



## STARTING YOUR FIRST GAME

Yes, it's a big rulebook. That's because the game was designed to give players lots of options and flexibility. You'll appreciate that when you're playing for the twentieth time, but right now, you're having trouble getting started!

Here's a simple way to learn the game:

- Only plant crops, and ignore all the livestock options, for the entire first game. This allows you to become familiar with the overall gameplay without having to learn all the livestock rules, which are a little more complex than those for crops.
- Don't allow land purchases in the first 'year' (four turns). Stick with your one starting homestead section. This will simplify and speed up the first few turns.
- Don't be competitive! Treat the first game as practice, allow that mistakes might be made, and don't worry about the outcome. As you figure out how the game works, you'll get strategy ideas for next time.

Now let's walk through your first year. Start by giving every player a Land Card and \$1,000. Each player places their Homestead marker on the section indicated on their Land card. Place the Turn marker on Turn 1 on the track on the gameboard.

### **Turn 1:**

- Anyone who wants to buy wheat should do so now (this is the only thing you can plant in the winter). Pay for the seed and place a wheat marker on your property. Players who don't want to plant wheat do nothing. This concludes the buying phase.
- Now each player takes a Chance card. The cards only apply in certain situations; if your card doesn't appear to apply to you, simply discard it. If it does, collect or pay money as shown. If it seems complicated and you're not sure what to do, don't worry about it - discard it. (You're not playing a competitive game yet, so it doesn't matter.)
- When everyone's done with their Chance card, turn over one Event card. This applies to all players, but again, the event may only be in effect under certain conditions. When you're done with this card, you've concluded the Event phase.
- Turn over a Harvest card. Because it's your first turn and no-one has dairy cattle, there's nothing to harvest, but it helps to develop the habit of turning over a card to open the Harvest phase. You've now completed your first turn.

### **Turn Two:**

- Move the turn marker to #2. Now it's spring. Players who didn't plant wheat should plant corn or soybeans.
- When everyone's done paying for and placing their crop markers, distribute another round of Chance cards, then turn over another Event card.
- When you're done with the above, turn over another Harvest card to mark the beginning of the Spring Harvest phase. The wheat is now ripe. Players with wheat should turn in their markers and collect the amount shown on the Harvest card for wheat in their region (Paradise Prairie, Lake District, etc.). When everyone's done with that, move the Turn marker to #3.

### **Turn Three:**

- Players who planted wheat in the winter now have the option to plant a summer sorghum crop. Or they may choose to do nothing.
- Do another round of Chance and Event cards.
- Turn over another Harvest card, even though no-one has crops ready to harvest.

### **Turn Four:**

- Nothing is planted in the fall, so you can skip through the Buying phase for this turn.
- Do another round of Chance and Event cards.
- Turn over a Harvest card. Corn, soybeans, and sorghum are all harvested now. Remember to turn in your crop marker when you collect the payment for the crop in your region.

You've now completed your first year. Before starting Turn Five, allow a little time for everyone to plan their strategy. Some players may have enough money to both pay off their mortgage now (at \$1,000) and replant in winter or spring. If you choose to pay off your mortgage (it's optional until the end of the game, but as shown on the card the cost goes up each year), turn in your Land card. You're now debt-free.

Also at this time, some players may have enough money to expand by buying more land. Review the rules for Buying Unowned Land on top of pg. 3 before starting Turn 5. If you do buy land, remember to leave yourself enough cash to plant a crop on each section you own!

If anyone had a disastrous start and doesn't even have enough cash to replant their home section, review the rules for Prospecting on pg. 4. Now you're ready to start Turn Five.

Some tips for the rest of the game:

- Wheat and sorghum can be planted in either of two seasons. To keep track of when you planted a particular section, develop a pattern, or “code”, for how you place the markers. This will also be a useful practice for livestock (see the Prairie Almanac for suggestions).
- Remember that the Modern Era begins on turn 9. The era change affects some Chance and Event cards, and also the crop farming limits. In the Pioneer Era (turns 1-8) you may not have more than five sections of crops, and all your landholdings must be connected (on the sides or corners). In the Modern Era, these limitations are removed, IF you buy a truck and machinery set. See the Modern Era rules on pg. 6.
- Don't despair if it seems like you'll never pay off your mortgage. The repayment schedule was designed for regular games with livestock involved, and with players who've played once or twice before in mind. It's not reasonable to feel as if you “ought” to be able to retire your mortgage in a practice game using only crops.

Good luck, and Happy Sodbusting!



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fun@ mansionhousegamesand hobbies.com  
905-821-4270

[www.sodbusters-game.com](http://www.sodbusters-game.com)