

WHAT A COMMOTION...

# POTION EXPLOSION

... TO MAKE UP A POTION!

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Even at my age seeing all those colored marbles invites me to play and take my mind back to childhood, when I used to play with the other kids in the court yard, trying to grasp the complete lot with a lucky strike. Marbles are still sold today in many toy shops even if less and less children use them as they prefer the "electronic" ones that they find in any console or portable phone. But for me finding marbles as the basic element for a board game was a very nice surprise and a lot of back flashes.

The box of Potion Explosion includes 80 of them in four colors, together with 64 cardboard tiles in the form of distillation flasks (to prepare 8 different potions), 21 "Professor's help" tiles, 15 "Skill" tiles and 4 "Bunsen" benches (one per player). My only small remark about the components is that two of the colors (black and blue) are mat and very easy to recognize, while the others two (red and yellow) are semi-transparent and for color-blind players it may be difficult to distinguish them. Otherwise everything is sturdy, colored and very pleasant to use.



Before starting with the first game the "dispenser" must be assembled: extract with attention all the pieces from the cardboard sheet and follow the very clear instructions printed on the rulebook. I suggest to put a few drops of quick drying glue on the assembled dispenser in order to "fix" it forever. The thermoformed plastic tray inside the box has been perfectly designed to accept both the assembled dispenser and all the other components: each of them has its fixed place. Very practical and very nice: I would like that more manufacturer could do the same.

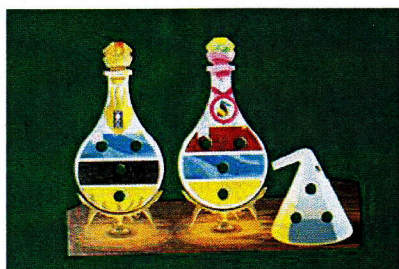
Pffsssssss

The science Professor lights up the Bunsen stoves and starts to teach the players on how to produce interesting potions. Each "flask" tile shows all the information that we need during the game: a symbol to identify the eight different potions; a number printed on a ribbon that tells us the Victory Points (VP) that we will receive at the end of the game; two to three colored stripes to show which are the necessary ingredients (marbles of the same color) and from four to seven holes inside the stripes, where the marbles will be stored. Two flasks of each potion also have a small "yellow star" and will be used during the set-up.

Two series of potions are randomly discarded at the beginning of the game and the related 16 "flask" tiles are stored in the box. This leaves us with six different potions for a total of 48 flasks. The twelve tiles with the yellow star are now placed face up on the table, while the other 36 are placed beside the board, one stack for each type, for future use.

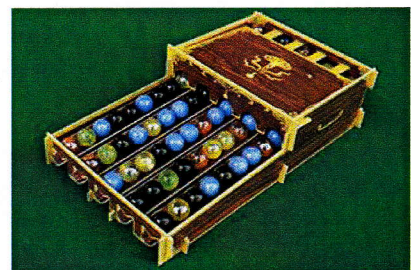
The First player select one Potion between the 12 displayed, then every player do the same in clockwise order. The last player select now a second flask and the others follow in anti-clockwise sense.

Each player places the two potions on his personal board, one on each Bunsen: the lateral "still" is the player's reserve and may contain up to three ingredients (see picture 2 to have a look at the starting situation). It is now time to place all the marbles on the dispenser: they roll towards the 5 holes and from there they fall on five slides where the players may see most (but not all) of them.



Kaaaaaboooooommmmm

The players, in turn, look at the sequence of colors on the five slides and decide which ONE marble to take in order to start feeding the first potion. When a marble is taken all the remaining "upstream" marbles will roll down and clash (the explosion) against the others: if this clash is between marbles of the same color the player will take all of them too. If a new "explosion" between



identical marbles is generated the players will take them too, and so on. But let me immediately note that while the FIRST explosion is the norm, the second is very rare and a third is near impossible.

The player has now one or more marbles on his hand and may place them on the "holes" of his potions inside the "stripe" of the same color. Often some marbles cannot be used because the potions do not have any more free "holes" in those colors or because we collected marbles of colors that we do not own at all: hopefully we may store up to three "surplus" marbles on the holes of the lateral "still". In the next turn they will be again available for new potions.

At this point the player's turn is over, unless he wishes to make one or both of the following optional actions:

- 1 - Ask for a "HELP" from the Professor: the player may take another marble of his choice from the dispenser (but without explosion this time)
- 2 - Drink one or more of the potions already completed on the previous (or in the present) turns and use their "bonus", hoping to finish more potions.

When a player complete a potion he has to put again all the used marbles inside the dispenser, while the potion tile is collected for the final VP count (or to be used for its bonus). As a final task the player has to replace any finished potion with a new one selected between those available on the board. Which one depends on the strategy that the he is trying to follow.

As I wrote before a game of Potion Explosion is always played with 6 series out of

the 8 different potions available on the box. Each series is composed of 8 tiles that need from 4 to 7 colored marbles to be completed and have a different VP value.

The "Potions of Prismatic Joy", for example, are as follows :

- two potions need 4 marbles in three colors (2x red, 1x blue and 1x yellow) and grant 3 VP
- two need 5 marbles in two colors (2x red and 3x black) and grant 4 VP
- two need 6 marbles in three colors (1x red,

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*That's fun! No long-term strategies, no programming of moves, simple using opportunities that offer themselves and sometimes being a bit malicious!*

2x blue and 3x black) and grant 5 VP  
 - two need 7 marbles in two colors (3x blue and 4x yellow) and give 9 VP.

As you see the value of a potion rise with the number of marbles that are necessary to complete it. And this is the first "consideration" that should be taken when you have to select a new potion as all potions also grant a different bonus: for example you may take one or more marbles from the dispenser (but no explosion), or steal marbles from the other players' reserves, or use again a potion already "drank", or use the marbles in your still (reserve) without respecting the colors, etc. An used potion is turned upright to show that it has been drank, but all used potions are still counted at the game's end to calculate the VP.

The "professor's help" allows you to take a marble from the dispenser (without explosion) but I suggest to use it with care as for each "help" that you use you will get a special tile that will cost you 2 VP at the game's end. Of course if this "help" allows you to finish an high value potion that you may drink immediately to complete the second one on your Bunsen... well, no hesitation: do it. Otherwise it is better to wait.

The players that succeed in preparing FIVE different potions receive a "Skill" tile that grants 4 VP at the game's end. You also get the same reward if you complete THREE potions of the same type. The rules do not mention if you may get a reward for a second combination of 5 different potions or other 3 tiles of the same kind, but a quick call to the designer confirmed that each player may get just ONE per type.

The "Skill" tiles are also used to mark the turns: at the beginning of the game a certain number of them is placed on the table (in a four players game, for example, you

place 6 tiles) and when the last one is taken the final turn of the game starts. You can still get "Skill" tiles in this last round from stock, if the stack is empty.

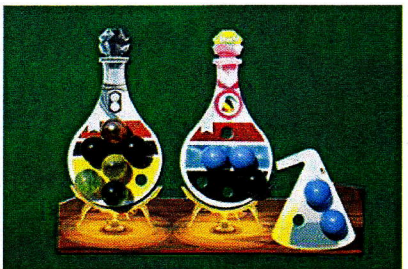
At the end of the last turn all the players sum the VP of their finished potions and add the "skill" tiles bonus, subtracting the "-2" malus of the "helps". The player with the higher total wins.

Puuuuffffffff.....

The length of a game of Potion Explosion is relatively short: 30-40 minutes. But this does not mean that the game is a simplistic one: some "thinking" is still necessary. First you need to concentrate on which marble to take out in order to maximize the explosions; then you have to make some considerations on the potions that you have in your bench and those still available. How many extra marbles do I have ? Which colors ? Which are the potions that I still need to collect for the "skill" bonus ? Which ones have the right colors to immediately place my extra marbles ? This is the kind of questions that pass in the mind of the players.

The main goal of the game is to collect the most potions possible, but I suggest to go for a mix of "light" potions (4 holes) and "heavy" ones (7 holes) as the latter grants more VP: when you have to take a marble from the dispenser always verify if you have extra holes in your reserve: if the answer is positive, and if you spot a good combination, do not be afraid to collect extra marbles that you cannot use immediately: place them in your "reserve still" and start to look at the available potions with the same colors that you may select on your next turn.

In the first game or two the players very often forget that a turn is not finished when you take the marbles from the dispenser: they still have the opportunity to get an "help" from the Professor and/or they may "drink" some (or all) of their finished potions. Before "passing" consider what you have available and if you find a good "combo" use it immediately. Remember that in the last step of a turn you have to replenish your Bunsen with new potions, if possible: so the



best that you can do is to try to get a couple of tiles on every turn to get many VP (easy to say but difficult to do !).

Sometimes you will also need to play in a "unusual" way and with a little spot of "malice", mainly to block a possible fantastic combination for your opponents instead of finding a good one for you.

I usually play more complex games with my friends at the Club, but Potion Explosion is really a fantastic game for the Family or to introduce new players to our "little world". Do not search for long term strategies nor try to make programs on the next moves, but be ready to jump on a favorable combination as soon as you find it and, above all,... be happy.

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**INFORMATION**

**Autor:** L. Silva, A. Crespi, S. Castelli  
**Grafiker:** Giulia Ghigini  
**Preis:** ca. 35 Euro  
**Verlag:** Heidelberger 2016  
[www.heidelbaer.de](http://www.heidelbaer.de)

**SPIELER:** 2-4  
**ALTER:** 8+  
**DAUER:** 45+

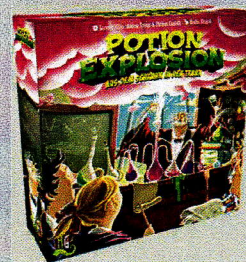
**BEWERTUNG**

**Sammeln**  
 Zielgruppe: Für Familien  
 Version: de  
 Regeln: de en es fr it nl pl  
 Text im Spiel: nein

**Kommentar:**  
 Zutatenspender muss zusammengebaut werden \* Schönes Material \* Gute Regel \* Taktik in Wahl der Getränke

**Vergleichbar:**  
 Sammelspiele mit Formationsbildung

**Andere Ausgaben:**  
 Horrible Games (en), Edge Entertainment (es, fr), 999 Games (nl), Rebel.pl (pl), weitere sind angekündigt



**Meine Einstufung:** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★