

HOW TO BECOME A POWERFUL MASTER OF LONDON

GUILDS OF LONDON

DIE ZÜNFTEN VON LONDON



Guilds of London use a mix of known mechanics to promote the players' representatives to the role of "Masters" of the Guilds in the medieval city of London. "Tiles" are used to set-up the board, "cards" will suggest the objectives and the possible actions and "workers" are placed in the right places to execute those actions. Being mainly a "card game" it is important to search for the better combinations (with the cards in hand) and to hope for

some luck at the right moment. 105 "action" cards (in five basic colors, each of them bearing one or two colored standards) are the real heart of the game and each player receives 16 wooden meeples (the workers) with 8 black meeples to be assigned as a prize. A deck of "Mayor" cards provides the objectives of the game. All the components are of decent quality but, as usual, it is strongly suggested to protect the cards with transparent sleeves as they are very

allows the movement of workers on the board; green help to acquire extra cards at the end of turn; finally, pink cards are more flexible and have very different effects. Every action is explained with "icons" and the latter are the only real problem for the first game or two as you constantly need to refer to a summary chart to understand their meaning. This, of course, initially slows down the game, but after a couple of test the players will remember each of them and rarely must refer to the rules for their use.

The "Mayor" cards also are not easy to understand: but each of them has a letter (from A to U) printed on the bottom right and you need to check a grid where their effect is listed in alphabetical order. It is



much used. Opening the box, we immediately note that no board is provided: it will be formed in various steps with 40 large tiles (70x70 mm) while a small board is used to host the "plantation" and to record Vic-

torious Points (VP). The color of the Action card shows their "special" use: yellow cards bring new workers on the board; blue transfer workers from the board to the "Plantation"; red

important to immediately check which bonus they offer because they are calculated only at the end of the game and therefore your "general strategy" should be addressed from the beginning. More "Mayor cards" are taken during play (usu-

ally you will pick up one or two of them to finally select one) so it is important to understand which ones are better suited for your game.

Game set-Up

The two "Guild Hall" tiles are placed on the board first, together with the special tile "Church of St. Lawrence Jewry". Then another 9 tiles, randomly selected from the complete deck, are wrapped around the first three. Each tile shows 1 or 2 colored standards on the top right side, a number on the top left, and a bonus that will be assigned to the player that will become the Master of that Guild. A circle is printed on the bottom left side and a "bonus" disk should be randomly sorted and placed on that position: it will be assigned to the player that arrive second.



Each player places 4 workers on the Town Hall and a special silver pawn (the Sacristan) is positioned on the lower numbered tile (we may see it on the bottom right tile on Picture 2). Then the players

take 6 Action cards and 3 Mayor cards, of which they select one only. The "plantation" board, with the turn track, is placed beside the tiles on the table and it receives a plantation tile, the black meeples and the deck of Mayor cards.

The players now decide the initial turn order and place a disk of their color on the turn track. The game may start (Picture 3)

On his turn each player may do one of the following actions:

- 1 – Play one or more cards to bring new workers from the reserve to the Town Hall
- 2 – Play one or more cards to move workers from the Town Hall (or any tile) to a new tile with the standard of the same color of the played cards.
- 3 – Play one or more cards to use their "special effects", paying their cost (from 0 to 2 cards). Please note that there are no "coins" on the game as each card has a coin printed on its back and therefore any of them may be used to pay the cost.

Finally, the players will draw two cards from the deck, if they used at least one, or four cards, if he did not make any action. You make keep up to 7 cards in your hand.

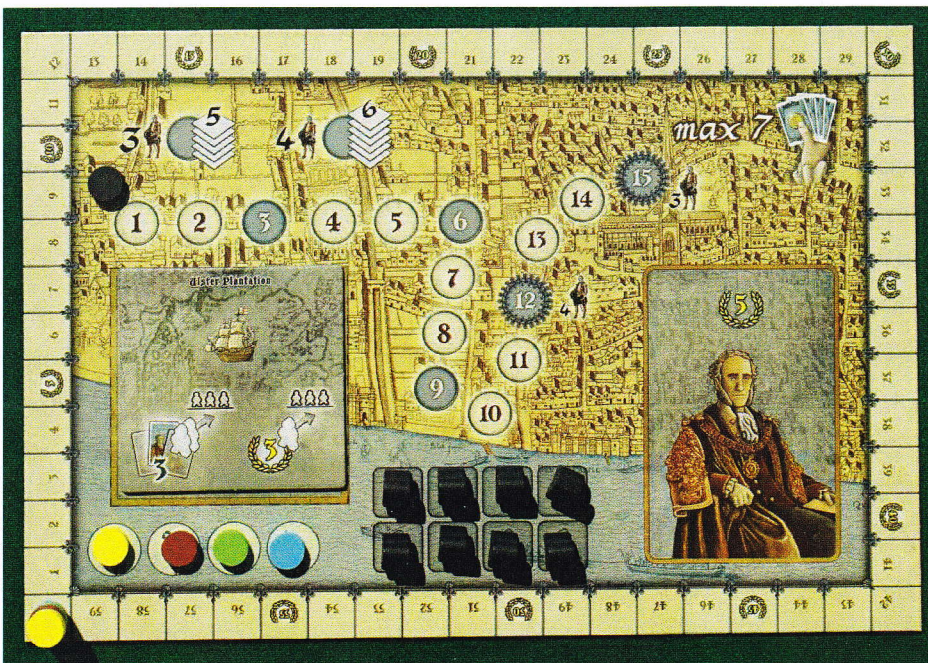
The main goal of the game, obviously, is to obtain "Guilds" and this is verified at the end of a complete turn. As you may see on Picture 4, each Guild tile is characterized by one or two colored standards (on its top right), a number (top left), a reward for the player who will get the majority (icons on the middle) and another reward for the player arriving second (using round tokens randomly placed on each tile and, sometimes, by an extra icon).



To obtain a Guild (and its reward) a player should have most workers of his color at the end of a turn while the total number of workers matches or is higher than the number on the tile. The Sacristan, if present, helps in getting the right number. Then the tile is turned over and all the workers are moved back to the Town Hall: only one of the winner's workers remain on that tile and his considered a "Master". Guilds are assigned one after the other, starting from the top left and proceeding down to the last tile on the bottom right.

After that the turn token is advanced one case and the new playing order is determined: the first player of the next turn is the one with the lower VP total. If the turn token arrived on a "grey" case, there is a further phase where the Plantation is checked if there are workers there: more VP are assigned to the first and second players. Finally, new tiles are added to the board enlarging the town of London. In the last turn (the length of the game depends on the number of players) the "Mayor Cards" are revealed and their VP are assigned as well. Each couple of adjacent Guilds with Masters of the same color also adds 1 VP. The higher total wins the game and probably the player will become The Great Master of London's Guilds (see Picture 5 – A game in process)

The heart of the game is obviously finding the winning "combos" with





- Company Hall: take 1 or 2 neutral workers
- Lord Mayor Parade: you select which color is Master (for the final objectives)

Guilds of London is not a difficult game to learn, but it uses so many icons that casual players may be confused. Another problem may be the necessity to search for and to use "combos", because not all like this kind of mechanics. For the above reasons I cannot recommend this game to Families or casual gamers. But it is OK for regular and expert players, unless they do not like a good percentage of "luck" in their games.

A complete section of the Rules introduces also the "solo" game, where you play against "Boris" (who will always play second and will place 3 workers per turn in tiles determined by drawing action cards and looking at their standard's color). I tested it a

couple of time and I think that you must play very competitively to win. I suggest all the owners to try it. ☑

Pietro Cremona

the cards: initially the players should be guided by the "objectives" of their Mayor cards and they will try to win the related Guilds as soon as possible. But during the game it is necessary to get extra objectives and possibly select the ones closest to the initial strategy: unfortunately, this often will not be possible, so the players should be prepared to change their tactical goals and adapt their play to the cards that they have in hand.

Pietro Cremona

Guilds were the base for commerce in Medieval London, but to get them really needed fierce fighting.

As it happens in all games guided by cards (particularly when you need to form "combos") if Lady Luck does not give her help it may be possible that your game becomes difficult as you see your "objectives" captured by your opponents because you cannot find the right cards to move your workers and to dispute the Guilds. Some pink cards may help but, again, you should be able (or lucky) to find them in time. Do not forget that if you feel a bad moment you may always skip a turn and get 4 cards: during our test this was sometimes the only way to adjust a very negative situation, even if precious turns were lost.

If you were patient enough and able to accumulate some good combinations you could also try to counter-attack, trying to take more than one Guild per turn, especially when you are the last player and you may distribute your workers

without fearing any reaction from your opponents. Of course, you probably already collected some "yellow" cards to bring 3-4 new workers on the Town Hall and immediately switch them to the selected Guilds (may be with the help of "red" cards) and win them all. This may happen 3-4 times in each game so, again, if you feel bad do not surrender, because you may take by surprise your opponents when they do not expect such a strong attack.

But there is another way to create "panic": the black workers! They are assigned as a reward during the game and are used during the Guild's assignment phase. Any player may send back to the Town Hall one colored worker in exchange for a black one. Let's make an example: A Guild numbered "5" already has 3 yellow, 2 blue and 1 red workers, so it will be assigned at the end of the turn. But BLUE owns two black workers while the others have none, so he may displace two yellows and win.

There are also 5 "Special Tiles" and each of them has a particular bonus:

- Church of St. Lawrence Jewry: is placed on the board at the set-up and let you draw four cards from the deck (a strong move in the first turns)
- University of London: you may keep 8 cards on your hand (instead of 7)
- Gog & Magog: if you have a Master on this tile you win all the following "draws"

INFORMATION

Designer: Tony Boydell
Artist: Boydell, Franz, Soto
Price: ca. 41 Euro
Publisher: Frosted Games 2016
www.frostedgames.de

PLAYERS: 1-4
AGE: 14+
TIME: 120+

BEWERTUNG

Majorities, worker placement
 Users: With friends
 Version: de
 Rules: de en es fr it pl
 In-game text: no

Comments:
 Basically, easy to access * Plethora of symbols can be irritating * Good for experienced players * Nice solo version

Compares to:
 Worker placement games using card combos

Other editions:
 Tasty Minstrel / Surprised Stare (en), Czacha Games (pl), 2Tomatoes (es fr it)

