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# STEAM CORSET

Instruction Manual  
Rough Draft

# Steam Court

In a place where politics, magic and science are covered in a heavy layer of coal dust lies the world of Steam Court. Steam Court is a 3-10 player card game that mixes elements of traditional card play, strategy, and character based abilities.

So grab your wrench and jump into the cogs as a Court Engineer! Tasked with the upkeep of the court's mechanical devices, players must attempt to catch the eye of the Queen and other high-ranking courtiers by displaying their mechanical prowess. Using their dealt hands of gear cards, players try to take tricks with the ultimate goal of being the first to use all their cards. The Queen rewards such displays of skill by snatching up the most successful engineer as her own. Can you maneuver your way into the Queen's good graces and come out on top of the social ladder by the end of the fourth Quarter? Or will you be stuck assisting the Tea Boy and suffering his incessant whining?



## Contents

- 10 - character cards with stands
- 2 Decks of cards. Each deck contains:
  - 6 - of each gear card 1-12
  - 3 - Putsch cards
  - 3 - Multiplier cards
  - 3 - 3/9 cards
  - 3 - 6/12 cards

- 2 - playmats
- 50 - gear tokens (1-10)
- 10 - character tokens

Instruction manual (The final version is going to look way more rad btw).

# Goal

Prove that you are the most skilled engineer by collecting the highest sum of gear tokens by the end of the fourth Quarter. Gear tokens are awarded based on the order in which the players get rid of all the cards in their hand.

# Setup

## Seat Order Diagram.



## Setup

Based on the number of players (see below), gather corresponding character tokens. Each player randomly draws a token to determine initial seating order. Gather the five sets of gear tokens corresponding to the number of players (e.g. 5 players would use gears 1-5). From the first set of tokens, give the gears in reverse order (The lowest player at the table receives the highest gear/points, the second lowest player the second highest and so on until the highest player receives the lowest gear). Stack the other four sets of the gear tokens from highest to lowest and place one stack on each Quarter on the playmat.

## 3 Player Game

Choose three characters and follow the seat order diagram to determine highest to lowest. Use one deck of cards, but remove one of each number and special card.

## 4-5 Player Game

Choose to play at either the Royal Table or Renegade Table and follow the seat order diagram for set up. Use one deck of cards for play.

## 6 Player Game

Set up the Royal Table according to the seat order diagram and insert the Inspector seat between the Alchemist and the Tea Boy. Use one deck of cards for play.



## 7 Player Game

Set up the Royal Table and seat players in the following order: Queen, General, Duke, Alchemist, Inspector, Pirate, Tea Boy. Take one of each numbered card (1-12) from the Renegade Table's deck and add them to the Royal Table's deck before play.

## 8-10 Player Game

Set up two tables according to the seat order diagram. Remove 1 character of your choice for 9 players. For 8 players, remove 1 character from each table. Each table will play independently with its own deck of cards. Initial gear tokens are still given in reverse order (e.g. in a 10 player game the Queen receives the 1 gear and the Vagabond receives the 10 gear). The remaining sets of gear tokens are split between the two tables according to number of players. The lower tokens go to the Renegade Table and the higher tokens go to the Royal Table. At the end of each Quarter, the two players at the Renegade Table to get rid of their cards first are promoted to the Court and will reseat as the two lowest players at the Royal Table. Also, the last two players to get rid of their cards at the Royal Table are banished from the Court and will reseat as the top two players at the Renegade Table. (e.g. the player who goes out first at the Renegade Table and takes that table's highest gear token would reseat as the Alchemist, the second lowest character at the Royal Table. The player who goes out last at the Royal Table and takes that table's lowest gear token would reseat as the Inspector, the Renegade Table's second highest character.)



## Game Play

Shuffle and deal the deck of cards into hands for each player at that table plus an extra hand called the "Court Hand." Each player should have an equal number of cards. Extra cards are placed in the Court Hand.

Starting with the Queen (or highest player) and going in descending order, players use their special privileges listed on the back of each character card.

The highest player at the table starts the very first "trick." He may play any quantity of cards of the same value (e.g. three 2s).

Subsequent players must play the **same quantity** of matching cards as the first player but of increasing value (e.g. three 3s -> three 5s)

A player who can't play (or chooses not to) passes by turning his character card around to the "Pass" side and sits out for the rest of the trick.

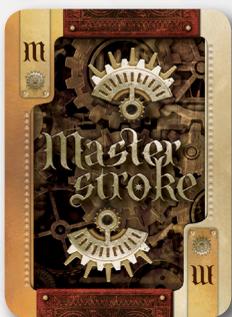
Play proceeds around and around the table with players continuing to lay cards until everyone passes. Whoever plays the highest card(s) wins the trick. The cards are discarded to the side, everyone turns their character card back to the front (indicating that everyone is active), and the winner leads off the next trick.

When a player gets rid of all his cards, he lays down his character card and takes the highest gear token remaining on the stack of tokens for that Quarter. Play continues around the table on that trick until everyone has passed. If no higher cards were played, the player to the left of the player who went out starts the next trick. Game play continues until only one player is left with cards. That player takes the last (lowest) gear token and the Quarter ends.

Before the next Quarter begins, players leave their current seats and character cards and reseat based on the order in which they went out. The player who went out first becomes the highest player at the table for the next Quarter. (e.g. The Duke gets rid of his After the players have reseated, the cards are shuffled and dealt for the 2nd Quarter. Once again, players exercise their pre-Quarter privileges starting with the highest player. After the privileges have been exercised, the highest player begins the Quarter by leading the first trick.

Play proceeds in a similar fashion for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Quarters. At the end of the 4th Quarter, players add up the five gear tokens they collected and whoever has the most points—is the winner! (see rule variants for other victory conditions)

## Explanation of Special cards



The **Masterstroke** card beats all other cards. As soon as a Masterstroke card is played, it ends the trick (you cannot beat a Masterstroke with another Masterstroke). If you are dealt three Masterstroke cards, you can pull a **coup** and seize the throne! You immediately move to the Queen's seat, and as necessary other players move down one seat. The cards are reshuffled, dealt, and then the Quarter restarts.



A **Multiplier** card (X) can be played with one or more of the same numbered card(s) and the player can announce the number of times the card(s) will be multiplied (a 2 card and a Multiplier could equal two 2s, three 2s, eight 2s, infinity 2s.). A Multiplier can be played as a multiple of one (played with a 2 card as  $2 \times 1 = 2$ ). It can also be played by itself, but it will equal a single 1 card.



The **3/9** cards can be played as either a 3 or as a 9 (whichever the player determines to be most valuable to his hand).

The **6/12** cards can be played as either a 6 or as a 12 (whichever the player determines to be most valuable to his hand).

## Characters

Each character has a special privilege listed on the back of the character card. Most privileges are exercised after the cards are dealt, but before the first cards are played. Pre-Quarter privileges are exercised in order from the highest character (Queen) to the lowest (Tea Boy/Vagabond).

### The Royals



#### The Queen

Her Royal Majesty the Queen presides over the court from her gear encrusted throne. Nothing escapes her shrewd gaze or her iron fist. The Queen grants her Engineer the ability to bestow his two most undesirable cards to the lowest player at the table. This happens at the beginning of the Quarter. The Queen's Engineer also begins play each Quarter.



#### The General

Second only to the Queen, the General commands respect and obedience. No one dares to cross him and his arsenal. At the beginning of the Quarter, the General's Engineer may give one of his undesirable cards to the second-lowest player at the table. Once during the Quarter, he may stop another player from laying a card/set (except for a lead card). The player does not forfeit the trick, but must wait until play goes all the way around the table before laying another card.



#### The Duke

The Duke smiles and bows before the Queen, all the while using his connections to increase his power and influence. The Duke's Engineer need only match the previously laid card/set. He does not have to play higher valued cards: three 4s → three 4s.



## The Alchemist

The Alchemist rarely emerges from his laboratory. He has no use for politics and court intrigue when he is on the verge of unlocking the mysteries of the universe. The Alchemist's Engineer may transmute one thing into another. He may lower the value of any of his numbered cards by exactly two digits.



## The Tea Boy

The Tea Boy bows low, keeping his eyes on the steaming silver pot. At the beginning of the Quarter, the Tea Boy's Engineer must give his two highest numbered cards to the highest player at the table. After serving his best he may decide to trade his hand for the Court Hand (he may not look at the Court Hand before deciding), but must keep any cards given to him by other Engineers exercising their privileges. The Tea Boy tends to shirk his duties, leaving his Engineer responsible for shuffling and dealing the cards for the Quarter.

## The Renegades



### Submariner

Crammed in a can and tossed into the ocean. It's not the most glamorous life, but the Submariner wouldn't have it any other way. Once during the Quarter, the Submariner's Engineer may reveal a numbered card from his hand, shuffle the discard pile, and then dive in and pull out that many cards. He may keep up to half of those cards. When the Submariner is played at the head of the Renegades Table, his Engineer begins each Quarter.



### Inspector

No secret is safe from the Inspector. He has eyes and ears everywhere. Some suspect he even has them in the back of his head. Once per Quarter, the Inspector's Engineer may look at the Court Hand as well as one other player's hand.



### The Doctor

The Plague Doctor, is he a beacon of hope or an angel of death? His mere presence causes the courtiers to shudder. The Plague Doctor's Engineer may randomly draw four cards from the Court Hand. He must keep 2 cards.



## Pirate

The Pirate's life is one swashbuckling adventure after the next. Except when it's full of scurvy, mutiny, and parrot droppings. Once during the Quarter, after losing a trick, the Pirate's Engineer may steal back the cards he played during that trick and put them back into his hand.



## Vagabond

The Vagabond has no home, no friends, no past, and no future. The Vagabond's Engineer must give his two highest numbered cards to the highest player at the table. He is expected to deal the cards for each Quarter.

# Sample Game Play

The Queen starts the first trick of the Quarter by laying three 1s. The General lays three 3s (one of which was a 3/9 card); the Duke lays three 3s (his privilege allows him to lay the same numbered cards). The Alchemist passes. The Tea Boy has three 11s, but for sake of strategy, he passes and decides to hold on to those cards a little longer so he has a better chance of winning a trick later in the game. The Queen lays three 9s. The General lays a single 10 and a Multiplier; the Duke passes; the Alchemist already passed. The Queen lays a Putsch and wins the trick. All of the players who had passed turn their character cards back around and come back into the game.

The Queen leads the next trick by laying a single 4. The General lays an 8; the Duke lays an 11. The Alchemist passes; the Tea Boy passes. The Queen lays a 12. The General stops the Queen from laying using his privilege, then lays a 12. The Duke passes; the Queen also passes as she has no cards that can beat a 12. The General wins the trick and starts the next trick.

# Variations

## Party Variation

Remove the gear tokens. At the beginning of each Quarter, stack the character tokens (corresponding to the characters being used) in order from the highest on top to the lowest. When a player goes out, he takes the highest character token from the the stack. At the end of each quarter reseal based on the character token collected (the order players went out). When playing with two tables, follow the main instructions for switching back and forth from the Royal and Renegade Tables. At the end of the 4th Quarter, the player at the Royal Table who gets rid of his cards first becomes the engineer to the Queen and is the winner of the game.

## Character Auction Variation

During setup gather character cards that will be used for the game. (Example: choose 5 character cards for a 5 player game.) Players in clockwise order bid for the characters by gaining negative victory points based on the bids they win. Players who pass during a bidding round cannot re-enter until the next character bidding round. (Example: player one bids -1 point for the Queen character, player 2 bids -3 points, player 3 passes, player 4 passes, player 5 bids -4 points, player one passes, player 2 bids -5 points, players 3 and 4 already passed and cannot re-enter, player 5 passes and the queen character card goes to player 2 for -5 points) The auction continues until all players receive a character card.

## Random Characters

For a slightly unbalanced game for 3-7 players, randomly choose any character tokens and seat in descending order according to the seat diagram chart. If you want to get crazy, randomize the characters and seats. Gather gear tokens corresponding to the number of players (e.g. 5 players would use gears 1-5). Randomly choose a gear and seat in descending order. Randomly choose a character token. Using character privileges might get a little wonky, but this variation works for those lazy gamers who don't want to switch seats or can't remember which cup is theirs after moving around the table.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What do you do when the dealt cards are uneven?**

Every player receives the same number of dealt cards. Any extra cards go into the Court Hand. Players may have to trade cards using their privilege, resulting in uneven hands, but this is done after all the cards have been initially dealt.

### **If I'm the Queen and I have a set of three 1s, do I have to give two of those to the lowest player?**

"Undesirable" doesn't necessarily mean "lowest". If you would prefer to get rid of your single 2 so that you can play three cards on your first turn and get rid of those 1s, then give that little Tea Boy whatever you want to get rid of!

### **If I'm the Tea Boy/Vagabond, do I have to give away my Masterstroke, Multiplier, 3/9, 6/12 cards?**

No. You only have to give away your highest "numbered" cards, not your special cards.

### **When can the General stop someone from playing?**

Before or after a player lays his card/set (except for a lead card/set), the General may stop him and make him put his card(s) back into his hand. He must stop the player before the next player lays his card(s).

### **Can the General stop a player from playing a Masterstroke card?**

The General can stop any player from laying ANY card(s) (as long as it is not the first card(s) to lead the trick). Since stopping a player from laying does not require them to pass and remove them from the trick, that player could still lay his Masterstroke card the next time around.

### **Is it better strategy to get rid of my low cards first?**

Typically it is. Especially at the beginning of the game. It is impossible to play a 1 card(s) unless you lead the trick, so getting those low cards out of your hand early will keep you from being stuck with them at the end (there are always exceptions though).

### **Can I pass even if I have playable cards?**

Yes. You may choose to pass at any time, but you will not be able to re-enter until the start of the next trick.

### **Can I lay two cards with a Multiplier card?**

Yes. If a player started the trick with three 5s, you could lay two 7s and a Multiplier.

### **Can a player play over his own cards in the same trick (everyone else has passed, but the active player still has cards that are playable)?**

Yes. Say you lay two 10s and everyone else has passed. You have two 11s and a single 4 left in your hand. The best strategy would be to lay your 11s on your 10s, win the trick, and start the next trick with your 4 and go out.

### **When a player goes out, do we keep playing or start a new trick?**

When a player runs out of cards, the other players continue playing around the table as usual. If a player plays his last card and no one else can play on that trick, the player to his left starts the next trick, and everyone is back in the game who had passed.

### **In the Victory Point Variation, if I pull a coup, do I get bonus points?**

No, but you do get to play with the highest character with the best potential of receiving the most points in the next Quarter.

For the most up-to-date version of the rules, please visit [www.steamcourt.com/rules](http://www.steamcourt.com/rules)

# Credits

This game was designed by Will Meadows and Ryan Pilz. Graphic design completed by Will Meadows. Illustrated by Greg Warner. Steam Court typeface design by Jeremy Dooley.

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# Thank Yous

Special thanks to David Lovegrove. This game wouldn't have existed if you hadn't introduced me to the mechanic, mentored and brainstormed with me as we worked on a dozen other games, and encouraged me to step up and give it a try. Thank you.

Tom Glass—you introduced me to the wide world of board gaming and your insights were invaluable as we put this one together. Thanks for being awesome.

All of the members of our Advisory Board/Playtesters: Thanks for the support, feedback and encouragement!

Our wonderful wives (we each have one): Thank you for letting us waste far too much time playing games! We love and appreciate you! Thanks for helping us get to where we are!

*Soli Deo Gloria.*



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