

Brimstone

by Rick Holzgrafe

3 or 4 players — 1 to 2 hours — Ages 12 and up
(Draft 8)

Welcome to Brimstone!

The planet called Brimstone, once a hot and toxic hell of a world, has been transformed into an earth-like paradise by humanity's great Terraform Fleet of automated spacecraft. The colonists were left with relatively low technology, except for the automatic air transport system at the center of Brimstone's single continent. They had planned to develop their own high technology in time—but now they may not have time!

Brimstone's climate and weather patterns are deteriorating. Once-verdant areas of the continent are turning to desert and swamp, and arable land is getting scarce. The citizens of each of the great Bases began to assemble armies to ensure that the other Bases will not take control of all Brimstone and steal the remaining fruitful lands.

You are the leader of your Home Base, and you must build your armies and lead them against the misguided and evil leaders of the other Bases, to ensure that your own people will not starve!

You can read more about the curious history of Brimstone in the back of this manual.

Overview

Brimstone takes place on a continental map formed from 61 hexagonal Terrain tiles which are placed, some in fixed locations and some randomly, before play begins. There are 10 different kinds of terrain tile, each with its own advantages and disadvantages for the armies that occupy them.

Play proceeds in rounds. In each round, all players issue orders simultaneously to all of their armies and then execute those orders round-robin, one order per player, until all orders have been executed. At the beginning of each round, one player (the Round Leader) selects an Event Card for the round. An Event Card describes a rule change that will be in effect throughout the round. The Round Leader is also the player who first executes an order. At the end of each round, the player to the Round Leader's left becomes Round Leader for the next round.

Goal

The player who first occupies at least 5 City hexes at the end of a round, wins the game.

Components

- 65 Terrain Tiles (“Hexes”)**
- 80 Troops** (20 each in red, blue, green, and yellow)
- 52 Order Tokens** (13 each in red, blue, green, and yellow)
- 6 Slow-Travel Markers**
- 40 Brimstone Bucks (“Stones”)**
- 10 Event Cards**
- 4 Screens**

Preparation

Setting Up the Map

Select the appropriate Setup Map from the maps in the back of this rulebook. Be careful to select the map that matches the number of players in the game.

Place Home Base, City, and Airport hexes in the locations shown on the Setup Map. Follow the directions on the Setup Map to discard any other unneeded hexes from those that have not yet been placed. Then shuffle the rest and place them randomly to fill out the map. (You may find it convenient to begin placing the random tiles first, and add the Home Base, City, and Airport hexes in their proper places as you go.)

Adjusting the Map

It's common for a random layout to favor one or two players more than the others: some Home Bases may not have enough nearby Farmland or Village hexes, or may have barriers of difficult terrain that block their access to desirable areas. Follow this procedure to improve the layout *before* choosing Home Bases:

Select the most experienced player (or select a player at random) to be the

Round Leader for the first round. The Round Leader may swap the locations of up to three pairs of the randomly-placed tiles. When he is done, players choose Home Bases for themselves, in counter-clockwise order starting with the player to the Round Leader's right. The Round Leader will therefore get the last remaining Home Base after all other players have chosen.

The Round Leader should do his best to make the map as fair as possible for all players, since he will probably get stuck with the worst position! The Round Leader should be the most experienced player because he can do the best job of making the map fair.

Finishing the Setup

Place the Event Cards face down beside the board. This is the Event Pool. Shuffle them, and randomly turn 4 of them face up (for a 3-player game) or 5 face up (for a 4-player game).

Place the Slow Travel Markers beside the board where all players can reach them.

Brimstone Bucks are the official currency of Brimstone, but the locals just call them “Stones.” Place the Stones in a pile or container beside the board to form the Bank.

Give each player the troops and Order Tokens in his color. These should be kept beside the board when not in play. Each player also gets a screen, used to hide his order tokens from the view of other players. Finally each player places two troops of his color on his Home Base, and receives two Stones from the Bank.

Playing the Game

Play proceeds in *rounds*. Each round has five phases which happen in order. The phases are:

1. **Select an Event**

The Round Leader selects a face-up Event Card from the Event Pool, announces his choice, and places the Event Card face-up near him and beside the board, where all players can see it.

2. **Place Orders**

All players place orders for their troops by placing an Order Token in their Home Base and in each hex where the player has troops. Place the tokens face-down so that no other players can see which orders are being placed. All players place orders simultaneously; there is no need to take turns. (You may leave some armies without orders, but usually it is wise to at least give each army a Bide order, so that other can't tell that your troops there will be idle.) This phase ends when all players agree that they are done placing orders.

3. **Reveal Orders**

All placed orders are turned face-up.

4. **Execute Orders**

Players take turns executing one order at a time, in clockwise order, starting with the Round Leader. Each player in his turn must choose one of his remaining orders and either execute or remove it. Any order may be removed instead of executed. Each player, before executing his first

order for the round, must supply his troops (see **Supply**). If a player has no orders left when his turn comes, he is skipped over. This phase ends when all orders have been executed.

Exceptions: Defend and Support orders are not executed or removed. Forage orders *must* be executed first, if needed to complete the player's supply. (See **Supply**.)

5. **Refill the Event Pool**

Return the Round Leader's Event Card to the Event Pool, face-down. If all Event Cards are now face-down, shuffle *all* of the Event Cards, then randomly turn 4 of them face up (for a 3-player game), or 5 face-up (for a 4-player game).

When the round is over, the player to the Round Leader's left becomes the Round Leader for the next round.

Supply

Troops must be kept supplied! Before executing your first order in each round, you must ensure that all of your troops are adequately supplied.

Supply is measured in *Supply Barrels*. If your supply is enough for your needs, you're okay for that round. But if you are short on supply, you must either make up the shortfall, or immediately discharge some of your troops *before* executing your first order in the round.

Supply your troops *before* your first move of each round, but *after* the first moves of any other Players who take their first move before you do. You may exceed your supply limits without penalty at any other time.

To supply your troops, first calculate your *Available Supply* (that is, the number of Supply Barrels you have available) by counting the number of  symbols on your Home Base and on each other hex where you have troops. The total is your Available Supply.

Next, begin calculating your *Supply Requirement* by adding up the number of Supply Barrels needed by the troops in each of your hexes. Each hex needs:

Troops	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6
Barrels	1	2	3

Troops	7 or 8	9 or 10	11 or 12
Barrels	4	5	6

...and so on: each hex needs half as many barrels as it has troops, rounded up.

Finally, count the number of  symbols on hexes where you have troops, and add that number to your Supply Requirement.

There are no tokens for Supply Barrels. Instead, just calculate your Available Supply and your Supply Requirement.

Supply Barrels rot quickly, and cannot be saved up for later rounds.

You always get the Supply Barrels for your Home Base whether or not you have troops there.

You do not need to worry about transporting your supplies to your troops. That's all handled by your capable quartermasters.

If your Available Supply is at least as large as your Supply Requirement, then you have successfully supplied your troops for this round.

But if your Available Supply is *less than* your Supply Requirement, then you are under-supplied. You must either obtain enough additional Supply Barrels to supply all your troops, or else discharge troops until you can supply the remainder.

You can obtain additional Supply Barrels in two ways. One way is to purchase Supply Barrels by paying 2 Stones into the Bank for each additional Supply Barrel. You may purchase as many as you want at 2 Stones per Supply Barrel.

You may also place and execute a Forage order, which earns 1 additional Supply Barrel. You may combine purchasing and Foraging in any way that you like.

If you use a Forage order to gain an additional Supply Barrel, you *must* execute the Forage order as your *first* order in that round. You may not execute any other orders before executing the Forage order.

If you still have unsupplied troops, you must discharge some of them: remove troops from the board until you can supply the remainder. You get to decide which troops to remove.

the Village hex, *or* 1 troop from any other hex. Any of these removals will reduce his Supply Requirement by 1 barrel, and his remaining troops can all be supplied.

Example of Supply

The Red Player has 4 occupied hexes:

- 1 troop on a Farmland hex
- 1 troop on a Desert hex
- 3 troops on a City hex
- 2 troops on a Village hex.

The Red Player's *Available Supply* is found by counting the  symbols on his Home Base and on the hexes where he has troops:

2 on his Home Base
 + 2 on his Farmland hex
 + 1 on his City hex
 = **5 Supply Barrels total**

The Red Player's *Supply Requirement* is found by adding up the number of Supply Barrels needed by the troops on each hex, and adding in the number of  symbols on those hexes:

1 for the 1 troop on the Farmland hex
 + 1 for the 1 troop on the Desert hex
 + 1 for the 2 troops on the Village hex
 + 2 for the 3 troops on the City hex
 + 1 for the  symbol on the Desert hex
 = **6 Supply Barrels total**

So the Red Player needs one more Supply Barrel. He can get it either by executing a Forage order as his first order, or by paying 2 Stones before executing his first order.

If the Red Player neither forages nor pays, he must remove both troops from

Orders

Each player gets 13 Order Tokens:



3 March



2 Recruit



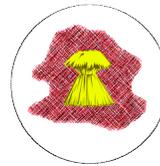
1 Support



2 Defend



3 Bid



1 Forage



1 Pillage

Orders may be placed only on hexes where you have troops, except that you may play Recruit and Bid on your Home Base even if you have no troops there. Most orders are executed in turn and are then removed from the board; but Defend and Support orders are not executed and remain on the board throughout the round.

Instead of executing an order, you may remove it from the board without using it. But whenever it is your turn, you *must* either execute or remove one order, until you have no executable orders left.

March

March orders may be played on any hex where you have troops. This order normally allows you to move the troops of that hex into an adjacent hex or hexes, but there are exceptions to this general rule listed below.

Destinations: The troops executing a March order do not all have to go to the same destination. (Exception: traveling “by air.” See **Air Travel** below.) You may send your troops off in different directions to different destinations. You may also leave some behind.

A *friendly* hex is one that already contains some of your troops. You may March into any empty or friendly hex, except that you may never enter or attack your opponents’ Home Bases.

Slow Travel Hexes: Mountain and Swamp hexes (marked with ) are *slow-travel* hexes. When your troops first enter a slow-travel hex, place a Slow-Travel Marker in the hex. Executing a March order in a hex with a Slow-Travel Marker removes the marker but does not move the troops.

If you already have troops in the slow-travel hex, place a Slow-Travel Marker only if there is not one there already. The troops already in the hex will lose time due to the need to rendezvous with the incoming troops in difficult terrain.

If you run out of Slow Travel Markers, you can use any other handy item such as a penny or even a Stone borrowed from the Bank.

Chaining: If you move your troops into a hex that contains another March order, then the combined troops can all be moved on a later turn when you execute the second March order. This allows the original troops to participate in two marches within a single round. You can chain all of your March orders, if you wish, and even make some or all of them forced marches (see below) to cover a surprising distance in one round.

Forced Marches: You may optionally pay one Stone per March order for a *forced march*, which allows your troops to behave as if a second, “phantom” March order awaited them at their destinations. Troops may use the phantom order to *immediately* march onward to a second hex, or to move into or out of a slow-travel hex without delay. Only those troops who received the original March order may use the phantom order; troops met along the way may not join the march. See **Combat** below concerning battles that occur during forced marches.

In a forced march, your troops take both steps in a single turn.

Any troops affected by the original March order may choose to participate in the forced march, even if they go to different destinations.

Air Travel: When you use a March order to march from the Airport hex at the center of the board, you are traveling “by air” and can reach nearly any part of the

board in a single step. The following special rules apply to air travel:

- You may choose to leave some troops at the Airport, but the rest must all go to the same destination. Unlike ordinary marches, you may not send your troops to multiple destinations with a single March order.

- The destination may be any hex on the board, with the exceptions of City and Home Base hexes. (These places are too urban: they are filled with buildings and offer no wide, flat areas of land or water in which to land aircraft.)

- You may force-march as usual either by starting from the Airport, or by continuing through the Airport. Air travel rules apply to the portion of the forced march that begins on the Airport hex, whether that is the first or second part of the forced march.

Traveling “by air” requires a March order just like normal travel. That is, your troops are *not* instantly transported elsewhere simply because they have arrived at the Airport.

Attacking: You may attempt to March some or all of your troops into an enemy hex (a hex occupied by an opponent's troops). Your attempt will cause a battle to occur (see **Combat** below); if you lose the battle, your opponent will remain in the disputed hex and you will not be able to move your troops into it. You may engage in only one battle per March order.

Recruit

Recruit orders may be played anywhere except for Desert, Swamp, and Airport hexes. (Nobody lives in those places.) You can play Recruit on your Home Base even if you have no troops there.

To execute a Recruit order, place one new troop in that hex from your off-board supply. Recruit has no effect if all of your troops are already on the board.

Support

Support orders may be played on any hex *except* hexes containing a Slow-Travel marker. If an adjacent hex is attacked, the player who played the Support order *may* choose to contribute its hex's troops to the battle. Support may be given to either the attacker or the defender, even if the Supporting player is neither.

Support orders are not executed. Instead they remain available throughout the round, and come into play whenever there is an adjacent battle.

Defend

Defend orders may be played on any hex. If that hex is attacked, the defending army's combat strength is increased by one.

Defend orders are not executed. Instead they remain available throughout the round, and come into play whenever the Defended hex is attacked.

Forage

Forage orders may be played on any hex except for Home Base, City, Desert, and Airport hexes. (Nothing grows in those places.) A Forage order produces one additional Supply Barrel, and must be the first order executed if the extra barrel is needed for supply.

Pillage

Pillage orders may be played only on Village hexes. Execute a Pillage order by taking one Stone from the bank.

Bide

Bide orders may be played on any hex. You can play Bide on your Home Base even if you have no troops there. Bide has no effect (except to waste time, which is sometimes useful). To execute a Bide order, simply remove it from the board.

Combat

Combat occurs when a player (the *attacker*) uses a March order to attempt to move into a hex (the *disputed hex*) occupied by another player (the *defender*). Combat is resolved by calculating the combat strength of each player. The player with the greater final combat strength is the winner.

If there is a tie, the attacker wins.

Because a March order allows a player to divide his armies and send them to different places, the attacker must declare how many troops are being committed to the battle. The uncommitted troops are free to stay behind, or to move to other destinations either before or after the combat is resolved. The defender always commits all troops in the defending hex.

All supporting hexes must declare their support before combat begins. Support is voluntary; the player who placed the Support order decides whether to sup-

port, and who to support. All troops in supporting hexes are considered to be committed to the battle.

Combat Strength

The final combat strength is calculated for each player as follows.

The Attacker:

- Number of committed troops in the attacking hex
- + Number of troops in supporting hexes
- + 1 if a  symbol is shown on the attacking hex
- + Payment (see **Payment** below)

The Defender:

- Number of troops in the defending hex
- + 1 if the hex has a Defend order 
- + Number of troops in supporting hexes
- + 1 if a  symbol is shown on the defending hex
- + Payment (see **Payment** below)

Mountain and Forest hexes show the  symbol, meaning that they add 1 when defending the hex. Forest hexes also show the  symbol, meaning that they add 1 when attacking from the hex.

Payment

Each player may increase his final combat strength by spending Stones to improve the condition of his troops and equipment. To make payment, each player secretly hides zero, one, or two Stones (but no more than two) in his fist and holds his closed fist over the board. When both players are ready, they open their fists simultaneously and add their

payments to their respective combat strengths. The payments of both players go to the Bank after being counted.

Casualties

The loser of the battle must remove one troop from his attacking or defending army, plus one additional troop for each difference of 3 in final combat strength.

Casualties may be taken only from the defending hex or from the committed troops in the attacking hex; uncommitted troops and all supporting troops on either side are immune to loss.

Casualties are returned to the player's off-board supply, and may be recruited again at any later time.

Examples of Casualties

If the final combat strengths are Red 4 and Blue 2, then Blue loses one troop.

If the final combat strengths are Red 6 and Blue 2, then Blue loses two troops.

If the final combat strengths are Red 7 and Blue 1, then Blue *would have lost* three troops, but actually loses only one troop because he has no more to lose.

Troop Movement After Combat

If the defender wins, the defending army stays in the disputed hex and the survivors of the attacker's committed troops remain where they were. Uncommitted troops are still free to move elsewhere.

If the attacker wins, the survivors of the defender's army *must* retreat to an

adjacent friendly or empty hex. Any order remaining in the disputed hex is removed without being executed. Then the attacker's committed troops *must* move into the disputed hex. Any remaining uncommitted troops are free to come along, at the attacker's discretion. No supporting troops may move.

If the combat occurs as the first movement of a forced march, the committed troops may not continue the forced march after combat, and must remain in the attacking hex (if the combat is lost) or the disputed hex (if the combat is won). Uncommitted troops may complete the forced march as usual.

If the disputed hex is the Airport, defenders may retreat by air according to the usual air-transport rules (see **Terrain** below). A retreating army may not force-march. If there is no available hex to retreat to, the defender's entire army is destroyed.

Combat and Slow-Travel Terrain

You may not attack *from* a hex that contains a Slow-Travel Marker (unless you can force-march, removing the marker on the first step and attacking on the second step). However, you *may* attack a hex that contains a Slow-Travel marker.

A Slow-Travel marker in the disputed hex is ignored for purposes of combat, but remains in the hex regardless of the outcome of the battle. It applies to whichever army occupies the hex after the battle.

If the defending army retreats into a slow-travel hex, place a Slow-Travel marker in that hex as usual.

Diplomacy

Players are allowed to make deals, alliances, truces, promises, pacts, agreements, and any other kind of diplomatic arrangements and agreements, at any time.

Under no circumstances are such deals binding, and there is no penalty (other than loss of trust and honor) for breaking them.

Event Cards

Brimstone's climate grows more unpredictable with every passing season. Frequent, sudden, and severe weather changes are common and will strongly affect your battle campaign!

Fair Weather

Play the round with all normal rules in effect. It is as if no Event Card was selected at all.

Truce

Players may not engage in combat during the round. Attempts to march into hexes occupied by enemy troops are forbidden.

Entrenched

If a tie occurs in battle, the win goes to the defender instead of to the attacker. All other rules of combat apply normally.

Missed Payroll

Players may not spend Stones to increase their combat strength.

High Morale

All march orders may be executed as forced marches, without payment. (Players may *not* pay for a "double" forced march.)

Deep Snow

Deep snow makes all terrain equally difficult. Omit the normal +1 combat strength modifiers for attacking or defending Forest and Mountain hexes when calculating final combat strength.

Good Roads

At the start of the round, remove all Slow-Travel markers from the board. Do not place any Slow-Travel markers during the round.

Fogbound

This event affects Airport, Mountain, and Forest hexes. Troops in these hexes may not be given March or Support orders, and no troops may enter these hexes, even when retreating.

Lightning

Support orders may not be played during the round, due to the constant disruption of radio communications.

Heavy Rains

No forced marches are allowed during the round.

Terrain

Here are the 10 types of terrain and their effects:

 <p>Home Base</p>	<p>May not be occupied or attacked by enemy forces.</p> <p>Recruit and Bid orders may be played in Home Base hexes even if the hex contains no troops.</p> <p>Home Base produces two Supply Barrels even when there are no troops there.  </p> <p>Forage orders may not be played in Home Base hexes.</p>
 <p>City</p>	<p>Occupy 5 City hexes (for 3 or 4 player games) or 6 City hexes (for 2 player games) at the end of a round to win.</p> <p>Armies in City hexes <i>earn</i> one extra Supply Barrel. </p> <p>Forage orders may not be played in City hexes.</p>
 <p>Plains</p>	<p>(No bonuses, penalties, or special rules.)</p>
 <p>Village</p>	<p>Pillage orders may be played in Village hexes.</p>
 <p>Desert</p>	<p>Armies in Desert hexes <i>cost</i> one extra Supply Barrel. </p> <p>Forage and Recruit orders may not be played in Desert hexes.</p>

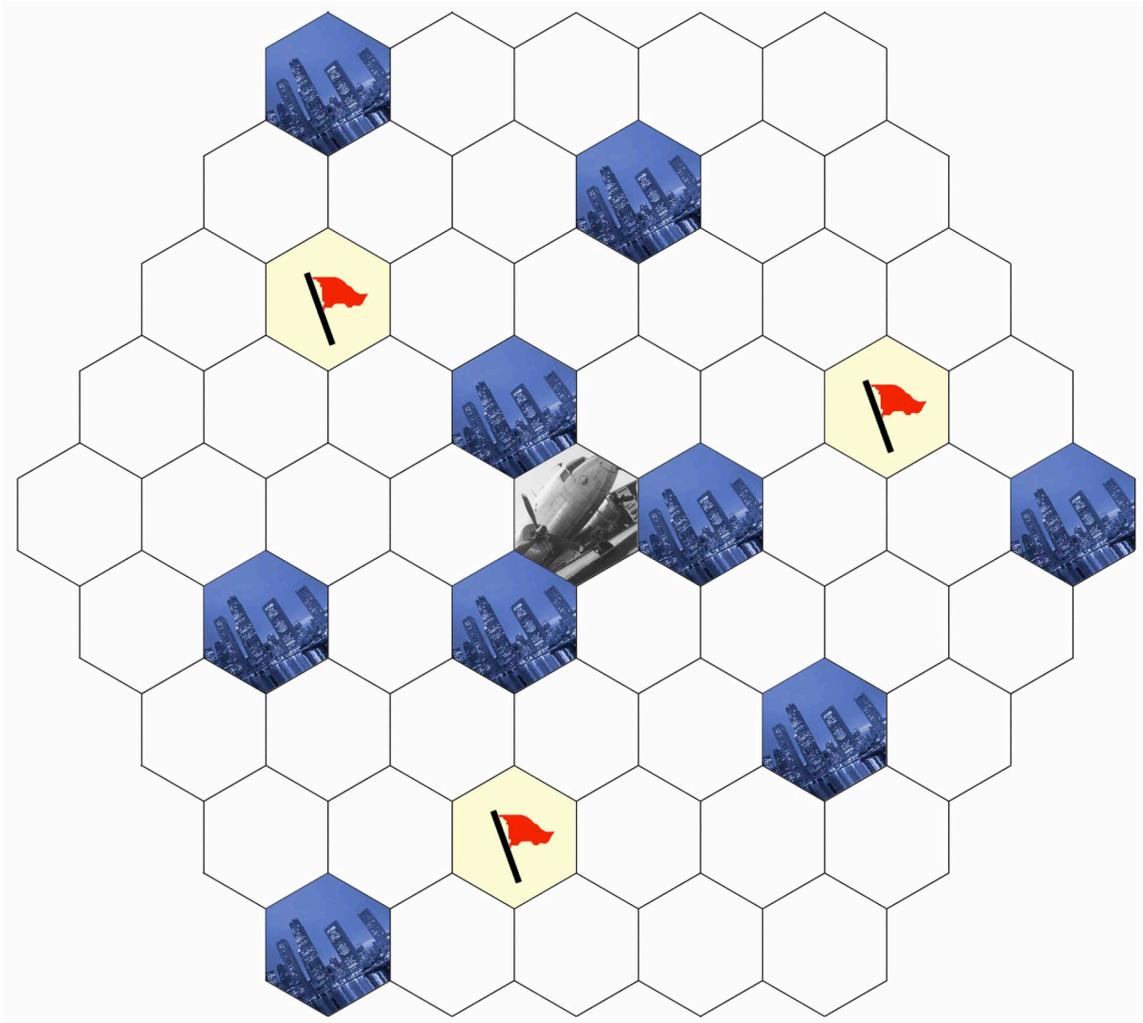
 <p>Farmland</p>	<p>Armies in Farmland hexes <i>earn</i> two extra Supply Barrels. 🍷 🍷</p>
 <p>Forest</p>	<p>Armies in Forest hexes add 1 to their combat strength when attacking or defending (but not when supporting). 🗡️ 🛡️</p>
 <p>Mountain</p>	<p>Slow travel. 🐢</p> <p>Armies in Mountain hexes add 1 to their combat strength when defending (but not when attacking or supporting). 🛡️</p> <p>Support orders may not be played in hexes containing a Slow-Travel marker.</p>
 <p>Swamp</p>	<p>Slow travel. 🐢</p> <p>Recruit orders may not be played in Swamp hexes.</p> <p>Support orders may not be played in hexes containing a Slow-Travel marker.</p>
 <p>Airport</p>	<p>Troops marching from or through the Airport travel "by air" to any <i>one</i> friendly or empty hex on the board, <i>except for</i> Home Bases and Cities. You may leave some troops at the Airport; all others <i>must</i> go to the same destination.</p> <p>Recruit and Forage orders may not be played at the Airport.</p>

Setup Map for 3 Players

Remove these hexes first:



Set aside 1 Home Base hex, 2 Farmland hexes, and 1 Mountain hex; these will not be used. Then place 9 City hexes, 3 Home Base hexes (any colors you like), and the Airport hex as shown. Then shuffle the remaining 48 hexes and place them at random in the empty spaces.

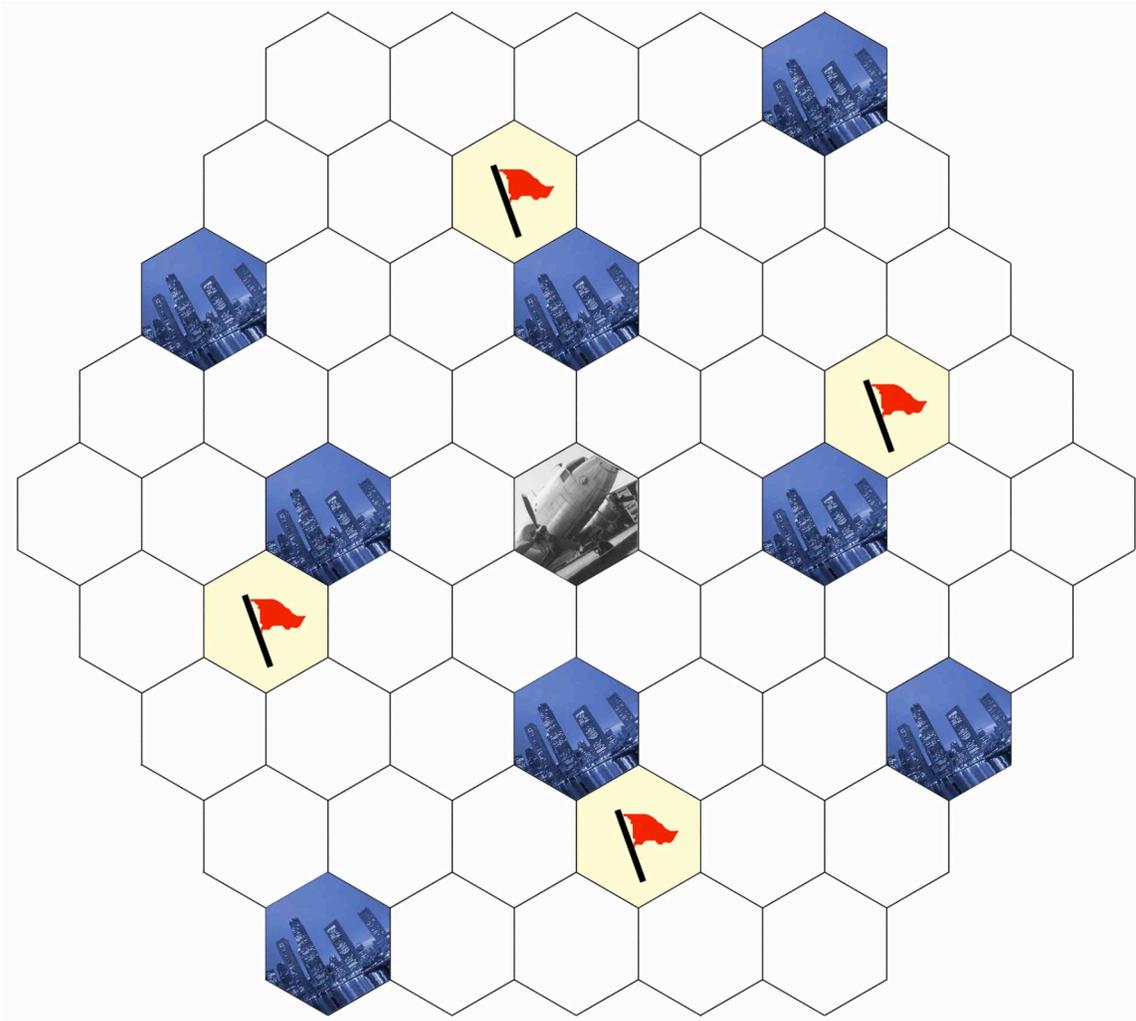


Setup Map for 4 Players

Remove these hexes first:



Set aside 1 City hex, 2 Plains hexes, and 1 Mountain hex; these will not be used. Then place 8 City hexes, 4 Home Base hexes (place the colors as you please), and the Airport hex as shown. Shuffle the remaining 48 hexes and place them at random in the empty spaces.



Strategy Tips

What should you do at the beginning of the game? In the first round, you have just two troops, stationed in your Home Base. You have seven kinds of order to choose from, but most of them are useless this early in the game. Bide just wastes time. Support and Defend are pointless because your opponents are too far away to attack you. You don't need to Forage because you already have enough supply, and you can't Pillage because you own no Village hexes yet.

That leaves March and Recruit. Most players like to start with a March. That lets you send your two troops off to different destinations: for example, one troop to Farmland, and one to a Village. Owning Farmland gives you more supply, so that you can recruit aggressively in the next few rounds. Owning a Village lets you start Pillaging to build up a supply of Stones for later use.

Some players prefer to start with a Recruit order. After growing your Home Base army to three or four troops, you can then March them all off in different directions, suddenly claiming up to four useful nearby hexes.

Farmland is important. Without it, you can't supply enough armies to occupy enough Cities for a win, even if your opponents do nothing to stop you. There is not really enough Farmland to go around, so be prepared to fight fiercely to take and hold several Farmland hexes.

Try to take and hold one Village hex in a protected location. If you can leave it free for frequent Pillage orders, you can build up a large fund of Stones, and replenish it quickly when battles and forced marches deplete your funds.

Pay attention to the Forest hexes. Attackers in Forest hexes gain a +1 combat advantage. Adjacent hexes are more vulnerable to attack from Forests, so remember that such hexes are easier to attack and harder to defend.

Also pay attention to the slow-travel hexes: the Mountains and Swamps. They form effective barriers and can help protect you from invaders. But they can be passed by a determined or wealthy opponent. (Hannibal crossed the Alps, after all!) Remember that if the "Good Roads" Event Card is in effect, Mountains and Swamps are no harder to pass than any other kind of terrain.

Use Support wisely. Placing a Support order in a hex with a strong army helps to efficiently defend every adjacent hex.

The Airport offers a way to make a surprise move. Armies traveling "by air" can show up unexpectedly in nearly any part of the board. (But remember, not Cities or Home Bases: they're too urban, and offer no places wide and flat enough to land.)

Don't forget the Cities! A quick-acting player can win by suddenly abandoning his Farmland and Villages and making a fast grab for two or three empty or poorly defended Cities. Remember that if you keep only one or two troops in a City, they will be self-supporting (because the City earns you one supply barrel each round). An occupied City is harder for an opponent to take than an empty one.

But also remember that to win, someone must not only take the right number of Cities, he must also hold them until the end of the round. If someone suddenly seizes enough Cities to win, you should

immediately look for ways to successfully attack one, to prevent the win.

Finally, think ahead. In the next round, who will be Round Leader, and who will get to execute orders ahead of you? When you are Round Leader, what Event Card will you select? The answers to questions like these can help you plan your strategy for several rounds into the future.

Brimstone: Its History and Current Events

The world named Brimstone was a planetary hell when humans first found it among the stars. Earth-like worlds were rare and the stars hard to reach, yet humanity knew it would need new elbow room and footholds among the non-human worlds. There was only one solution: to transform unsuitable planets into new Earths. Brimstone was the first!

Star travel is slow; the ancient dream of faster-than-light travel was never realized. So the Terraform Fleet was a vast armada of automated, slower-than-light starships, sent to Brimstone to gentle its torrid, toxic airs and quicken its hard and sterile soil. Genetically-engineered plants were introduced that thrived in Brimstone's poisonous atmosphere and began converting it to oxygen. Asteroids were dropped to fill the skies with dust clouds, shading the land to cool the climate, producing rain to fill oceans, spreading a fine silt across the dry, hard plains, and sculpting the continent-to-come. In time, earth-like plants and animals were revived from frozen seeds and embryos. These replaced the original

terraforming organisms and created a sustainable ecology.

When all was ready, automatic mechanisms awoke the human passengers sleeping in orbit. A single continent had been carefully shaped, and now bases were built where the colonists could set their first footprints and establish their strongholds. Cities were laid out symmetrically, to ensure that all colonists would get their fair share of this continent and its new riches of verdant valleys and fruitful plains.

And then, its work done, the great Terraform Fleet left. The expense of terraforming Brimstone had been titanic, and most of the equipment was reusable. It was recalled to Earth to be restocked, refitted, refueled, and sent on to another potential New Earth. The Brimstone settlement had what it needed to survive and prosper, and would not need space travel or high technology again until they were capable of producing it themselves.

But the grand experiment failed.

Brimstone's weather system wasn't stable. Unexpected rains washed topsoil and its precious cargo of seeds to the salty ocean. Regions that had been lush gardens first grew dry, then turned to desert. Lowlands filled with water that spread to fill hundreds of square miles with mud flats and shallow marshy lakes and sluggish streams. The farmlands that had once blanketed Brimstone became scarce and precious.

Luxuries became expensive, then necessities grew scarce. Unrest grew among the colonists. Demagogues arose, each convinced that he and he alone held the solution to Brimstone's problems. Dis-

trust grew between the peoples of the Bases, and soon there was talk of war. Factories were converted to the manufacture of weapons, always for purely defensive purposes, but each new factory only helped convince the other Bases that war was inevitable. After a while, it *became* inevitable, because there was no longer anyone on Brimstone who believed otherwise.

Brimstone lacks the resources to fight any kind of war other than a ground war with live troops. The only exception is the central Airport, which was originally the spaceport where the Terraform Fleet landed its cargoes and shipped them to all parts of the continent. The automated transport system is still in operation there: airships that quickly deliver men and cargo to almost any region, then return automatically to the Airport.

The ecology is failing and the people of Brimstone are divided. War is now imminent. Each of the Bases has raised the beginnings of an army, and is about to send their forces forth to unite Brimstone again under one rule. The selfish, lying demagogues of the other Bases must not gain ultimate power! You, and you alone, are the leader who can bring all of Brimstone back under a single sane and intelligent rule; who can unite the settlers and develop the technology needed to maintain Brimstone as a habitat for humanity and—someday—make it the stable and permanent paradise it was meant to be!

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Rick Holzgrafe

rick@kagi.com