



PARADOX

INITIATIVE



BRIAN SUHRE

COMPONENTS

- ▶ 1 Multiverse Board
- ▶ 72 Timeline Cards
- ▶ 32 Tech Module Cards (8 per player)
- ▶ 10 Research Goal Cards
- ▶ 135 Paradox Particle Tokens
- ▶ 12 Purple Paradox Particle Tokens
- ▶ 12 Trigger Switch Discs
- ▶ 5 Alliance Tokens
- ▶ 4 Paradox Consoles
- ▶ 15 World Tiles
- ▶ 1 Matrix Token Bag
- ▶ 1 Chief Scientist ID Badge
- ▶ 15 Lock Tokens
- ▶ 1 Glitch Marker
- ▶ 1 Solo Board
- ▶ 1 Solo Tentacle Marker

INTRODUCTION

In Paradox Initiative, players are mad scientists competing to claim strands of spacetime from worlds all across the multiverse.

On your turn, first you select planets to focus on during the Wormhole Phase. Then, you manipulate paradox particles in order to form strands, establishing stable connections to faraway worlds and allowing you to study their advancements during the Matrix Phase. Finally, you prepare to do it again and add the captured data to your collection during the Cleanup Phase. This continues until the timeline deck is empty.

The player who has collected the most complete worlds and best met the company's research goals will be hailed as the greatest scientist in the universe!

"To a visionary of sufficient boldness, there is nothing that cannot be observed, labeled, sorted, judged, cataloged, and even sampled. It is as if all the worlds of the multiverse are laid out on the laboratory workbench of such a visionary."

— Cimern Oxleb, Chief Scientist of the Paradox Industries Group

SETUP

1. Place the **multiverse board** in the center of the table.
2. Place the **world tiles** on their matching, designated spaces on the multiverse board.
3. Place the **glitch marker** on a random world.
4. Place the **purple paradox particle tokens** on their designated space on the multiverse board.
5. Place the **locking tokens** nearby.
6. Shuffle the **timeline cards** into a face-down deck and place it to the left of the game board. The tableau of available timeline cards is called the wormhole. To form the wormhole, follow the instructions below, based on the number of players.
 - 4 Players: Deal 9 cards face up next to the timeline deck.
 - 3 Players: Deal 8 cards face up next to the timeline deck.
 - 2 Players: Take the top 18 timeline cards and create a new alternate timeline deck above the timeline deck. Then, reveal 3 cards from the alternate timeline deck, placing them in a row next to the deck. Finally, reveal 6 cards from the timeline deck, placing them in two 3-card rows below the alternate timeline cards. The end result should be a 3x3 grid of cards, with the top row consisting of only alternate timeline cards and the bottom two rows made up of timeline cards.
7. A set of paradox particles is composed of 15 **paradox particle tokens**. Each set consists of one of each symbol in the five different colors. Based on the number of players, place sets of paradox particles in the **matrix token bag** and then shake up the bag.
 - 4 Players: 9 sets (all 135 paradox particles)
 - 2-3 Players: 7 sets (105 total paradox particles)
8. Draw paradox particles from the matrix token bag, one at a time, and place the tokens on the anomaly, located in the center of the multiverse board. If a symbol already on the anomaly is drawn, set it aside and continue drawing until there is one of each symbol, regardless of color, on the anomaly. Return any previously set-aside paradox particles to the bag.

9. Shuffle the **research goal cards** to form a deck and place one card face up beside each of the research goal spaces, next to the multiverse board.

Note: If Secret Objective is revealed as a research goal, deal a face-down research goal to each player and return all remaining research goals to the box.

10. Place the alliance **tokens near** the research goals.
11. Randomly choose a starting player for the first round and give them the **chief scientist ID badge**.

PLAYER SETUP

1. Place a **paradox console** (player board) in front of you, being sure to leave space to the right of it.
2. Take a set of red, yellow, and blue **trigger switches** and place them deactivated side face up in the designated area above your console.
3. Take a set of 8 **tech module cards**, shuffle them, and place them in a face-down deck to the left of your paradox console. Then, draw 2 tech module cards, choose one to place face up near your deck, and return the other to the bottom of the deck.
4. Beginning with the chief scientist, create a matrix by drawing paradox particles from the bag, one at time, and placing them in a 5x5 grid to the right of your paradox console. Particles should be placed starting with the bottom row, filling in from left to right, moving up to the next row after filling each row. Pass the matrix token bag to the player on your left when finished.
5. Return all unused player components to the box.

See page XX for solo setup and rules.

PHASE 1: WORMHOLE

The chief scientist chooses and performs one of the following actions:

- 1. Draft a Card:** Select one card from the wormhole and place it on the matching section of your paradox console (e.g. place a past timeline card in the past section). If you choose a nexus card, place a locking token on the paradox particle in your matrix that corresponds with the location indicated on the nexus card.

| In a 2-player game, players may draft any card in the timeline or alternate timeline.
- 2. Activate a Trigger Switch:** Flip a deactivated trigger switch disc to its activated (color) side.
- 3. Build a Tech Module:** Draw 2 tech module cards. Choose one to place face up on the table near your paradox console. Return the other to the bottom of the deck.

Play proceeds to the left until all players have performed one action. Then, the last player to have performed their action performs a second action. Play now proceeds to the right, until all players have performed a second action. Once the chief scientist has taken their second action, the wormhole phase ends.

“The universe is too vast for the biological brain to conceive of all at once; imagine trying to perceive the multiverse, which contains infinite universes! We must rely on the paradox engine to focus on particular zones across the multiverses, lest our minds light up with too much information, like candles drifting into the sun.”

—Cimern Oxleb, Chief Scientist of the Paradox Industries Group

PHASE 2: MATRIX

During the Matrix Phase, players manipulate their paradox particles to form **time strands** of the same color. In doing this, they will gain the necessary focus to capture the timelines on their consoles, or to stabilize and lock worlds on the multiverse board.

MATRIX ACTIONS

Starting with the chief scientist and proceeding to the left, each player performs two matrix actions. A matrix action consists of either swapping the positions of two paradox particle discs with matching symbols in your matrix or between your matrix and the anomaly (the three paradox particles found in the middle of the multiverse board). Note: Paradox particles with lock tokens cannot be swapped.

TIME STRANDS

A time strand is formed when performing a matrix action that results in a row or column of at least four paradox particles of the same color. Strands resolve the instant they are formed, even if you still have a second action to perform. You cannot, for example, form a 4-disc strand with one action, and then take another action to expand it to a 5-disc strand. Additionally, you are not required to form a strand with every action.

As soon as you form a strand, perform the following steps in order:

- 1. Resolve trigger switches, if applicable.**

If the strand is red, blue, or yellow, activate the trigger switch of that color by flipping it from its deactivated side to its activated side. Nothing happens if the trigger switch is already activated.

- 2. Remove all particles in the strand from your matrix, setting aside earned particles.**

If you form a 4-particle strand, set aside one of the particle discs. If it is a 5-particle strand, set aside two discs.

Place all other particle discs on the discard space on your paradox console.

3. Allocate earned particles.

You may place earned particles onto timeline cards on your console to score points.

You may spend earned particles to stabilize and lock worlds.

Discard any particle tokens you don't spend or place.

4. Refill the matrix.

All remaining particles in your matrix drop to fill the lowest available space in their column.

Then, draw new particles from the bag to refill the matrix, left to right, bottom to top.

A disc covered by a locking token does not drop during a refill. Any discs above the locked particle token remain in place as well. Newly drawn particles fill any spaces beneath it.

If a strand is formed by a refill or drop, it does not automatically resolve. You may choose to spend one of your future matrix actions to resolve it, or you may leave it alone and make a different swap. This is the only time when a 4-disc strand may be left unresolved in order to turn it into a 5-disc strand on a later action.

Note: It is possible to form multiple strands with one action, even intersecting strands, but the strands must be formed simultaneously on the same action. If multiple strands are formed on the same action, each step is resolved for all strands before proceeding to the next step. Also, when allocating particles in Phase 3, you may freely allocate all particles in any order, regardless of what strand they came from.

CLAIMING NEXUS CARDS

In order to claim a nexus card from your paradox console, you must form a strand that includes the particle in the position pictured on the card. When you form such a strand, claim the nexus card and place it in your score pile. Remove the locking token and then resolve the strand as normal. **Note:** Claiming a nexus card does not cause the glitch marker to move. See below for details on the glitch marker.

ALLOCATING PARTICLES: FOCUSING TIMELINES

You may place earned particles onto the timeline cards on your console in order to focus (score) those cards. The upper left corner of each timeline card shows the particles needed to focus it. Once the required particles are on the timeline card, move the particles to your discard pile and put the timeline card in your score pile, facedown, to the left of your console.

Then, advance the glitch marker a number of spaces clockwise on the multiverse board, based on the type of timeline card focused:

- ▶ **Past:** 5 spaces | **Present:** 3 spaces | **Future:** 1 space

If multiple timeline cards are focused on the same action, total the number of spaces the glitch marker would move, based on all resolved cards, then advance it that many spaces. Resolving multiple timeline cards still only counts as moving the glitch marker once.

When the glitch marker ends its movement on a world disc:

- ▶ If the world has a locking token on it, remove the locking token; nothing else happens.
- ▶ If the world is stable (the timeline is visible), flip the world token. This world is now fractured.
- ▶ If the world is fractured (the planet is visible, the timeline is not) nothing else happens.

ALLOCATING PARTICLES: STABILIZING & LOCKING WORLDS

World tokens have two sides: stable, which depicts the world's present timeline, and fractured, which depicts a planet.

- ▶ You may spend one black or white particle to stabilize a fractured world by flipping it from its fractured side to its stable side.
- ▶ You may also spend one black or white particle to lock a world, which is indicated by placing a locking token on it.
- ▶ You may stabilize or lock any world, even if the glitch marker is currently resting on that world. A world can have a maximum of one locking token on it at any time.
- ▶ Discard any particles you spent in this way.

FREE ACTION: DEACTIVATING PURPLE PARTICLES

Any time during your Matrix Phase, if all three of your trigger switches are face up, you may flip all three face down to take a purple particle from the main board. Purple particles discs are wild and count as any type or color of particle. They must be immediately spent on timeline cards or used to repair worlds. This is a free action.

When you return a purple particle, return it to the multiverse board. (Purple particle tokens never go into the matrix bag.) There is no limit to the number of purple particles you can have on your paradox console.

FREE ACTION: USING TECH MODULES

Any time during your Matrix Phase, you can use a tech module to perform its special action. After using a tech module, remove it from the game. This is a free action. Players may use any number of tech modules they wish during their turn, but each one must be fully resolved before activating another. See the index on p. XX for a list of special actions.

FREE ACTION: FORMING ALLIANCES

Any time during the Matrix Phase on your turn, you may form an alliance. To form an alliance, spend one particle of any color and move that color's alliance token to their play area. The player may use this alliance token immediately or in a future turn as a single particle of this color:

- ▶ If used on a timeline card, place the token directly on the timeline card. Once that card is focused (scored) or lost, the player returns the Alliance token to the supply.
- ▶ If used to repair or lock a world, the player immediately returns the token to the supply.

Another player may break an existing alliance on their turn during the Matrix Phase by spending a particle of the same color. The alliance token is then returned to the supply. Note: It is possible to spend 2 particles to break an existing alliance and claim it for yourself.

Five science teams from other departments have offered their services to your teams. But because resources are limited, the alliances tend to be fickle, going where the funding takes them.

END OF TURN AND LOST CARDS

You have a limited number of turns to claim timeline and nexus cards drafted from the wormhole. After performing your matrix actions, shift all cards on your paradox console one space to the right. Any card that moves from the Danger! space off the paradox console is lost. Place the card in the wormhole discard pile. When a card is lost, any particles on the card are placed on the discard pile of the paradox console. If a nexus card is lost, the locking token is also removed from the matrix.

Return all discs from your discard pile to the bag and then pass the bag to the next player in clockwise order.

PHASE 3: CLEANUP

After all players have performed their matrix actions, the Cleanup Phase occurs. At this time, any cards remaining in the wormhole are moved to the discard pile. Depending on the player count, refill the wormhole with cards from the timeline deck:

► **4 players:** refill 9 | **3 players:** refill 8 | **2 players:** refill 6

Pass the chief scientist ID badge to the left.

If the timeline deck is empty at the beginning of the Cleanup Phase, this triggers the game end. Follow the steps below:

1. Pass the chief scientist ID badge to the left.
2. Skip Phase I: Wormhole.
3. Each player performs one final matrix action during Phase 2: Matrix.
4. The game ends.

For a 2-player game, think of the current wormhole as unstable, and all the remaining cards are discarded at the end of every round. Now think of the alternate wormhole as stable; these cards are never discarded at the end of the round. Only add cards to the alternate wormhole if there are missing cards at the end of the round. If the alternate timeline deck has no remaining cards, skip this step. This process allows for better strategizing — otherwise, too many cards would be discarded. The alternate deck has no bearing on the end game trigger; the end game only triggers when the core timeline deck is empty.

GAME END & SCORING

After each player has taken their final action, the game is over. Follow the steps below.

1. FRACTURED WORLD PENALTY

Remove any fractured worlds from the multiverse board. If a player has cards from any fractured worlds in their score pile, they must choose and discard one card corresponding to each fractured world before scoring.

2. SCORING WORLDS

Players sort their remaining cards by world and score based on the size of their completed sets. A set consists of up to 4 cards for any given world consisting of past, present, future, and nexus. Any cards in your score pile from a given world count toward that world's set.

For each set of world cards, score as follows:

- ▶ **1 Card:** 1 point
- ▶ **2 Cards:** 3 points
- ▶ **3 Cards:** 6 points
- ▶ **4 Cards:** 10 points

Players also score 1 point for each locked world on the multiverse board that is represented by a card in their score pile. Even though multiple cards make up a world, only 1 point can be scored per locked world.

"Inevitably the multiverses will one day unfocus. No grand patterns of paradox particles will suffice to observe these other worlds then. It is why we must struggle to gather all the data we can during the period of convergence!"

3. SCORING RESEARCH GOALS

Research goals come in three categories:

- ▶ **Research Assets:** There are five strategic advancements spread throughout the timelines of the 15 worlds, depicted as icons in the upper-right corner of timeline cards (9 for each symbol). Players gain additional points for these at the end of the game.
- ▶ **Timeline/Nexus:** Players gain additional points for scoring the past, present, future, and physical location of worlds.
- ▶ **Secret Objective:** When the secret objective is a research goal, players score additional points based on the goal they received at the start of the game.

Players score points related to the research goals established at the beginning of the game:

- ▶ For the first research goal, every card in the player's score pile that meets this criteria is worth an additional 1 point.
- ▶ For the second research goal, every set of 2 cards that meet this criteria is worth an additional 3 points.
- ▶ For the third research goal, every set of 3 cards that meet this criteria is worth an additional 6 points.

Any alliance token in your play area at the end of the game is worth 1 point each.

WINNING THE GAME

The player with the most points wins! If there is a tie, the player with the most cards in their score pile wins (after the fractured world penalty). If there is still a tie, the player with the most nexus cards wins. If there is still a tie, all tied players may rejoice in their shared victory, forming a corporate behemoth that is sure to dominate the planet's industry and technology...until the next game.

"Glitch research is an exercise in risk and reward. The additional time spent protecting the connection to a world could be the project's blessing...or its doom."

APPENDIX

EXPERIMENTS

The Spires, The Towers, and The Gates are experiments in the timeline deck. Each has 3 cards that include a past, present, and future. When drafting these cards, place them on your mat as normal.

These projects have a planet symbol . This symbol means you have to save a planet in order to complete the card. To save a planet, you must lock a planet or repair a fractured planet. It does not matter which planet you save. If the card requires particles of any color, these particles must be on the card before you can save a planet and complete the card. Saving a planet is the final step.

Note: Each planet symbol must be resolved with its own saved planet. You cannot save multiple symbols with one saved planet.

Each experiment has a special action that triggers immediately after completing the card (upper-right icon):

- ▶ **[icon] Past:** Gain 1 additional matrix action this turn.
- ▶ **[icon] Present:** Build a tech module.
- ▶ **[icon] Future:** Activate a trigger switch.

Experiments move the glitch marker as normal timeline cards.

Experiment cards score 1/3/6 points for a set. Experiments cannot be fractured and always score.

PARALLEL UNIVERSES

Parallel universes are placed in the present section when drafted. In order to save a parallel universe, you need 2 particles of any color and 1 purple particle. A parallel universe must be paired with another card(s) at end game scoring, and may be used in place of a single missing timeline or nexus card for any world at end game scoring. A parallel universe only counts as the chosen timeline (past, present, future, nexus) for research goal scoring. Note: Parallel universes do not move the glitch marker when saved.

SOLO RULES

1 Rival Lab Board
1 Rival Lab Pawn

In solo play, you compete against a rival interest known as the “rival lab.” To win, you must outscore the rival lab. The rules for how you play remain unchanged from the core game, but there are additional rules that govern your opponent.

SETUP

3. Timeline deck

Set up the timeline deck as you would for a 2 player game.

Place the rival lab’s pawn on the space shown. (This is the first card dealt from the timeline deck, i.e. card #4 in the 3x3 grid)

4. Paradox Particles

Create and place 4 sets into the matrix bag.

5a. Setup Rival Lab

Place the rival lab’s board to the right of your play area.

7. Setup Research Goals

If the secret objective card is revealed, deal the rival lab a face down objective card and do not look at it until scoring.

9. Select Chief Scientist

The player always goes first. Take the chief scientist ID badge.

OVERVIEW OF THE RIVAL LAB'S TURN

For each action the rival lab takes during Phase 1 and Phase 2, the player randomly draws one particle disc from the bag to determine the rival lab's action. Compare the drawn particle disc with the current phase on the rival lab's board. After performing the action, place the disc in the rival lab's discard pile. Each round, draw 2 discs during Phase 1 and 2 discs during Phase 2. The 5th disc for the round will be drawn during the rival lab's End of Turn step.

PHASE 1: WORMHOLE

If the rival lab draws a red, yellow, or blue disc, move the rival lab's pawn in the wormhole a number of spaces based on the color drawn. If the pawn ends its movement on a timeline card, place that card face down in the rival score pile. If the pawn ends its movement in an empty section, the rival lab does not receive a card for this action.

The rival pawn always moves clockwise around the 6 sections created in the wormhole (see image). Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the 3x3 grid, but never enters the alternate timeline spaces 1, 2, and 3.

If the rival lab draws a white or black disc, you must choose one of the available cards in the alternate wormhole and place it in the rival's score pile.

During your turn, you may draft cards from the alternate wormhole if you choose, just like in a 2-player game.

PHASE 2: MATRIX

If the rival lab draws a red, yellow, or blue disc, move the glitch marker a number of spaces based on the color drawn. If the glitch marker lands on a world, the glitch attempts to damage it. Follow the core rules for fracturing worlds. In addition, if the symbol on the disc matches, the rival lab gains or breaks the alliance token of the same color.

If the rival lab draws a white or black disc, it attempts to repair a fractured world. The disc color determines which world gets repaired:

- ▶ **White:** Repair the first fractured world clockwise from the glitch marker and ending with the world underneath the glitch marker.
- ▶ **Black:** Repair the first fractured world counter-clockwise from the glitch marker and ending with the world underneath the glitch marker.

In addition, if the symbol matches:

- Place a locking token on top of the repaired world.
- The rival lab gains or breaks the alliance token of the same color.

END OF TURN

After the rival lab's second action in Phase 2, draw 1 particle token from the bag and swap it with the anomaly. Place the disc from the anomaly into the rivals discard pile. Then, return all discs in the discard to the bag. The rival lab's actions are now complete until the next Phase 1.

PHASE 3: CLEANUP

Draw cards from the alternate timeline deck to fill empty sections in the alternate wormhole. If the alternate timeline deck has no remaining cards, skip this step.

Any cards remaining in the wormhole are moved to the discard pile. Refill the wormhole with 6 cards from the timeline deck.

Pass the chief scientist card to the next player.

If the timeline deck is empty at the beginning of the cleanup phase, pass the chief scientist ID badge, skip Phase 1, and each player gets 1 action during Phase 2 before the game ends. For the rival lab's final action of the game, draw 1 particle token and perform a matrix action.

GAME END & SCORING

Separate the rival lab's score pile into sets and set aside any scored parallel universe cards. Then, the rival lab suffers fractured world penalties. The rival lab follows the following priority when deciding which card to lose to fractured world penalties. (Nexus>Past>Present>Future) If the rival lab sets aside any parallel universe cards, add them to world sets that score them the most points (closer to a full set). Then score the rival lab's worlds, objectives, locked planets and alliances.

If your final score is higher than the rival lab's final score, you win!

Much like a human opponent, the rival lab is designed to produce a range of scores, some higher than others. But, if you find yourself consistently winning and would like a more challenging solo experience, score 1 point for each unique world in the rival lab's score pile (after fractured world penalties).

DESIGNER'S NOTES

The various strategies of Paradox Initiative will become clearer as you play the game, but here are some tips I find useful to get started:

- ▶ Think about both discs you are moving during your actions, not just the one that forms the strand. Placing particle discs in rows or columns with like colors will help you on future turns.
- ▶ Always look for opportunities to form more efficient strands. For example, forming two separate strands at once or “L” and “T” shaped strands.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to form strands to clear out useless discs and to fill your board with new particle discs when looking for a specific color or symbol.
- ▶ Always be thinking about how your tech modules can get you out of a sticky situation or gain an advantage over your opponents.
- ▶ Think about your trigger discs and how you can gain as many purple particles during the game.
- ▶ Always plan ahead. Anyone can form a 4-disc strand, but setting up a 5-disc strand and planning for future cards in the wormhole will keep you ahead of other players.
- ▶ Once you have mastered the matrix, you can focus on what other players are drafting from the wormhole and, when the opportunity rises, you can work to prevent them from completing large sets of timeline cards.
- ▶ Avoid analysis paralysis. While other players decide which timelines to save, focus on your matrix and find the patterns you need.

TECH CARDS

- ▶ **Destroy:** Destroy 1 column of particle discs in your matrix, placing them into your discard. Then, refill your matrix. If you destroy a column with a nexus token, leave the disc and token in the place and refill around it. Do not resolve any formed strands.
- ▶ **Diagonal:** For your next action you may resolve a diagonal strand.
- ▶ **Swap:** Swap any two particle discs, regardless of symbols. Do not resolve any formed strands.
- ▶ **Rewind:** Return a card on your console back to its starting section.
- ▶ **Glitch:** Move the glitch marker 1–3 spaces and do not interrupt the world’s signal where it lands.
- ▶ **Paradox:** Move a particle disc from one card to another on your console. Discs that are moved must follow resource allocation rules.
- ▶ **Shift:** Shift all paradox discs in a row of your matrix to the right one space. The disc pushed out is placed in the empty space on the left side of the matrix. Do not resolve any formed strands.
- ▶ **Search:** Take one card from the discard pile and place it on your console in the appropriate position.

CREDITS