

THE TOLL · Rules

Source: <https://tablepress.space/the-toll/rules/> · Rebuilds with the site.

THE TOLL

The stack is one road. 2-4 players · 25 min · ages 8+ · 35 sites + 12 heat + 5 road + 2 table cards (54)

> This game is about owning the stretch everyone else must pass through, felt as the click of a toll and the dread of becoming the target, decided by whether you lock two doors now or stay small enough that the hit lands on someone else.

Sand, Chip, Cloud, Model, App. That order is the digital world. You cannot skip a stretch. If they own the next door, you pay. If you own two stretches that touch, you may say THE TOLL — and then everyone can hit you.

What is in the box

- 2 table cards (How to play, How you score) — leave them out
- 5 road cards — put them in a row: Sand ▽ · Chip ◇ · Cloud □ · Model △ · App ○
- 35 site cards (seven numbers on each stretch)
- 8 Hit cards and 4 Change cards

No dice. No board beyond the five road cards. No app. Coins or scraps for the score. One scrap if someone says “later” on a tax. Print from <https://tablepress.space/the-toll/print.html>

How to start (under 2 minutes)

Put the 2 table cards and the 5 road cards out. Line the road left to right: Sand, Chip, Cloud, Model, App.

Mix the 35 sites with the 12 heat cards. Give 5 each (2 people: 6). Put 3 face-up as the Yard.

Each person keeps their sites in five little piles under the matching road card, so the table can see who sits on which stretch.

Youngest starts the first turn. After that, the person with the lowest score starts the next round (a true tie: the person to the left of whoever just played). Play until everyone has had 6 turns (2 people: 8 turns). Then add any “later” tax. Most points wins.

How you win

Most points. Write them as you go.

A turn

Do one:

1. Play one card from your hand, then take one card (a Yard card or the top of the pile). Fill the Yard back to three.
2. Swap one hand card with one Yard card. Stop. (This is always legal.)

Play a site

Put it under its stretch, number showing. Last card you play there sits on top.

Who owns a stretch? The person with the biggest number there. Same number? The person who last played there. Extra smaller cards on that stretch do not help. If a stretch has no sites, nobody owns it. After you play, say the owner out loud.

The toll. If a stretch next door is owned by someone else, that person scores 1. Chip, Cloud, and Model each have two doors. Sand only touches Chip. App only touches Model. You never pay yourself.

The neighbors are also printed on the site.

Play a Hit

Play it on the Target, then put it in a discard pile.

Who is the Target? The last person who said THE TOLL. If nobody has locked yet, the person who owns the most stretches. If that is a tie, the person among them with the most points. If that is still a tie, there is no Target: you may not play a Hit. You may swap it into the Yard instead.

Play a Change

Play it any time. Follow the card. Then take a card as usual.

Say THE TOLL

At the end of your turn, if you own two stretches that touch and you have not locked yet this game, you may say THE TOLL.

Score 4. You become the Target. You may lock only once.

The four doors: Sand–Chip · Chip–Cloud · Cloud–Model · Model–App. Sand and App do not touch. If you own more than one pair, pick one — the score is still 4.

Sample turn

The road shows Bo on Chip (Foundry Slot 4), Cam on Cloud (Region Pair 4). Ana plays Fine Tune (Model 2). Model's next-door Cloud is Cam's, so Cam scores 1. App is empty, so no second toll.

Ana owns only Model. She cannot lock. She takes Light Machine (Chip 6) from the Yard — the card Bo wanted.

Next, Bo plays Light Machine under Chip. Bo still owns Chip. Cloud is Cam's, so Cam scores 1. Bo still has only Chip. Bo takes a Hit and waits.

Cam later owns Cloud (4) and Model (5). Cam says THE TOLL. Cam scores 4, and is the Target. Ana's Hack is now a real card.

Stuck? Read this

I cannot play a site I like. Play it anyway (it still sits on its stretch), play a Change, play a Hit if there is a Target, or swap with the Yard.

My hand is empty. Take two cards (Yard or pile). Fill the Yard. That is your turn. You are not out.

The Yard is empty. Take from the pile. Do not fill the Yard until it is below three after a take.

The pile is empty. Play what you have. Do not take. After a whole round with an empty pile, the game ends even if some people have turns left.

Two people reach for the same Yard card. It belongs to the person whose take or swap it is now.

A Hit arrives and there is no Target. You cannot play it. Swap it.

Breakup / Split Up dumps a stretch. Those cards go into the Yard. The Yard may be bigger than three until people take. Then fill only if it drops below three.

Hack / Breach. You name a stretch they own. Their lowest number there goes to the Yard.

Tax Bill / Back Tax. They lose 2 now, or they say "later" and lose 3 at the end. Mark "later" with a scrap.

Protest / Walkout. They collect no tolls until the start of their next turn. Hits and locks still work.

Grant / Lab Grant. Take one site from the Yard and play it now. Pay no toll for that play. Ownership can still change.

Job Credit / Hiring Credit. If you own fewer stretches than at least one other person, score 2. If not, this card does nothing but leave your hand.

I own two that touch and I do not lock. That is allowed. Someone may steal a stretch before you get another turn.

I already locked. You still collect tolls. You cannot lock again. Hits still come for you while you are the Target.

We tied at the end. Most stretches owned, then the single highest site still in front of you, then the fewest Hits that landed on you.

Last-turn kingmaking. Playing a Hit on the Target that helps the person in second is legal. First night can ban table-talk.

Two people want to lock the same door. Only on your own turn. The second person must still own two that touch when their turn comes.

2 people

Give 6 each. Yard of 3. Play until each person has had 8 turns. Hits still need a Target. If you lock first, you will eat the Hits. That is the duel.

Young table (8–9 years)

An adult reads the five road cards once. Ignore “later” on taxes (always lose 2 now). Ignore Job Credit and Hiring Credit the first night. Play the number. The italic line is extra.

So everyone can play

- Stretches have a word and a mark. Do not teach them by color.
- Numbers are 1 to 7, printed big. There is no A, J, Q, or K.
- Five cards may sit in a row in your hand.
- You never need two hands at once. Swap one card at a time.
- Say “three people,” not “3p.” Say “next door,” not “adjacent.”
- One-handed play: piles stay on the table. Reach the Yard, not a fan of twelve.