

# ROMAN EMPIRE

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## OVERVIEW

*This political card game for 3 to 6 players represents the turmoil of the Late Roman Empire, where different ruling factions vie for power, while at the same time cooperate enough to prevent the Roman Empire collapsing. A read of the history books on this era will highlight how dangerous it was to become emperor, how ruthless the emperor's "bodyguard" — the Praetorian Guard — were when they became unsatisfied with the one whom they were supposed to protect, and how Senators were pawns in a game that was controlled by individuals and wild action. The game has been adapted (with permission) from GDW Games' "Red Empire", designed by Frank Chadwick.*

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## OBJECT OF THE GAME

Each player is attempting to dispose the leaders of enemy factions, become emperor, and solve the crises faced by the empire. The most successful player wins the game. However, players must also work together to prevent the collapse of the empire!

## SETTING UP

There are three types of card, distinguished by their different backs.

- Leaders - these have a white back.
- Playing - these have a red back with Roman insignia.
- Emperor - there is one emperor card - it's easy to spot.

Shuffle the Leader cards and place face down in the centre of the playing area. Do the same with the Playing cards. Place the Emperor card near the other two decks.

Next, deal each player a number of Leader cards face-up in a line in front of the player, depending on how many players there are:

- 3 players - 5 leaders.
- 4 players - 4 leaders.

- 5-6 players - 3 leaders.

Deal 5 Playing cards face-down to each player — these cards are taken as the players hand.

## ASSIGNING THE EMPEROR

Each player sums the values of their leader cards. The player with the highest total *and* at least one Patrician amongst their leaders takes the Emperor card, and places it on or under any of the Patricians in their faction, to indicate the current Emperor. If there is a tie for the total leader strength, then sum the strengths of the Patricians in each of the tying factions to find the strongest. If there is still a tie, award it to the player with the strongest single Patrician. If there is still a tie, flip a gold coin.

Emperors take the credit for victories, but are also held accountable for failures, and are also often the target of ambitious rivals!

## LEADER CARDS

Each player represents a faction in the ruling elite of Rome. The leader cards of each player represent the leaders of that player's faction. There are three backgrounds that Leader

cards may come from:

- Senators - white marble.
- Praetorian Guard - gold.
- Patricians - red cloth.

Each leader card also has a single value showing the strength of that leader.

## PLAYING CARDS

There are four types of Playing cards:

- Crisis - these indicate a major crisis that must be dealt with to maintain the strength of the empire.
- Play at once - these represent some other activity beyond the players control.
- Play, hold or discard - these represent options available to the faction.
- Action - the number on these cards represents the strength of the action; these cards represent actions at the disposal of leaders of the same background within the faction.

## COURSE OF PLAY

Play begins with the player to the left of the Emperor player. The player draws cards, then plays cards. Play then moves to the next player in a clockwise direction.

On each player's turn they:

1. Draw enough cards so that they have five cards in their hand.
2. *Must play* — in any order they choose — all "Crisis" and "Play at once" cards. Each of these is played and resolved one at a time.
3. May, if they wish, either:
  - play one "Play, hold or discard" card,
  - challenge an opponent's leader with an Action card, or
  - discard one card.

## CRISIS CARDS

There are six crisis cards, and each have a value on them. When played, it is placed face-up in front of the player who drew it. Each player in turn, starting with the player to the left of the player who played the card, and ending with the player who played the card, may now (if they wish) play one Action card against the Crisis, by placing an Action card face-up in front of them. When playing Action cards to resolve a Crisis, the following restrictions apply:

- Action cards can only be played by a player if they also have at least one leader in their faction of the same background, and
- only the player with the Emperor can play Action cards with the brown "Rome" background.

As soon as the sum of the Action card values played equals or exceeds the Crisis card value, the crisis has been dealt with, and the player with the Emperor takes the Crisis card and keeps it face-down in his victory pile

(even if that player did not help resolve the crisis). Each player who played an Action card against the Crisis also takes back their Action card and places it face-down in their victory pile.

However, if the value of Action cards does not meet the value of the Crisis after the last player has had an opportunity to play an Action card, then the crisis has not been dealt with. Place the Crisis card face-up near the centre of the table in an "ongoing crises" area. The current Emperor is removed from play, and the Emperor card is now assigned as described in the "Assigning the Emperor" section, except that the Emperor card cannot go back to the faction it just came from: only the other players are considered. Discard any Action cards played on the Crisis.

If the total value of all Crisis cards in the "ongoing crises" area equals or exceeds XVIII, then the Roman Empire collapses, and all players immediately lose!

## PLAY AT ONCE CARDS

The cards marked "Play at once" describe the actions that must be taken when they are played. Here is a little more detail:

**Disrepute, Corruption and Incompetence:** each of these cards affect *all* Leader cards of the indicated background for one full turn, by lowering their strength by the indicated amount. The card is placed face-up in front of the player who played it, and is immediately discarded at the start of that player's next turn. If a leader's strength drops below zero as a result of the combination of one of these cards, and other challenges already on the leader, then the leader is disposed, and the player who played the Disrepute, Corruption or Incompetence card puts the disposed leader in their victory pile, except that leaders of a player's own faction are sent to the victory pile of the player to their left.

**New Leader:** When played, place the card into the discard pile, and draw one new Leader card into your faction.

**Sickness:** The card must be placed on the leader of the highest strength (ignoring the effects of challenges) in your own faction (choose in the case of ties). There is no effect of this card on the turn in which it is played. On each subsequent turn, the player begins their turn by rolling the die: on a 1 the leader recovers and the Sickness card is discarded; on a 2 or 3 there is no result; on a 4, 5 or 6 the leader dies and both cards are discarded.

## PLAY, HOLD OR DISCARD CARDS

Cards marked "Play, hold or discard" may be held in the player's hand until they are ready to play or discard them.

**Diplomacy:** Only the player with the Emperor can use this card. This card can be played to remove all challenges from a player's faction. Alternatively, the player can use this card when an unresolved crisis would usually result in the Emperor being disposed: in this case, the Emperor is unaffected, and the Diplomacy card is discarded.

**Leadership Challenged:** Only players with at least one Leader from the Praetorian Guard (gold) background can play this card. When played, the dice is rolled for *each* Patrician Leader in play, from all factions, including the player who played this card. On a 5 or 6 the Leader is assassinated. On any other roll there is no effect. All Leaders disposed in this way are sent to the victory pile of the player who played this card, except Leaders from their own faction, which are discarded.

**Citizens Dissatisfied and Outraged:** This card may be played on any other player. It lasts for one turn and lowers the strength of *all* Leaders of the targeted player by the indicated amount for one turn. If a leader's strength drops below zero as a result of the combination of one of these cards, and other challenges already on the leader, then the leader is disposed, and the player who played the Citizens Dissatisfied / Outraged

card puts the disposed leader in their victory pile, except that leaders of a player's own faction are sent to the victory pile of the player to their left. This card is immediately discarded at the start of the next turn of the player who played it.

**Hero:** This card is played on any specific Leader card, and serves to increase the strength of the Leader card by the indicated amount. In addition, all challenges currently on that leader are discarded. No more than one Hero card can be played on any leader.

**Tour of the provinces:** The card is played face-up in front of the player's own faction and remains for one full turn. While in play, the faction's Leaders may not have additional challenges placed upon them, nor may the player play Action cards for any purpose. The faction is still affected by any Crisis, Play at once, and Play, hold or discard cards played during the turn. The Emperor may still be disposed as the result of not resolving a Crisis, though he may still play a Diplomacy card as usual. The card is discarded at the start of the player's next turn.

### CHALLENGING A OPPONENT'S LEADER

Crisis cards can be used to Challenge a Leader of any other Player. To do so, place an Action card on the targeted leader.

When playing Action cards to challenge a Leader:

- Action cards can only be played by a player if they also have at least one leader in their faction of the same background, and
- only the player with the Emperor can play Action cards with the brown "Rome" background.
- only one Action of each background can be played, and
- the first challenge to a leader cannot be from the same background as the challenged leader.

The Action card remains on the Leader card until either:

- the total of Action card values on the leader equals or exceeds the Leader's strength: in this case the leader is removed and placed face-down in the victory pile of the player who played the last Action card against the Leader. All Action cards that were placed on the Leader are discarded. If the Emperor is disposed, the player who played the last Action card receives the Emperor card to assign to a Patrician in their faction. If the player does not have a Patrician in their faction, then the Assigning the Emperor rules are

followed, even if this results in the card going back to the original owner.

- an Action card of each background has been played on the Leader, but the values of the Actions is less than the value of the Leader card. In this case all action cards on the leader are discarded.

Note that a leader cannot be disposed by a single Action card: it requires at least two opponent to dispose a leader.

### VICTORY

When the last card is drawn from the playing deck, the player who drew it completes their turn, even if they have fewer than five cards. The game is then over. At this point players total up the points in their victory pile and determine the winner. Points are awarded as follows:

- Emperor at the end of the game: V points.
- Each Crisis card in a player's victory pile scores points equal to the value of the Crisis.
- Each Action card in a player's victory pile scores points equal to the value of the Action.
- Each Leader card in a player's victory pile scores one point.