

IT'S TIME TO DITCH THIS DINGY CANTINA.

YOU'RE READY TO MAKE IT BIG.

WELCOME TO THE

*Star*  
CARTEL

A GAME BY MARTIN BOISSELLE

ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAŁ NIEWIADOMY

The black market's a tricky business. Now that you've joined the Star Cartel, you'll need to play it smart. Every shipment you make will let you stash some contraband for yourself, and will earn you a new ship, but with every fresh delivery the Cartel's prices change. Will you risk it all on illicit plants, plan a careful mix of med-kits and energy crystals, or rush to deliver as quickly as possible to get that special ship? Don't push too hard or the price will fall faster than re-entry to atmosphere, and your hopes will fall with it.

# COMPONENTS

1. 90 Contraband cards
2. 6 Starter ship cards
- 21 Ship cards
- 5 Contraband tokens
5. Cartel board



The game set up for play, with the contraband tokens on **3**. The face-up grid of contraband cards is referred to as the hub. The stack of ship cards is referred to as the shipyard. The images on the cartel board indicate which contraband token relates to each card type.

## SHIP CARDS



1. Capacity is how much space the ship has for contraband.
2. Value is how many points the ship is worth.
3. Ability denotes the ship's special rules.

4. This is how the ship's special ability works.
5. This number tells you in which player counts a ship is used.

## CONTRABAND CARDS

1. Size is how much space it will take in your ship's cargo hold.
2. Type indicates which cartel token determines its value.



## SETUP

Place the cartel board in the centre of the table and place all the contraband tokens on the space marked 3. If you're playing with four players, remove any ship cards marked 5+ from the game. If you're playing with three players, remove any ship cards marked 4+ or 5+ from the game.

Each player takes a starter ship; any remaining starter ships are returned to the box. Arrange all remaining ship cards into a deck by capacity, with the lowest capacity on top. Place the *Cassiopeia* at the bottom of the deck. Place them face up next to the cartel board - this is the shipyard.

Shuffle the contraband cards and place them face down next to the cartel board; this is the contraband deck. Deal out contraband cards in four columns of three cards, so that each column lines up with a slot in the cartel board. This should leave a total of twelve cards on the table, all face up, called the hub. If any of the drawn contraband cards have a size of four, draw new cards in their place and shuffle the original cards back into the deck.

Randomly determine a starting player.

## HOW TO PLAY

### OVERVIEW

On your turn you will be loading one of five goods - food, weapons, flora, medicine and energy crystals, and delivering them to the Star Cartel if your ship is full. Each turn consists of two actions, loading and delivering, after which the turn passes to the player to your left.

When loading, you must take a contraband card from the bottom row of the hub onto your ship, and may optionally load a second card. The bottom row is the row furthest away from the board. You **cannot overload your ship**: the total size of all the contraband you've loaded can never exceed your ship's capacity.

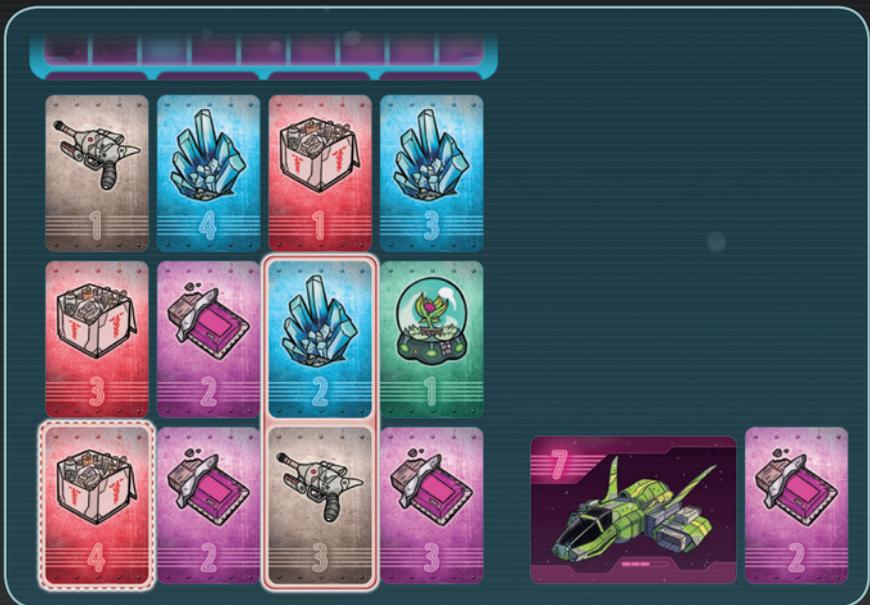
If your ship is full, meaning the total size of the contraband you have loaded is exactly equal to the ship's capacity, you can then deliver your goods to the cartel. You'll **hand over your largest and smallest goods**, and may be able to stash something for yourself.

When delivering contraband, only the size of the cards is important. However, when scoring at the end of game the number of cards in your stash is what matters, and their size is no longer relevant. It can be very effective to load multiple small cards of the same type in order to get more cards in your stash. Be careful though, as this will slow down your ability to deliver your cargo!

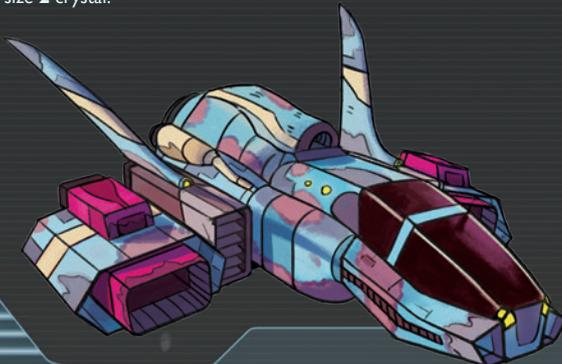
## LOADING

First, check if your ship can fit any more contraband. If taking any card from the bottom row of the hub would overload your ship, skip directly to delivery instead. If not, you must take one contraband card from the bottom row of the hub, and may optionally take a second card from the same row. You may never take a card which would overload your ship. If a particular contraband card would cause you to exceed the ship's capacity, you may not take that card.

Any time a card is removed from the hub, move the cards above it down one space – when you take the first card from the bottom row, the card above it becomes available for loading. Put the cards you've loaded face-up beside your ship, so that they're visible to the other players. We recommend that you group cards of the same type into sets as you load. Once you have loaded, check if your ship is full. If so, you can deliver. If not, end your turn.



At the start of his turn, Joseph has a total size of 2 already in his cargo hold. As his ship has a capacity of 7, he can still load, so must do so. If he takes the size 4 medicine, he won't be able to take a second card, as there are no size 1 cards he can take. He decides he instead wants the size 3 weapon, and will then be able to take the size 2 crystal.



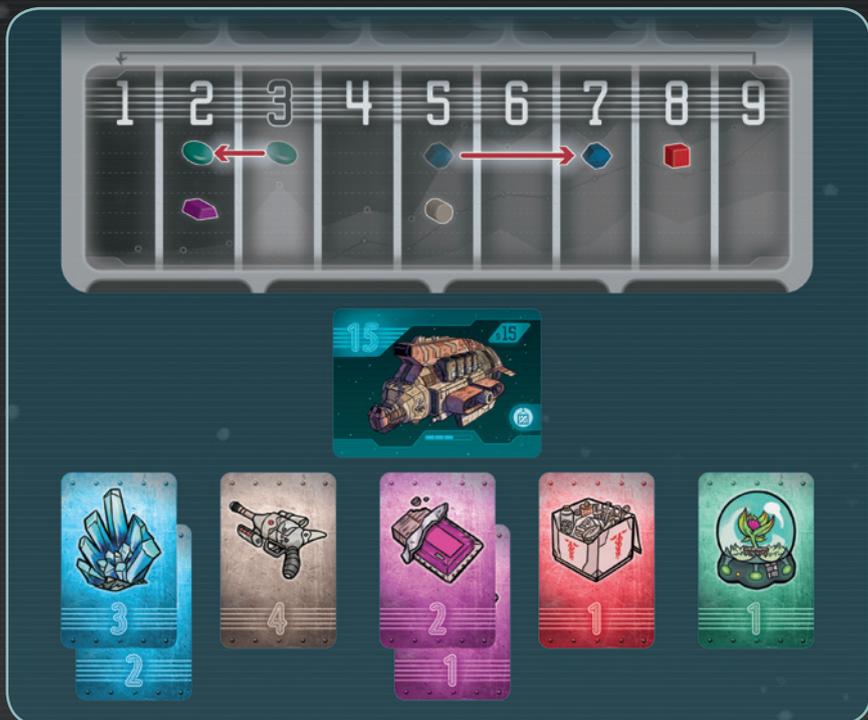
## DELIVERING

If the size of all the contraband on your ship equals its capacity, or you could not load any cards this turn, you will deliver your contraband. Group all contraband cards you have loaded by type, and add up the total size of each set. **The number of cards in each set does not matter at this moment, only the total combined size.**

Discard the **largest set** and move its matching token up two spaces on the cartel board. That type of good is now worth more points at the end of the game. Discard the **smallest set** and move its token down one space on the cartel board. That type of good is now worth fewer points at the end of the game. Is there is ever a tie for largest or smallest set, you may decide which of the tied sets is considered largest or smallest.

If you have any sets remaining, you may choose one set and put it face-down in front of you. This is your stash. These cards will be worth points at the end of the game. You may check your stash at any time, but it is kept secret from the other players.

Discard any remaining sets. Finally, replace your current ship with the top card from the shipyard and end your turn. The old ship is discarded.



Emma has loaded these cards, for a total size of **14**. At the start of her turn there are no cards in the hub of size **1** that she can take, so she must deliver. Her largest set is energy crystals, so she discards those cards and moves the matching token up two spaces. Both flora and medicine have a total size of **1**, so she decides to have flora be her lowest set, discarding that card and moving the token down one space. She now has to choose which remaining set to put in her stash. She could go for the set with more cards (food), or the one whose value on the board is currently high (medicine).

## ENDING YOUR TURN

Once you have taken your actions, draw cards from the contraband deck to replenish the hub to twelve cards. If the contraband deck is empty, shuffle the discard pile to form a new contraband deck. The player to your left now begins their turn.

## THE CARTEL BOARD

The cartel board shows how many points each type of contraband will be worth at the end of the game. It is a volatile market, and must be managed carefully to prevent a price crash.

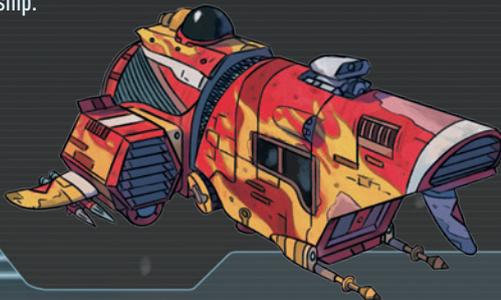
If a cartel token would ever go above nine, the price has crashed - immediately move the token down to one and don't move it any further. If a cartel token would ever go below one, the price has bottomed out - leave the token on one instead.

## SHIP ABILITIES

Some ships have a special ability, which you can optionally use on your turn. As soon as you gain a new ship, the old ship's ability is lost. We recommend ignoring the special ship rules if this is your first time playing the game. The abilities work as follows:

	Before you load, you may choose to discard all of the cards in one row of the hub.
	The first contraband card you pick when loading may be from any row in the hub.
	When delivering, you may move the largest set down two in value (instead of up), or the smallest set up one in value (instead of down). You may not do both.
	When delivering, after resolving the largest and smallest sets, you may stash one additional remaining set.
	If you load two cards of the same type, you may load a third card of that type from any row in the hub.

Each ability is also explained on the back of its card. A special ability will never allow you to overload your ship.



## ENDING THE GAME

When a player takes the last ship from the shipyard, the game ends. All other players now take a final turn, but with the following change to the delivery phase: if you wouldn't normally be allowed to deliver your goods this turn, make a rush delivery after loading.

A rush delivery is the same as a normal delivery, except that contraband token of the largest type only moves up one space, and the token of the smallest type doesn't move at all (but the cards are still discarded). You may stash one type as per normal.

In the final turn, players won't gain a ship from the shipyard when delivering (as it's now empty). Instead they keep their current ship. Once all players have had their turn, the game is over and players add up their scores.

## SCORING

Group all of the contraband cards in your stash by type. **At this moment the size of the cards does not matter, only the total number of cards.** Each card is worth as many points as the position of the matching token on the cartel board.

A player's score is the value of all the contraband cards in their stash, plus the value of their ship card. The player with the highest score wins.

In the case of a tie, the player with the highest score from contraband wins.

If it's still a tie, the player with the highest score from a single type of contraband wins.

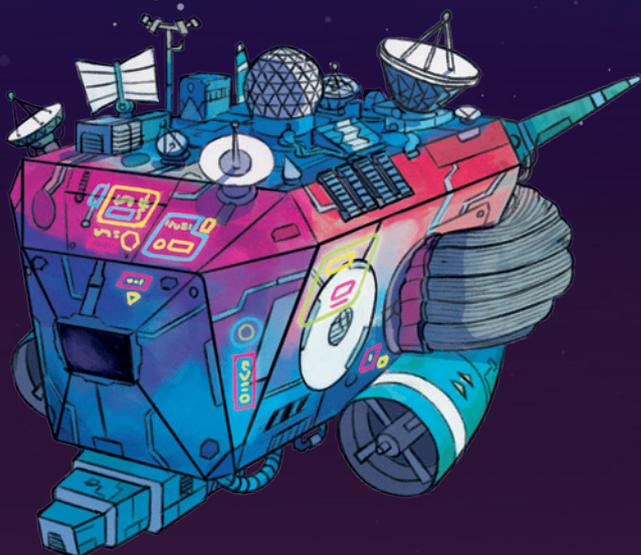
If it's still a tie, the player with the fewest contraband cards wins.

If it's still a tie, the players share the victory.



At the end of the game, the cartel board shows as follows: energy crystals are at **8**, food and guns are both at **6**, medicine is at **3** and flora is at **1**. Duncan has one energy crystal (**8**), three guns (**18**), two medicine (**6**), and one flora (**1**). Together with his ship worth **15**, his total score is **48**.





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