

The Villagers of Catan

Playtest Ruleset v0.2

Backstory:

Rather than starting on an empty island, full of wonderful resources to be exploited, you are a villager on the island of Catan. But not just any villager; you are a villager who sees the village life around you as slothful, and indolent rather than industry and empire building. With friends and henchmen, you've managed to build up two villages into towns, and not just any towns, but towns in the best island locations! You've started work on a couple of roads, because you have plans for this island. Alas, the villages around the island have taken notice and are not going to be taken over easily. They've developed a loose federation to consolidate villages into towns of their own. Who knows, they may even know of your plans for developing cities and the necessary support road system.

Game Play Overview:

In this game, you will play one faction in a very similar way to the normal Settlers of Catan game. The primary difference is that there will be significantly less trading, and depending on the difficulty level, you will likely not use the Largest Army and Longest Road cards. Your single opponent will be using an alternate growth system which will see villages grow into towns, build roads, and then possibly become cities. Conceptually, your opponent uses dice pip increases/decreases as cards.

Supplies Needed:

Settlers of Catan game (standard 4 player version), twenty 6-sided dice.

Setup:

Setup the board either with the standard initial setup, or with a randomized one (recommended). While the random setup is reasonably straightforward, there are phone apps ("Catan Assistant" is one) that simplify the process.

Choose the locations for your initial towns and accompanying road segments. Select one of the locations as your second placement, and award yourself with a card for each surrounding resource. You will typically want to be nearest the higher recurring hexes, and also have access to all five resources.

The Villages: Each village on the board will be represented by a 6 sided die, initially placed with a value of 1 facing upwards. A die will be placed on each intersection with the following exceptions:

- intersections adjacent to your towns or roads
- sea intersections that are not harbor locations adjacent to two resources.

This should result in between 17 to 20 die being placed.

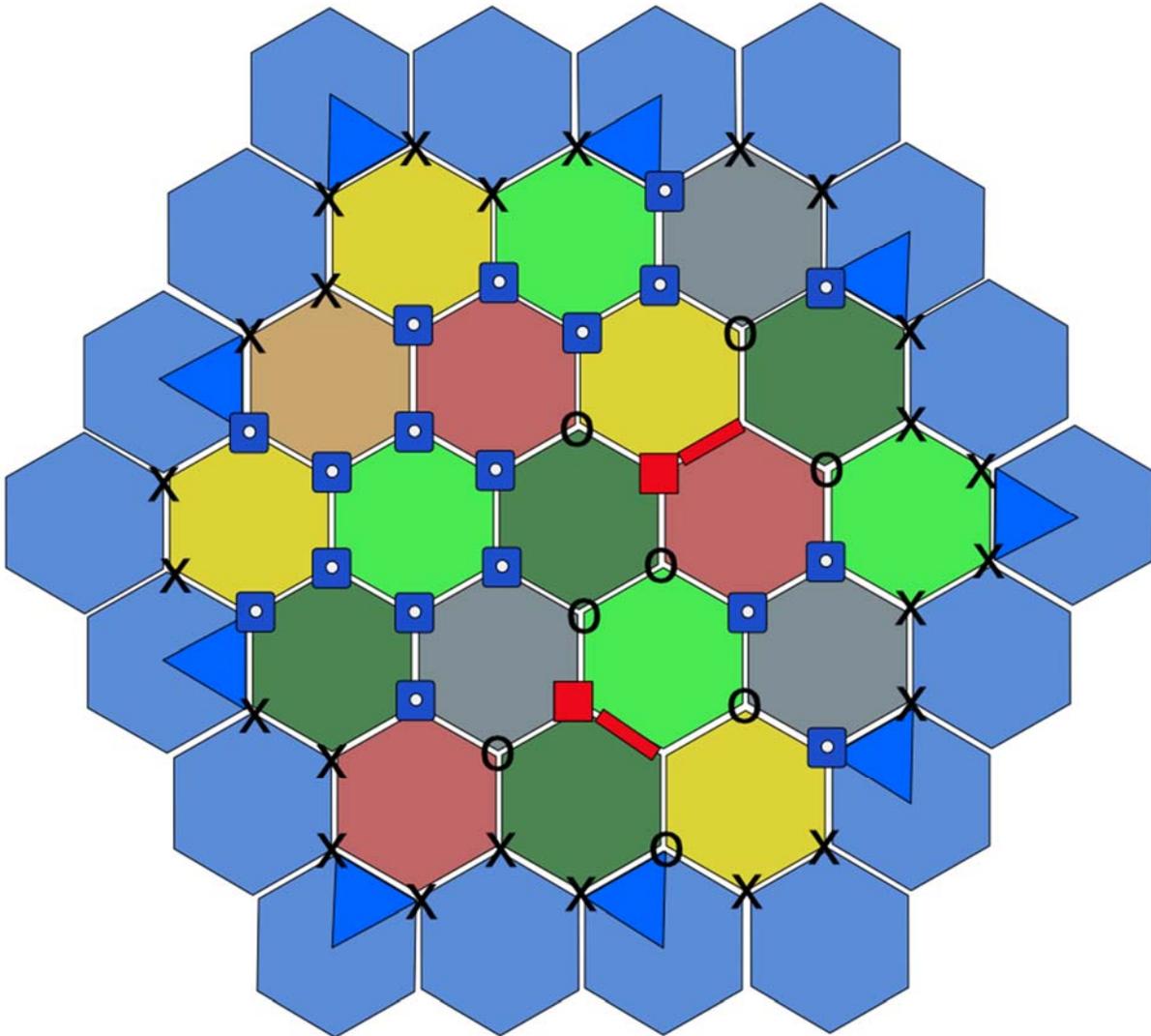


Diagram Explanation: The above diagram illustrates a typical setup (with the blue triangles indicating the harbors). The player color is red with two towns placed with one adjacent road each. The villages dice are shown as blue die with an initial value of 1. The "X" locations do not qualify as they are not adjacent to two resource (or desert) hexes plus a harbor. The "O" locations do not qualify for villages as they are adjacent to your towns or roads.

This should result in between 17 to 20 die being placed.

Choose a set of faction tokens (towns, cities, roads) for the village faction. This will provide the primary limitation of only having 5 towns on the map at a time.

Gameplay

A typical turn:

Die roll - giving a result between 2 and 12.

Resource distribution - based on the die roll. You will receive resource cards per the standard game. The villages surrounding the rolled hex(es) will each increase one pip in value, with the die being manipulated to show the new value on the top. If a location has grown to the size of a city, increase the number of pips by 2.

Dice value progressions - when a village/town/city die exceeds the value of 6, the following actions will take place:

- If it is currently a village (hasn't yet progressed to a town or city):
 - If there are towns available, this village has grown into a town. Place a town token on the intersection, reset the die to 1 and place it beside the town token, and then remove any villages adjacent to it (honoring the rule that towns cannot be on adjacent intersections). This would signify one village outgrowing and subsuming the others.
 - If all five of the town tokens are on the board, award a pip to the nearest town or city then reset the die to 1. This would signify the typical boom/bust/growth/contraction of the village, with disillusioned young ones moving on to the town or city where prospects seem better.
- If the location is currently a town:
 - If it is connected to another town by a road, it upgrades to a city, the die is set to 1, and the town token becomes available for deployment elsewhere
 - If not connected via a road and is within three road segments of another town, a road is placed towards the nearest village/town/city (or whichever route seems to be of the most benefit to the Village faction), reset the die to 1.
 - If a town is isolated (not within three road segments of another town or city), draw a development card, set the town die to 1.
- If the location is currently a city, draw a development card, reset the die to 1.

Dice development cards: Point cards should be played immediately, put face up near the board. Monopoly and Year of Plenty cards will allow two selective dice pip upgrades, ideally in the most advantageous location for the dice faction. Road building should be done in the most advantageous way possible, ideally linking cities. Soldier cards are used to move the robber and steal a card (player discards a random card, dice faction increases a dice pip adjacent to that resource).

Your actions - play resource cards to build roads, towns, cities and development cards per the standard game. Take note of the special trading action below.

Trading - if you build a road to an existing village (but not town or city of the other faction), you must trade with them. You are limited to receiving one of the adjacent resources to that village. In return you will either have to trade one card if it is not an adjacent resource, or two cards if your trade goods are adjacent to the village. You may receive in trade as many cards as there are pips on the village dice. When you have completed your trade, that dice is removed from the board. You gain no benefit in building a road to a Villages faction town or city, nor can you build past it.

The Robber - Robber movement will alternate between the two factions, with the village faction placing the robber when the first 7 is rolled. If you have more than 7 cards in hand, you will still need to discard half of them.

Village faction robber placement: the robber will be placed on your best hex (likely a 6 or 8) in such a way as to be most bothersome to yourself and least bothersome to the villages. You will discard a card at random. The Villages faction gets to add a pip to one village/town/city that is adjacent to a hex of that resource.

Your robber placement: You can move the robber to a hex, and decrease one pip of an adjacent dice. You get one of the resources of the hex on which you placed the robber (unless you place it on the desert).

Development cards - play as normal with the following changes/clarifications:

Play the monopoly card as a year of plenty card, getting two free resources.

Soldier cards can be used to relocate the robber, and get the extra resource (and pip reduction). Pip reductions cannot take a city or town below 1. Only play this when the robber was last placed by the Villages faction and on a space inconveniencing you.

Winning

The faction which reaches 10 points first is the winner. The nature of dice not always matching probabilities (and the robber possibly blocking rolls that due) means that a typical game can be lopsided, or a close fought battle. If you desire more predictability, the "Deck of Dice" is an option, providing the proper ratio of rolls within a 36 draw deck (and more grief when the robber blocks a key hex when the corresponding card is drawn).

Adjusting difficulty level possibilities:

Using the largest army and longest road cards will make it easier for you to win, as the villages faction will not be working towards earning these cards

To increase the difficulty, you have the following options:

- remove the longest road (2 point card)
- remove the largest army (2 point card)
- increase the starting value of each of the villages, usually set at 1

Playtesting thoughts:

Is it fun? (I enjoy watching the villages coalesce into towns and cities, and don't mind losing to them, but that might not be everyone's cup of tea.)

Questions? Suggestions?

Design Thoughts/Conundrums:

Part of the "fun" of playing Catan is trading the excess cards that you have for the cards that you need. I haven't played much two player Catan, but guess trading wouldn't be as much of a factor. The game as laid out does have limited trading, albeit almost as an offensive strategy, but in solomode I'm not seeing a way to meaningfully replicate that.