

COAL N' WRITE – How to Play

~~VERSION 1 RULE SET. ~~

A “roll n’ write game” by Stephen B. Thomas (editor@let-off.com). Plays in 20 – 25 minutes, for 1 to several players.

To play, you will need 3 six-sided dice, a player worksheet for each player, and a General Store sheet for the game (note there are different General Store sheets for solo games and multiplayer games, included in the print n’ play version). Each player will also need something to write with, but they will not need an eraser to change any marks.

WHAT IS THIS?

Imagine that it’s the 1870’s, and you’ve just come into possession of a land claim. To your surprise, there’s the beginnings of a mineral mine dug into the side of a hill. You and two of your friends plan to dig out as much of the minerals as you can, cart it off to the General Store, and rake in the cash!

You have cleaned out your savings to buy a bunch of tools and hire six burros for your first foray into the mine. Your goal is to collect and sell as much of the valuable minerals from the mine that you can, and either invest your reward, or bank it for when you go back home. The mining team with the most riches after cashing-in six deliveries wins!

GAME FRAMEWORK

The game is composed of six ROUNDS (represented by the burros). Each Round is comprised of several TURNS (throws of the dice). Some Rounds will be shorter or longer than the others. You just don’t know until the dice are thrown. Also, each Turn’s dice throws will be available for players to use, but players do not need to do the same thing with the dice results as any other player. In fact, a lot of the fun and surprise of the game is in comparing all the different things to do with the dice results they have to work with.

Since different players will likely be doing different things with the same dice results, it’s important to keep the player sheets within view of all players. It’s also helpful to set a convention of calling out loud one’s intentions for the use of a die. This way, no player is accused of dirty dealin’, and fun stays the main objective of the game.

THE MINE

Imagine a long tunnel going deep into the side of a hill in the middle of the desert. You begin to dig out to the “sides” of this tunnel, seeking out mineral deposits. As you dig, you form side tunnels that allow you to dig more minerals of that same kind, following a “vein” of that mineral.

It’s the same idea here in “Coal n’ Write.” You first dig out the minerals closest to the long central tunnel, then side tunnels are constructed as you dig more and more mineral deposits. These other deposits can become more challenging to dig out, represented by higher numbers and more “dig” squares. These are explained below.

LET’S PLAY!

Choose one player to throw the three dice. Follow these steps to complete your first Turn:

1. Check for any pairs. VISIT the General Store, if you want.
2. Check for any individual 1’s. At the end of this turn, move the die to the BUNKHOUSE. Note that only one worker can be moved to the BUNKHOUSE on any one turn (so rolling three 1’s doesn’t mean it’s the final round!).
3. Assign any remaining dice to DIGGING or CLAIMING mineral deposits.

HOW TO CLAIM MINERAL DEPOSITS

You can use one or more dice whose results MEET OR EXCEED the number printed in the mineral box. Sometimes, a number is low enough (and the dice results are high enough) that you can use a single die for claiming a mineral. Other times, a mineral deposit has a higher number than the current results, or the number is impossible to reach with a single die (when the number is 7 or higher, for example).

To claim a mineral deposit, set aside the dice used to MEET OR EXCEED its number  then scratch out the mineral deposit. Finally, write the letter that mineral begins with (“B” for Borax, “C” for Coal, etc.) in an unused spot of your Ore Stash. Any dice used for this will become available again at the start of the next Turn.

Good news! The next Mineral Deposit in that tunnel is now available. Chances are the number is higher, but at least you can still dig out more of it. In fact, you are welcome to use any dice you have left to claim a mineral deposit in the same tunnel, beyond any mineral deposit you’ve just claimed. In this manner, lucky dice results can allow you to quickly dig many minerals from the same tunnel.

DIGGING AT MINERALS

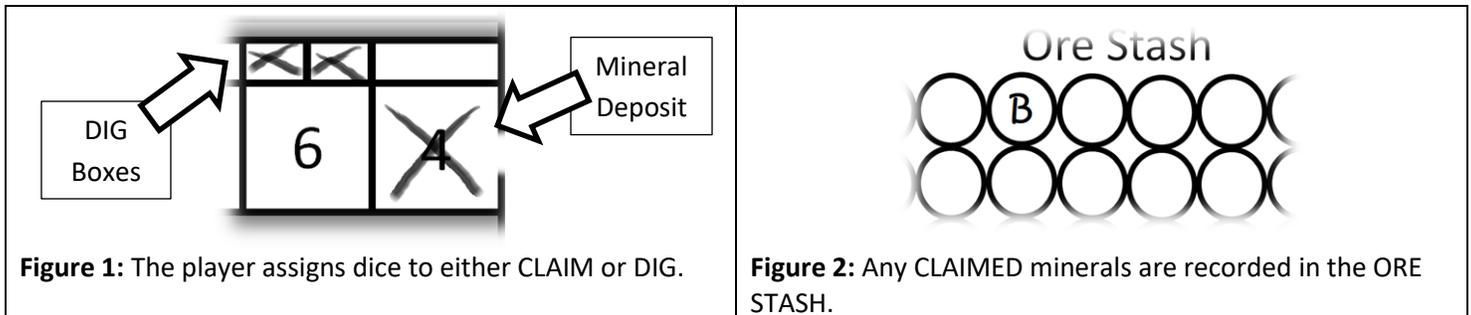
If none of the available dice results are high enough to MEET OR EXCEED the number on a mineral deposit, then you can instead DIG at it. This makes it possible for a die result of any number to eventually be good enough to dig out any mineral deposit.

Each deposit has anywhere from 1, 2, or 3 smaller boxes above it. These are DIG boxes, and can be scratched-out by assigning a die of any number to it. If all DIG boxes are scratched out on a mineral deposit, then the mineral can be claimed by any die roll. Set aside any die, scratch out that mineral deposit, and record it in your Ore Stash.

CLAIMING MINERALS or DIGGING MINERALS

Here’s an example of a typical Turn of play. Look at the following Figure 1 and Figure 2 for some visual details.

1. The player throws the dice, and the results are 2, 3, and 4. Not the best roll! But here’s what they choose to do. They look at the “Borax” section of the mine, just to the left of the main tunnel.
2. They assign the “4” to the first Borax mineral deposit. They scratch it out in the mine, then fill in a “B” in the Ore Stash.
3. They then use the 2 and 3 to DIG the next Borax deposit. Both DIG boxes are scratched out above the mineral. Since both DIG boxes have been filled, then any die result can be used to CLAIM that Borax on a future turn.



VISITING THE GENERAL STORE

If you’ve rolled matching pairs (or three of a kind), then you are welcome to assign a mine worker to visit the GENERAL STORE instead. This is a place where you can earn some cash  – most importantly – spend your cash on improvements and investments that allow you to bring home more cash  by the end of the game. To visit, simply set a die from that pair or trio aside, and choose one available option at the General Store.

These different options are explained in more detail later in these rules. However, keep in mind that you need to already have some money in order to purchase upgrades and improvements. If you visit the General Store with little or no cash, it’s likely because you want to go Varmint Huntin’. Ain’t nothin’ wrong with that, Eagle Eye!

ENDING A ROUND

If you want to start a Turn but all dice have been moved to the BUNKHOUSE, then the Round is over. This is what you need to do next.

1. Choose an unused burro.

- Move minerals from your Ore Stash to the burro storage spots one at a time by scratching it out in your Ore Stash, and writing that same letter in one of the burro storage spots: the solid-line squares. You start with six slots for minerals, but if you've invested in TACK AND HARNESS, you may fill the two dashed-line boxes with minerals as well.
- Count up the value of the minerals you've sent out for this round, then add it to your total. In future rounds, you are welcome to use this cash to purchase improvements and investments from the General Store. The value of the different minerals you can mine is listed on the player sheet as follows:

S = Silver, \$12 each	C = Coal, \$5 each
T = Tin, \$8 each	B = Borax, \$3 each

BANDIT TROUBLE

See those little black hats in the same squares as some of the burros? Those are foul bandits! They're gonna be big trouble unless you defend yourself. To scratch off a bandit from a burro, you need to purchase a Pistol from the General Store. One Pistol allows you to scratch off one Bandit.

If you load up a burro that has at least one Bandit still active (not scratched out), then the most valuable mineral type (even multiples of that mineral) you load onto that burro is scratched off, and its value is not added to your cash total.

Total: \$

S	T	T
T	C	B



Total: \$ 32

Figure 3: When sending out this delivery, there's a Bandit remaining. The player had lots of Silver to deliver, but wisely held most of it back. Instead, they load one silver onto the burro, and fill the rest of the slots with other minerals.

The Bandit steals that player's Silver, but ignores the other minerals. After the Bandit has done their dirty work, the player's delivery is valued at \$32.

CONTINUING THE GAME

A new Round begins by reclaiming all the dice from the BUNKHOUSE, and throwing them for the first Turn of the new Round. Play is the same as the first round, except that players will likely have some more appreciation for rolling doubles, and investing in the various improvements found in the General Store.

If there are no burros remaining, then the game is over. Add up each player's total remaining cash (but ignore any minerals left in the Ore Stash). The player with the most cash is the winner! Ties are won by the player with the highest value of minerals remaining in their Ore Stash.

ABOUT SOLO PLAY

"Coal N' Write" also supports a single-player game. Instead of competing with others, the first challenge of the game is to have completely filled in all spaces in your Ore Stash. Once you've reached that milestone, you can compare yourself to the following table to rank your performance. Measure your cash reserves:

Less than \$300: Go Back East, City Slicker!	\$341 to \$360: Gold Level
\$300 to \$320: Bronze Level	\$361 or More: Platinum Level!
\$321 to \$340: Silver Level	

APPENDIX: THE GENERAL STORE

This is a special, useful place! You can find all manner of worthwhile investments here, that will help you earn more cash. Although the General Store sheets have explanations on them, below are some additional details that may help you deal with confusion and questions about them.

NOTE: Some items are for multiplayer games only, while others are for the solo game only. These details are also noted below.

BLACKJACK TABLE (solo game only): The player can play a game of Blackjack in the saloon. Note that they must already have \$10 to be eligible to play. To start a game of Blackjack, throw one die, and double the result. Choose to Hit or Stay. If the player wants a Hit, they throw another die, double it, then add it to their original result. If the player chooses to Stay, or their total meets or exceeds 21, consult the table below for results:

Total = up to 15: Pay \$10. Big Loser!

Total = 16 or 17: You break even (no winnings or losses)

Total = 18 or 19: Collect \$10

Total = 20: Collect \$20 and add a Tin to your next burro

Total = 21: Collect \$25 and add a Tin and a Coal to your next burro

Total = 22 or more: Busted! Pay \$10 and add a Bandit (black hat) to your next burro

BURRO # 7 (solo game only): Solo players may purchase this upgrade to play a 7th Round of the game. Note that this Round has a Bandit that must be dealt with if the player hopes to earn cash from all their Ore in this delivery.

COAL BARON: The first player to report to the Coal Baron that they have at least 12 Coal in their Ore Stash earns an immediate \$40 bonus. They do not need to deliver the Coal, they just need to have it in their Stash, then choose this option to “report in” about their Coal stash. If there’s a tie, then all tied players split the bonus evenly among themselves. Once this bonus has been claimed, scratch it off the General Store sheet.

PISTOL: For each \$10 spent to buy a Pistol, immediately scratch off one Bandit (black hat) from a future delivery. You can buy multiple Pistols and assign them as you see fit.

STRIKE GOLD!: Mark initials in this box when you purchase the upgrade, just like in Wash Day. When you make your next delivery, you earn a \$5 bonus for each \$10 value of the delivery. For example, a \$27 value delivery earns the player a \$10 bonus that Round. A \$40 delivery earns the player a \$20 bonus that round.

PINKERTONS (multiplayer only): If a player is concerned about losing later in the game, they can end the game early using the Pinkertons. They must report in here, then scratch off one of each Borax, Coal, Tin, and Silver from their Ore Stash. This will become the final Round of the game.

RAILROAD SHARES (multiplayer only): Players can spend money now, to make more money later in the game. A Railroad Share can be purchased for \$10, and players may purchase as many as they can afford. Mark this on the General Store sheet. Thereafter, Shares will be worth \$6 for each Round that passes. So for example, if a player purchases a Share in Round 3, then on round 4 it is worth \$6. On round 5 it is worth \$12, then on Round 6 it is worth \$18.

VARMINT HUNTIN': At the end of this Turn, the player throws all three dice, adds 6, and then immediately adds that total of dollars to their cash total. There is no limit to the number of times a player may use this option.

WASH DAY: If a player chooses this upgrade, they should mark their initials or something in this box to indicate they purchased it for the current Round. If that player’s next delivery has at least 6 Borax in it, they earn a one-time bonus of \$25. Note that this bonus is gone at the end of the Round in which it is purchased, so if you deliver but don’t meet these criteria, the chance for the bonus is gone. At the end of the current Round, be sure to scratch out anyone’s initials from this area.

WORKHORSE TONIC (solo game only): Players can purchase as much of this as they can afford, though there are only 6 total permitted in a game. On a future Turn, if a die would be moved to the BUNKHOUSE, the player can scratch off a Tonic from their player sheet, and return that worker die to their hand. Note that this does not allow a worker that was already moved to the BUNKHOUSE to be brought back into play. The decision to use a Tonic must be made immediately when the 1 result is revealed.

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