

Empire Builder System RULES CHANGE 2025

4-Card Start

Initial Deal. Each player is dealt four demand cards. Event cards are set aside. Once all players have four demand cards, the event cards are shuffled back into the draw deck. This is the only time you will have four cards; for the rest of the game you will have three cards.

Clarifications

- **Discarding your cards.** When you discard your cards, including during the special build turns, you only draw three new ones.
- **Starting Your Train.** As you begin your first turn that includes an Operations phase, you discard down to three cards (if necessary). Then, you must place your train (pawn) in any city (including ports) on the map. Unless an event prevents you from doing so, you may pick up loads available in that city immediately.
- **You must place your pawn** on your first turn after the two special build turns - ***unless*** you discard your cards. If you choose not to move or build, but keep your cards, you ***do*** have an Operations phase and must place your pawn.
- **Pawn placement timing matters** because your train is not exposed to Event effects until it has been placed, and technically you may not pick up loads until your pawn has been placed (even if the eager chip banker hands them to you before then).

Why the change?

4-card start has been used for several years at World Boardgaming Championships and elsewhere. That experience has shown it improves the chance for everyone to have a good playable start.