1. Roll one six-sided die
2. Move your token the number of spaces shown
3. Follow the instructions on the space where you land
4. Play passes to the next player

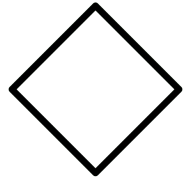
## BANKRUPTCY

- A player who cannot pay a debt enters BANKRUPTCY
- The player loses all money and all SHARE TOKENS
- The player loses one LUCKY STAR (if they player has any to lose)
- If a debt is owed to another player, that player is paid out
- All other debts are cancelled

## WINNING THE GAME

- The game ends when all players have crossed the finish line
- Final scoring:
  - Count all your money
  - Add \$4 for each SHARE TOKEN you own
- The player with the highest total wins

# Board Spaces



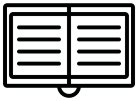
## WORK

- Collect \$3.
- Add \$2 for each LUCKY STAR you have.
- Add \$2 for each LEARN TOKEN you have.



## CHANCE

- Draw a CHANCE card and follow its instructions.
- If you run out of cards, reshuffle the deck.
- Each player may collect up to 3 LUCKY STARS.



## LEARN

- You may pay \$4 to gain a LEARN TOKEN.
- Each player may collect up to 3 LEARN TOKENS.



## INVEST

- You may buy SHARE TOKENS for \$5 each.
- Each player may collect up to 5 SHARE TOKENS.
- If any player rolls a 6 or lands on an INVEST space, all players collect \$1 per SHARE.



## DECISION

Choose ONE or pass:

- **INVEST**: Buy SHARE TOKENS for \$4 each.
- **LEARN**: Pay \$3 to gain a LEARN TOKEN.

# Bonus Rules (Optional)

## For Experienced Players



### I OWE YOU ONE

- Players with extra money can lend to other players.
- The borrower must pay back the original amount plus \$1 interest before the end of the game (or enter BANKRUPTCY).



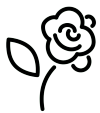
### BETTER TOGETHER

- Two players agree to combine their money and LUCKY STARS for one round.
- They share all gains and losses during that round.



### LUCKED OUT

- To begin your turn, roll 2 dice instead of 1.
- Choose 1 die and move that number of spaces.



### BREAD AND ROSES

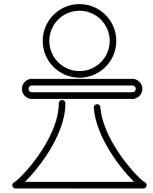
- Once per game, you may use an DECISION space to join a labor union for \$3.
- Gain 1 LUCKY STAR.



### THE LONG GAME

- Add the middle section of the game board to extend its length and enhance the impact of early-game actions.

# Choose a Strategy (Optional)



## LEARN TO EARN

- Prioritize getting LEARN TOKENS early
- Higher work income throughout the game
- Slower initial progress but steady growth
- Best for: Players who want consistent, predictable income



## BUY LOW, SELL HIGH

- Buy SHARE TOKENS whenever possible
- Sacrifice immediate spending for passive income
- Risk of market crashes (from CHANCE cards)
- Best for: Players who already have a decent money cushion



## GO BIG OR GO HOME

- Choose the riskier paths on the board
- Land on more CHANCE spaces hoping for big payouts
- Potentially big rewards but also big setbacks
- Best for: Players willing to gamble on their position



## TOGETHER WE RISE USING BONUS RULES FOR EXPERIENCED PLAYERS

- Form strategic alliances with other players
- Pool resources to overcome initial disadvantages
- Share both risks and rewards
- Best for: Players starting with fewer advantages

## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

- Some strategies work better depending on starting position
- Players with more initial advantages have more strategic flexibility
- Taking risks has different consequences for players with/without safety nets
- Education costs money up front but pays off over time
- Cooperation can help overcome systemic disadvantages

# Discussion Questions (Optional)



## BASIC QUESTIONS (YOUNGER PLAYERS)







- Did everyone have the same chance to win? Why or why not?
- How did having more money at the start help players?
- What was it like to have LUCKY STARS compared to not having any?
- How did you feel about your starting position?

## ADVANCED QUESTIONS (OLDER PLAYERS)

- If we played this game many times, which starting positions would likely win most often?
- What would make this game more "fair" for everyone?
- How are the starting positions similar to real life? How are they different?
- How does the "work hard to achieve anything" message relate to actual economic mobility in society?
- Why might politicians promote the idea that our economy rewards merit alone?

## LEARNING OUTCOMES


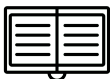













- Basic understanding of economic inequality and privilege
- Introduction to how starting advantages affect outcomes in capitalist systems
- Simple demonstration of how money can generate more money (capital accumulation)
- Critical thinking about fairness in economic systems
- Understanding of how "chance" affects people differently
- Recognition of systemic advantages and disadvantages
- Introduction to the concept of passive income through investments

START	 WORK	 LEARN	 CHANCE	 WORK	 INVEST	 WORK
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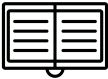







# Meritocracy

## The Board Game

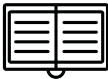










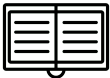










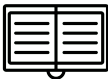





All emojis designed by [OpenMoji](#) – the open-source emoji and icon project. License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

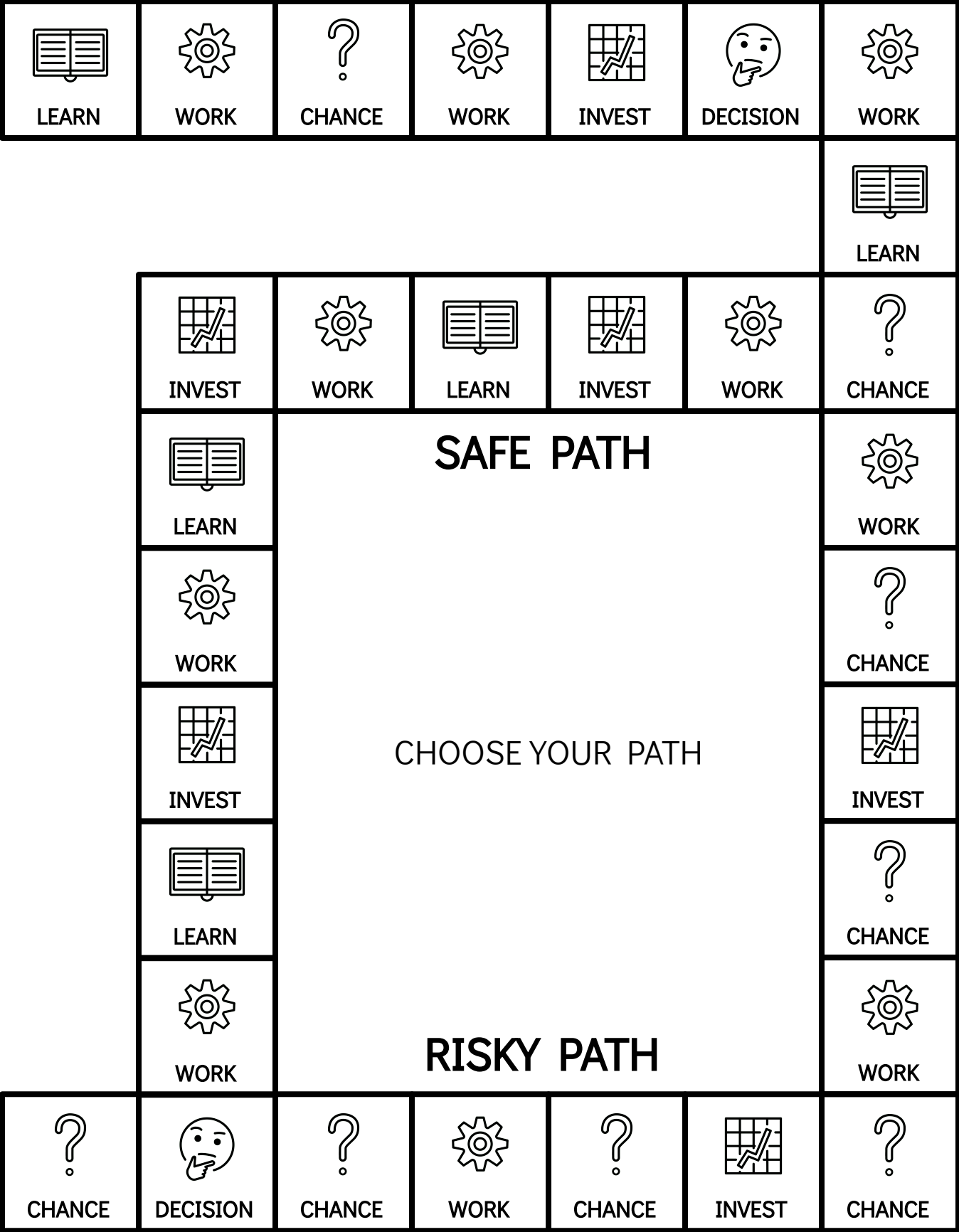
 CHANCE	 LEARN	 WORK	 DECISION	 WORK	 CHANCE
 WORK	SAFE PATH			CHOOSE YOUR PATH	 INVEST
 INVEST					 INVEST
 CHANCE					 CHANCE
 WORK					 WORK
FINISH					LAND ON OR BEYOND
	 WORK				
					RISKY PATH



							
LEARN	WORK	CHANCE	WORK	INVEST	DECISION	WORK	CHANCE

THE LONG GAME (OPTIONAL)

							
	LEARN	WORK	DECISION	INVEST	LEARN	WORK	
				<div>SAFE PATH</div> <div>CHOOSE YOUR PATH</div> <div>RISKY PATH</div>			
	CHANCE		CHANCE			INVEST	
							
	WORK		WORK			LEARN	
							
	INVEST		CHANCE			WORK	
							
	DECISION		INVEST			INVEST	
							
	WORK		CHANCE			LEARN	
							
CHANCE	LEARN		WORK	CHANCE	INVEST	CHANCE	WORK



## **GOLDEN TICKET START**

**\$50**  
**3 Lucky Stars**

Your family has a big house in a nice neighborhood with lots of helpful friends.

## **VIP HEAD START**

**\$25**  
**2 Lucky Stars**

Your family has two cars and can afford summer camps and nice vacations.

## **SUPER MID START**

**\$12**  
**1 Lucky Star**

Your family has enough money for what you need and sometimes special treats.

## **HUSTLE HARD START**

**\$10**  
**0 Lucky Stars**

Your parents work long hours to make sure you have what you need.

## **UPHILL BATTLE START**

**\$5**  
**0 Lucky Stars**

Your family sometimes worries about paying bills and buying groceries.

## **FAMILY BIZ START**

**\$15**  
**1 Lucky Star**

Your family owns a small store where everyone helps out after school.

## **FRESH CHANCE START**

**\$6**  
**1 Lucky Star**

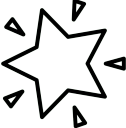
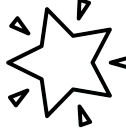
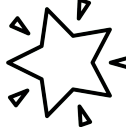

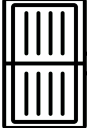

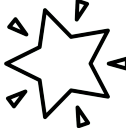
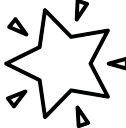
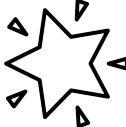
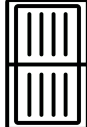
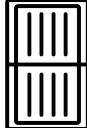
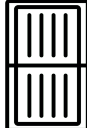
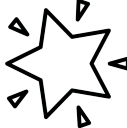
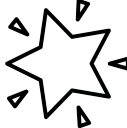
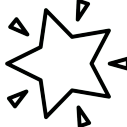
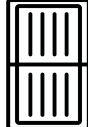
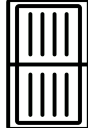
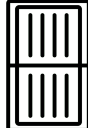
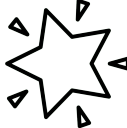
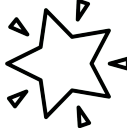
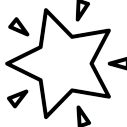
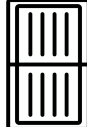
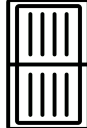
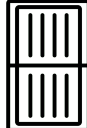
Your family just moved to a new city where everything is different and exciting.

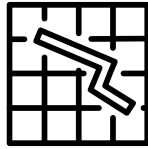
## **HOME HERO START**

**\$7**  
**0 Lucky Stars**

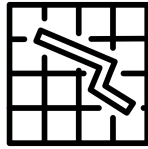
You help take care of your brothers and sisters while your parent is at work.

<b>** CHANCE **</b> Super Lottery Winner Roll again. If you roll a 5, collect \$50.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Best Friend's Wedding Pay \$3.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Economic Recession Everyone loses half their money. If you have \$100, gain \$10 instead..	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Car Repairs Pay \$4.
<b>** CHANCE **</b> Viral Video Roll again. If you roll a 1 or 2, collect \$20.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Investment Opportunity If you have at least \$20, collect \$5.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Grandparent Gift Collect \$1. Add \$2 for each Lucky Star.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Broken Laptop Pay \$2.
<b>** CHANCE **</b> Market Crash All players lose \$2 per share.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Community Help The player with the least money collects \$2.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Birthday Party Collect \$2. Add \$1 for each Lucky Star.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Lost Coat If you have 0 Lucky Stars, it was your only coat. Pay \$1 to replace it.
<b>** CHANCE **</b> Music Lessons Pay \$2.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Family Friends Gain 1 Lucky Star.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Mega Inheritance Collect \$2. Add \$6 for each Lucky Star.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Medical Emergency Pay \$6. If you have a Lucky Star, pay \$2 instead (health insurance).
<b>** CHANCE **</b> Overdraft Fee Pay \$1. If you have at least \$10, pay nothing.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Tech Company Success Collect \$5 per share.	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Traffic Ticket Pay \$2. If you have 0-1 Lucky Stars, pay \$4 instead (legal fees).	<b>** CHANCE **</b> Hospital Stay Pay \$10. If you have a Lucky Star, pay \$3 instead (health insurance).

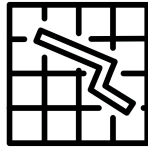
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<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Perfect Health</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Trust Fund</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Private School</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Higher Education</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Foreign Language</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Market Insight</div> </div> </div>
<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Cultural Privilege</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Upper Class Accent</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Private Tutoring</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Skilled Trade</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Sales Experience</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Professional Network</div> </div> </div>
<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Old Money Legacy</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Effortless Confidence</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LUCKY STAR</div> <div>Natural Charisma</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>STEM Knowledge</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Legal Expertise</div> </div> </div>	<div>  <div> <div>LEARN TOKEN</div> <div>Healthcare Knowledge</div> </div> </div>



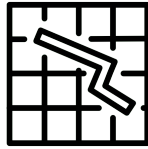
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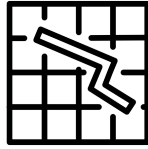
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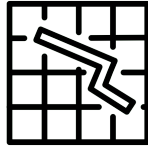
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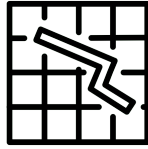
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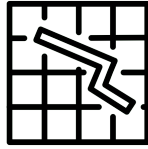
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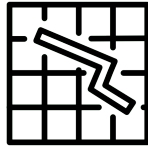
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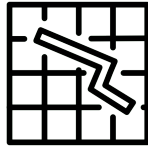
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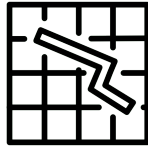
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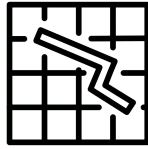
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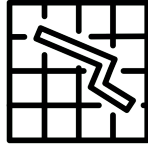
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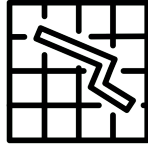
# SHARE



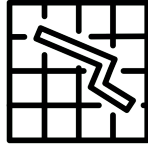
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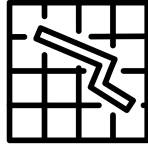
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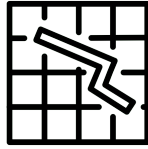
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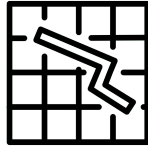
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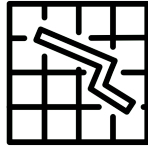
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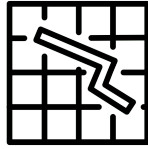
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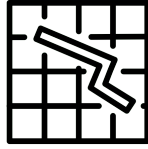
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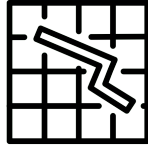
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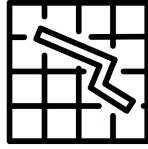
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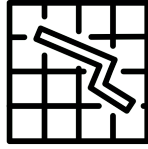
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<div><div>50</div><div>50</div><div>FIFTY SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>50</div><div>50</div><div>FIFTY SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>50</div><div>50</div><div>FIFTY SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>50</div><div>50</div><div>FIFTY SMACKERS</div></div>
<div><div>20</div><div>20</div><div>TWENTY SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>20</div><div>20</div><div>TWENTY SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>20</div><div>20</div><div>TWENTY SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>20</div><div>20</div><div>TWENTY SMACKERS</div></div>
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<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>
<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>10</div><div>10</div><div>TEN SMACKERS</div></div>
<div><div>5</div><div>5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>5</div><div>5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>5</div><div>5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>5</div><div>5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>

<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>
<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>	<div><div>\$5</div><div>\$5 \$5 \$5</div><div>FIVE SMACKERS</div></div>
<div><div>\$1</div><div>\$1 \$1 \$1</div><div>ONE SMACKER</div></div>	<div><div>\$1</div><div>\$1 \$1 \$1</div><div>ONE SMACKER</div></div>	<div><div>\$1</div><div>\$1 \$1 \$1</div><div>ONE SMACKER</div></div>	<div><div>\$1</div><div>\$1 \$1 \$1</div><div>ONE SMACKER</div></div>
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# House Rules



A large rectangular area defined by a dotted border, intended for writing house rules.

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