

A Life

A game by Stefan Freund for 2–4 players ages 8 and up.

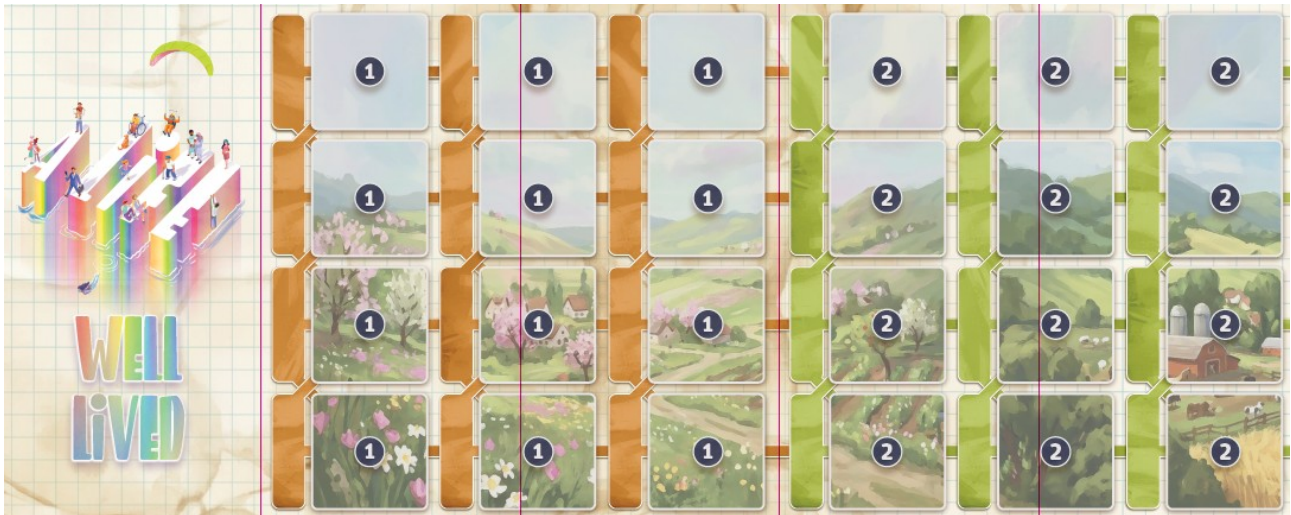
In “A Life,” you play through a lifetime. From birth to old age, you choose which experiences your characters will have. In the process, you collect resources such as knowledge, experience, dreams, and money, which you need to develop experiences. Additionally, your experiences determine the characters’ inner values, which dictate which resources you receive experience points for at the end of life. So the winner isn’t the one who is richest, smartest, or most successful, but the one who has lived their life best in accordance with their own values.

Game Materials

- 1 foldable game board
- 4 life boards
- 226 life cards
- 12 baby cards
- 60 life tokens for 4 characters (15 per character)
- 80 resource tokens (20 per character)
- 20 phase Tiles (5 per character)
- 24 banknotes
- 12 heart tokens
- 1 start token
- 1 score pad
- 1 set of instructions

Game Setup

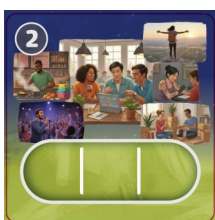
Place the game board in the center of the table and unfold it so that phases 1 and 2 are fully visible.



Each player chooses a character and places the corresponding life board in front of them.



Place your 5 phase tiles face down on the corresponding spaces of the 5 life phases.



Place the 3 life markers for the corresponding life phase on the phase tiles.



Then place your 20 resource tokens on the scales on your life board, 2 on each scale with the matching symbol. All tokens start the game at value 0.



Sort the life cards by life phase and shuffle them into 5 separate piles, which you place face down next to the game board.

Shuffle the baby cards and set them aside.

Core Resources

In “A Life,” your characters’ traits and achievements are represented by resource symbols. There are two types of resource symbols:

- Scoring resources → These are represented by colorless symbols and are used only for the final scoring. They indicate what was “important to you in life.”



- Life resources → These are represented by colored symbols and can lead to further life events. They are also used for the final scoring. They indicate what you “can do in life.”



Both types of resources are represented by a total of 10 symbols. In both categories, there are more common and rarer resources.

The following 5 resources are relatively common as scoring resources and relatively rare as life resources:

- Sports
- Education
- Art
- Fame
- Experience

The following 5 resources are relatively rare as scoring resources and relatively common as life resources:

- Strength
- Knowledge
- Creativity
- Joy
- Community

Your current value of the corresponding resource is shown on your life boards using the resource markers. The colorless marker represents scoring resources, and the colored one represents life resources. If the markers exceed the maximum value on the scale, adjust accordingly. The values are not strictly limited.

Important: Scoring and life resources do not deplete (there are a few exceptions, see below). If you need these resources for cards, you only need to have them, but you do not have to give them up.

Additional Resources

There are other resources in the game, which are briefly described here:

Money

When you receive money, take a banknote from the supply. Money is a consumable resource that is often required for particularly lucrative developments. So if a card requires money, you must give up the corresponding number of banknotes. You do not receive any experience points for money at the end of the game.

Life Cards

You draw the specified number of life cards. You may choose any cards from the stacks of the current phase and the next two phases. There is no hand limit.

Some cards require you to discard life cards. In that case, discard any cards from your hand to a discard pile.

Negative Resources

In rare cases, a life card causes you to lose a resource. In that case, move the marker for the corresponding life resource back. If you have already reached “-1” on the scale with this life resource, nothing happens.

You can never lose scoring resources, only life resources.

Heart and Baby Resources

These two additional resources are explained in detail below.

The Life Cards



The life cards depict the things your characters do or experience during their lives. The cards are divided into 5 life phases, which roughly correspond to these stages: childhood, adolescence, young and older adulthood, and old age.

A card consists of two sections: the base area (the upper part of the card) and the development area (the lower part of the card).

You automatically experience the base area when you play the corresponding card from your hand or from the game board into your life board. You only experience the development area once you can pay the costs shown there during the “Development” action (see below).

Experience

In both cases, experiencing means that you receive all resources from the respective areas. These are mostly scoring resources (colorless) and life resources (colored). In these cases, you move the life markers forward on the corresponding scales on your life track.

However, some cards also provide money, additional life cards, or negative resources.

Important: You only receive the resources from the development area if you have performed the “Development” action for the card.

Costs

Costs can be life resources. In this case, you simply need to have the resources—that is, show the corresponding value on the scale on your life board.

However, costs can also be money, life cards, or hearts. In this case, you must pay the corresponding cost—that is, give up money, cards, or hearts.

In some cases, costs are separated by a slash. In this case, you may choose one of the two options.

Your Birth

Now your characters are born. Since “A Life” is a very thematic game, it makes sense to go through this together as a small ritual at the start of the game rather than as part of the setup.

“You are born. From birth, you possess inherited traits.”

The baby cards are shuffled, and you receive one card, which you place on the corresponding space on your life board. Baby cards give you your first scoring symbols and thus suggest a direction for you.



Move the resource tokens for the scoring resources onto your life board according to the symbols on your baby card.

Also place three heart tokens on your baby card.

“And soon, the first dreams and plans begin to take shape.”

Now each of you receives two cards from life phases 1 (Orange), 2 (Light Green), and 3 (Blue). These cards form your hand and are kept face down.

The player who feels most alive at the moment goes first and receives the start marker.

Now take your first three life markers from the first phase tile on your life board. Set the phase tile aside; you'll use it to cover the area again at the end of the phase. The open area on the life board always shows you the current phase.

The starting player places the first three life markers in a stack on any starting space on the game board (the spaces on the far left). The other players follow in a clockwise direction; spaces may be occupied more than once.

Now draw 8 cards from the phase 1 (orange) deck and place them in any order on the first 8 spaces of the game board (in the first 2 columns).

Your life can now begin.

Gameplay

The game now takes you through your lives over a total of 15 rounds, divided into 3 rounds per life phase for the 5 life phases.

Starting at the start marker, you now take turns clockwise. Then the round ends.

Your Turn

Your turn always consists of exactly two parts:

- Select a card
- Place a life marker

Select a game card

You always have two options here:

- Take a card from the game board
- Play a card from your hand

Take a card from the game board

You may choose between the 2 or 3 cards on the game board that are connected by bars to the space where your life markers are located.

Once you have selected a card, move your life markers to the space behind the selected card, then place the card on top of your life board in the current column (matching color).

The empty space on the game board is immediately filled with a new card from the deck of the corresponding phase.

Playing a hand card

Alternatively, you may place one of your hand cards from the current phase onto your life board. Cards from past or future phases may not be played.

In this case as well, you advance your life marker. You may choose which of the 2 to 3 available cards on the game board to place your life marker behind (without taking the card).

In both cases, you immediately receive the resources from the base area of the played card.

Placing a Life Marker

You now take the topmost of your life markers from the game board and must place it. This symbolizes how your characters spend their time.

There are three options here:

- Development
- Friendship
- Resources

You must always choose one of these actions. If you cannot develop any cards and do not have the resources to pay for the friendship action, then you must choose the resource action. This can lead to a loss of hearts in the final phase (see below).

Development

Place the life marker on the cost area of a life card from the current phase. You now receive the resources from the development area of the life card. This area is only accessible to you through this action.

This action is only possible if you can pay the card's cost.

The "Development" action can only be performed once per card. It also cannot be performed on cards from past phases.

Friendship

You pay the cost shown next to the friendship symbol for the current phase on your life board and place your life marker on a life card for the current phase, but in another player's display.

This also grants you the resources and scoring symbols from the base area of the opponent's card. The other player does not lose these resources and scoring symbols.

You may perform the "Friendship" action again on any turn, but you may only select each opponent's card once. However, other players may also select this card during their own Friendship actions.

The development area of the opponent's card is not accessible to you.

Resources

Place your life marker on one of the resource spaces for the current phase on your life board. You then receive the resources shown.

You may perform the "Resources" action again on every turn, which is why 3 resource spaces are shown on your life board in each phase.

End of a Round

Once everyone has taken a turn, the round ends.

The start marker is passed to the next player in a clockwise direction. Exception: with 2 players, the start marker is not passed until the phase changes (see below).

Now, all remaining life cards from the column that has been passed on the game board are cleared, and a new column of cards is filled in on the right, so that the next two columns in front of the life markers are always filled.

If you run out of space on the right side of the game board, simply unfold the next section of the board. Similarly, fold the left side of the board back in as soon as you no longer need the space there.

End of a Phase

After every third round, the current phase ends. If this was not the last phase, a new one begins.

If you are playing with two players, pass the start marker to the other player.

Now take the 3 new life markers from the phase tile of the next phase on your life board. Place the new life markers in a stack at the spot on the game board from which you took the last life marker of the previous phase.

Now place the phase tile from the previous phase back on the Life Board, this time with the side labeled "A Life" facing up to indicate that this life phase is now over for you. Then remove the phase tile for the current phase and set it aside.

Baby Symbols

At the end of Phase 3, for each baby symbol on your laid-out life cards, draw 2 Phase 1 life cards, place one of them on top of your phase 3 cards, and discard the other.

At the end of Phase 4, for each baby symbol on your laid-out life cards, draw 2 Phase 2 life cards, place one on top of your phase 4 cards, and discard the other.

These cards represent your children's lives. You receive the resources from the base area of the two cards, but you cannot develop them.












The Hearts

At the start of the game, you receive 3 hearts on your baby card. You can lose these hearts during the game through cards or the Resource action in Phase 5.

If you have none of the 3 hearts left at the end of your turn, the game ends early for you at that point. Of course, you still participate in the scoring at the end of the game.

End of the Game

When Phase 5 is over or if you all had to drop out early, the game ends.

				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
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Now, record in the scoring block how many experience points you receive in total. To do this, multiply the value for the scoring resource and the life resource for each resource type. This value indicates your experience points for that resource type. If a resource is on the “-1” space, this results in a negative score for that resource.

Now add up all 10 resource types to get your total score.

Everyone who played this game and had a wonderful, emotional time is a winner. If you want to continue scoring, the player with the most experience points wins. In the event of a tie, the value you achieved for Joy counts.