

Mac Robber

Queen, 2005

designed by Ralf Burkert

translated by Pitt Crandlemire

A game by Ralf Burkert for 3-5 players

The Highlands - wide, rough country and brave fellows, who can toss rocks and whole tree trunks. There is no doubt that we are in Scotland, where each proud clan needs not only an unwavering fortress, but is also of the opinion that the fattest cows can always be found on their neighbors' lands. In the struggle for status and prestige, no one is spared because everyone would like to win the game as the most successful clan chieftain.

Game material

- 67 cards - with numbers from 1 to 4; the Highland clans use these to conduct their raids

- 5 clan tiles - showing the courtyard and estates of each player

Estates: Each player starts with 2 estates and may, in the course of the game, acquire up to 4 more.

A player's courtyard includes places for his warriors (yellow), pipers (blue), and monks (green).

- 5 clan coats-of-arms - for tracking victory points

- 1 gameboard - showing the scoring track along the outside edge

There are different starting positions shown for the clan coats-of-arms depending on the number of players

Red area: When at least one player reaches this zone, the game can end.

- 25 estates - marked on the back with numbers from 30 to 42

- 86 action cubes - (29 yellow, 27 blue, 20 green, 10 red)

- 1 bag for the cubes

- 1 start-player marker

- 5 overview cards

- 1 "Biggest Following" marker

- 1 rules booklet

Goal of the game

To become the mightiest clan chieftain and further develop the family's property. This can be achieved quickly through the acquisition of estates, castles, and cattle. But no one is safe from the raids of the other clans, because there is a saying in the Highlands, "There can be only one".

Set-up

Each player gets the clan tile of his choice and places 4 warriors (yellow cubes) and 2 pipers (blue cubes) on the appropriate spaces in his courtyard. Each player also gets 1 cattle marker (red cube) that is placed on one of his two estates (the two starting estates are already colored in green on each player's clan tile).

The gameboard is laid out in the middle of the table. Depending on the number of the players, the clan coats-of-arms are placed on space 2 (with 3 players), space 5 (with 4 players), or space 8 (with 5 players) on the scoring track. The estates are mixed well with the number side down and placed in the middle of the gameboard.

With 4 players, 4 yellow and 2 blue cubes are set aside and out of play; with 3 players, 8 yellow and 4 blue cubes are set aside. All the remaining cubes are placed into the bag.

The cards are shuffled and everyone is dealt 4 cards face-down as their starting hand. The rest of the cards are placed as a face-down draw pile.

with 5 players, each starts with 8 points

with 4 players, each starts with 5 points

with 3 players, each starts with 2 points

Course of the game

One player gets the start-player marker. Several rounds are played in clockwise order. In each round, players take one turn each. A player's turn consists of the following 3 phases:

Phase 1: Draw action cubes

Phase 2: Choose and execute action(s)

Phase 3: Raid or Exchange cards

After each player has had a turn, scoring takes place and the start-player changes.

Scoring and Change of start-player

Phase 1: Draw action cubes

The active player draws 6 cubes out of the bag. These cubes form his display.

Phase 2: Choose and execute action(s)

The active player chooses - based on his display - one or two actions, which he now executes. The following rules apply:

- For his actions he may use at most 4 of the 6 cubes in his display.
- He may not execute the same action more than once per turn.
- If he chooses the "Bard" action, he may not execute a second action.
- The last player in the round may execute only one action.

Note: The last player's single action may be the "Bard" action.

The cubes used for actions are placed, depending on the action, on one of his unoccupied estates, in his courtyard, or back into the bag. Cubes on estates or in the courtyard may score victory points. (See Scoring and Change of start-player)

Once the player has executed all his actions, all unused cubes are placed back into the bag.

In the following rules, all possible actions are presented with the corresponding color combinations.

Cattle

1 red action cube (1 cattle) is placed on one of your unoccupied estates. If you have no unoccupied estates, you may not choose this action.

Castle

2 blue action cubes (1 castle) are placed on of your unoccupied estates. If you have no unoccupied estates, you may not choose this action.

Monastery

3 green action cubes (1 monastery) are placed on of your unoccupied estates. If you have no unoccupied estates, you may not choose this action.

Warrior

1 yellow action cube (1 warrior) is placed into your courtyard on the yellow space. There is no upper limit to the number of yellow cubes you may have there but you may never have less than 3. For each warrior you have in play, you get 1 card in your hand (i.e. your hand size is equal to the number of warriors you have in play). When the number of your warriors changes, the number of cards in your hand changes immediately, as well; you either draw or discard cards so you have exactly as many as the number of warriors you have in play.

Note: having 3 warriors grants the permanent ability to conduct a Raid or to defend against one (See Raids or Exchanging cards).

Piper

1 blue action cube (here: 1 piper) is placed into your courtyard on the blue space. There is no limit to the number of blue cubes you may have there. Pipers may be added to a Raid to improve the combat strength of the raid.

Monk(s)

1 or 2 green action cubes (monks) are placed into your courtyard on the green space. There is no limit to the number of green cubes you may have there. Whether you place 1 or 2 monks, it counts as a single action.

Bard

1 blue action cube from your display (here: bard) is returned to the bag. You are now allowed to remove up to 2 cubes - of different colors - from the courtyard of any other player. 1 cube is put back into the bag; the other is placed into the corresponding space in your courtyard.

Note: Each player must always have at least 3 warriors (yellow cubes). A bard may not violate this limit when taking cubes from another player.

Note: The bard is the only means other than a Raid for changing another player's Tableau.

Estate

Either 1 yellow and 1 red action cube or 1 yellow and 2 green action cubes are returned to the bag. Unlike the other actions, you may also take cubes from your courtyard to return to the bag to meet the requirements of this action.

You take an estate from the general supply and place it on a corresponding empty (vacant gray) space on your clan tile. During the course of the game, you can acquire up to 4 more estates. (For a maximum of 6 estates altogether).

An estate may hold either 1 cattle or 1 castle or 1 monastery.

Note: Since the acquisition of additional estates is very important, you are allowed to partially or completely pay the requirements of this action by removing cubes from your courtyard but you may NOT pay with cubes from your estates!

Phase 3: Raid or Exchange cards

The active player may now conduct a raid against any other player, who must then defend himself.

Conducting a raid

- Each raid consists of 3 rounds of combat.
- In each round, the attacker first plays one card from his hand face-down. He may then immediately place one of his pipers on the card. A piper increases the value of the card by 1. (Only 1 piper may be played on a card.)
- Then the defender plays a card, whose value he can also increase by adding a piper from his courtyard.
- After both players have played their cards, they are revealed. The higher value (including any pipers added to the cards) wins this round of combat. In the event of a tie, this round ends undecided with no victor. Any played pipers are returned to the bag and the cards played in that combat round are placed on the discard pile.
- The player who wins the most rounds of combat wins the raid.

Combat value of the card = 3

Piper increases the value by 1

Total combat value of the card = 4

Effects of a raid

- If the attacker wins, he scores 1 victory point and he may remove a castle or a monastery from one of the defender's estates or he may steal a cattle. If the attacker has an unoccupied estate, he places the stolen cattle there, otherwise it goes back into the bag (just like the castle or the monastery). If the defender had no castles, monasteries, or cattle, the attacker gets 2 victory points.
- If the defender wins, he scores 2 victory points and the attacker loses 1 victory point.
- In event of a tie, the attacker scores 1 victory point.
- Afterwards, both players refill their hands by each drawing 5 cards into his hand and then discarding 2.

Not raiding and exchanging cards

If the active player chooses not to conduct a raid, he may discard up to 3 of his cards and draw replacements from the draw pile.

The player has now finished his turn and play passes clockwise. Once each player has had a turn, the round ends and Scoring and Change of start-player takes place.

Scoring and Change of start-player

During scoring, the action cubes on the players' tiles are counted:

Yellow cubes

The player with most yellow cubes gets the "Größte Gefolgschaft" (Biggest Following) marker.

If there is a tie for most yellow cubes, the player with the greatest total number of cubes in his courtyard gets the marker. If there is still a tie, the marker remains with the current holder, even if he is not one of the tied players.

The player with the "Biggest Following" marker may, in Phase 1: Drawing Cubes, return any or all of his drawn cubes back to the bag and draw an equal number again. He may only do this once.

Most yellow cubes = Biggest Following marker

Most green cubes = 3 pts..

Second-most green cubes = 2 pts.

Red cubes = 1 pt. each

Most red cubes = +2 pts.

Own blue cubes - red cubes of the opponent with the most cattle = number of points

Note: The player with the Biggest Following may, before choosing his actions, change and, if lucky, improve his display.

Green cubes

The player with most green cubes gets 3 victory points; the player with the second-most gets 2 victory points. In case of a tie, the tied players get 1 victory point each.

Example: If more than one player has the most green cubes, all of the tied players each get 1 victory point. In this case, no points are awarded for second-most green cubes.

If there is only one player with the most green cubes but more than one tied for second-most, the first gets 3 victory points, and all players tied for second-most each get 1 victory point.

Red cubes

Each player gets 1 victory point for each of his cattle cubes. The player with the most red cubes gets 2 additional victory points. In event of a tie, no one gets the extra victory points.

Blue cubes

Each player counts the number of blue cubes he has in his courtyard and estates. Each subtracts from this total a number equal to the largest number of cattle held by one of his opponents.

If the difference is positive, the player scores that number of victory points. If the difference is zero or negative, the player gets no victory points for his blue cubes.

Example: Ralf has 3 pipers (= 3 blue cubes) in his courtyard and 2 castles (= 4 blue cubes) on his estates. Peter has the most cattle, namely 3 red cubes. Ralf subtracts 3 (for Peter's red cubes) from 7 (for his own blue cubes). He thus scores 4 victory points for his blue cubes this round.

Peter has only 3 blue cubes. From this number, he must subtract the red cubes of the opponent with the most cattle. (He actually has the most cattle overall but he is not his own opponent, of course).

Among Peter's opponents, Uwe has the most cattle, namely 2 red cubes. As a result, Peter scores 1 victory point for his blue cubes this round.

Start-player change

Once all victory points have been recorded on the scoring track, one estate is drawn, number-side down from the general supply and removed from the game.

Once at least one player has reached the red area of the scoring track, when the estate is drawn the number on the back is revealed, which may trigger the end of the game (see End of the game)

If the game does not end, the start-player marker is passed to the left and the next round now begins with the new start-player.

End of the game

The game can end in two ways:

- Once at least one player has reached the red area of the scoring track, the estate tile is drawn and the number on the back is revealed. If the number is equal to or less than the victory point total of the leading player, the game ends immediately. The player with the most victory points wins. In the event of a tie, there is a shared victory.

- If, on any player's turn to draw, there are not enough cubes left in the bag for a player to draw 6, the game ends immediately. The player with the most victory points wins. In the event of a tie, there is a shared victory.

[Trans. note: End game scoring in this game is tight and a tie is fairly likely. I find the "shared victory" rule unsatisfying, so I play that ties are broken in favor of the player with most total cubes, similar to the tie-breaker for Biggest Following marker. If there's still a tie, then the player with the most estates wins. - PC]