

UPTIME • Rules

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UPTIME

Box pitch: Turn raw silicon into servers, wire your servers into a network, and win the contracts that pay for it — before the supply chain runs dry.

Spec: 3-4 players (2-player variant included) · 25-30 min · ages 10+ · 54 cards, no other components

Thesis: This game is about building tech infrastructure, felt as compounding momentum, decided by who converts scarce materials into connected value fastest.

Engine: Engine-building / tableau (primary) + once-around auction (spice, for Cloud Contracts).

Rejected: Trick-taking — the topic has no natural "round with a winner" moment, it's cumulative construction, not rounds. Hidden-role/bluffing — the topic is about supply and infrastructure, not betrayal; forcing a traitor role would fight the thesis.

1. Components

- Supply Deck (26 cards): raw materials (Silicon, Copper, Polymer, Rare-Earth) + 2 Twist cards.
- Build Deck (28 cards): Components, Computers, Network cards, Contracts, 2 Patch (wild) cards.
- No board, no tokens, no dice. (Optional: coins/scraps of paper to track nothing — you don't need them.)

2. Setup (under 2 minutes)

1. Shuffle the Supply Deck. Deal each player 4 cards from it as their starting hand.
2. Place the rest of the Supply Deck as a face-down draw pile.
3. Shuffle the Build Deck. Reveal the top 4 cards face-up in a row — the Build Row. This always refills to 4 after a claim.
4. Youngest player goes first; play passes clockwise.

3. Goal

Build the most valuable tech stack — Computers, Networks, and Cloud Contracts — before the decks run out.

4. A turn

On your turn, do exactly one of these four things:

- Draw — take the top 2 cards of the Supply Deck into your hand.
- Requisition — pay the printed cost of one Build Row card from your hand/tableau and take it.
- Bid — open the once-around auction on a Contract card in the Build Row (see §5).
- Pass — draw the top 1 card of the Supply Deck. (Always legal, even with an empty hand or an empty Build Row. This is your safety valve — you can never be stuck.)

Requisition costs

| Card | Cost | Effect |

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| Component (CPU, RAM, Storage, Motherboard, PSU, Case) | Discard the 2 raw materials printed on the card

| Add the Component to your tableau |

| Computer (choose which of the 4 face-up Computer cards) | Discard 3 different Component types from your tableau | Add the Computer to your tableau and resolve its printed ability once (see below) |

| Network (Cable / Router) | Discard 3 raw materials (any kind) + you must already own 2+ Computers | Attach it to your Computers |

| Contract | Not requisitioned directly — see Bid | — |

A Patch card in hand may substitute for one required raw material or one required Component type on any Requisition — play it face-down with the rest of the cost. Or, instead of Requisitioning, you may play a Patch face-up on top of any Build Row card to Reserve it: no one else (including you) may claim that card until it comes back around to your next turn, when you may claim it at its normal cost. This is your one guaranteed way to deny a rival the card they're clearly building toward.

The 4 Computers are not identical

Each of the 4 Computer cards is a unique named machine with one printed one-time ability, resolved the instant you claim it. Which one you go for is a real choice, not a formality:

| Computer | Ability (resolves once, on claim) |

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| Workstation | Immediately draw 1 free raw material of your choice. |

| Blade | Immediately return 1 unwanted Component from your tableau to the bottom of the Build Deck, then draw 1 raw material. |

| Tower | Your next Network Requisition this game costs 1 fewer raw material (minimum 1). |

| Mainframe | Counts as 2 Computers toward the Cloud Milestone (\$7) — still worth 5 points, not 10. |

Once claimed, an ability's one-time effect is spent; the Computer itself keeps scoring 5 points and keeps counting toward Network links normally (Mainframe's double-counting applies only to the Cloud Milestone trigger, never to scoring).

5. Bidding (once-around auction)

To open bidding on a face-up Contract, you must already own at least 1 Computer. Starting with you and going clockwise exactly once, each other player either raises the bid by discarding 1+ raw materials from hand (each material = 1 bid point, must exceed the current high bid) or passes. When it comes back around to you, if no one outbid you, you win it at your opening bid. The winner discards their bid materials to the supply discard (not to opponents) and keeps the Contract face-down in front of them — its value only counts at final scoring.

If you open a bid and everyone else passes, you win at 1 material. Bidding always resolves in one lap — it can never stall the game.

6. Twist cards

Two Twist cards are shuffled into the Supply Deck. When you draw one:

- Power Surge — immediately take 2 free raw materials of your choice from the Supply Deck, in addition to your normal draw.
- Supply Shortage — the Build Row does not refill after the next claim (by anyone). It refills normally after that.

Both are announced aloud and resolved immediately, then set aside (they don't return to your hand).

7. How it ends

The game ends the moment either is true, finishing the current round so everyone gets equal turns:

- The Build Deck is empty and the Build Row can't be refilled after a claim, or
- Any player has claimed 2 Computers and 1 Contract ("Cloud Milestone").

Because both decks are finite and the Cloud Milestone is reachable, the game always ends — it never runs forever and never ends on a random shuffle-out.

8. Scoring

| Source | Points |

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- | Each Computer in your tableau | 5 |
- | Each Cable (connects 2 of your Computers) | 2, capped at 8 total Network points per player |
- | Each Router spoke (connects up to 3 of your Computers) | 2 per Computer attached (max 6), counts toward the same 8-point Network cap |
- | Each Contract you won | printed value (4-7) |
- | Every 3 leftover raw materials in hand | 1 |
- | Unbuilt Components sitting in your tableau | 0 (harmless, not a trap) |

Highest total wins. Tie-break, in order: (1) most Computers built, (2) most Contracts won, (3) fewest Draw/Pass actions taken all game (rewards efficiency), (4) the tied player earliest in turn order. This chain always produces exactly one winner.

9. Sample turn

Priya has 2 Silicon, 1 Copper, 1 Rare-Earth in hand, and already owns a CPU and an RAM component. The Build Row shows a Motherboard (cost: 1 Silicon + 1 Copper) and a Computer slot is empty (Computers aren't drawn, they're a fixed row — see Build Deck note). She Requisitions the Motherboard, discarding her Silicon and Copper. She now owns 3 different Component types (CPU, RAM, Motherboard) — next turn she can Requisition a Computer.

10. Edge-case FAQ

- Cannot lead / no legal Requisition: Draw or Pass are always available — there is no turn where a player has zero legal actions.
- Empty Supply Deck: Draw simply isn't chosen (or gives fewer cards if only 1 remains); Pass still works and just does nothing that turn — still legal, never skipped.
- Empty Build Row that can't refill: triggers game end at the end of the round (§7); until then, other Requisitions on remaining Build Row cards are still legal.
- Empty hand: Pass or Draw are always legal regardless of hand size.
- Simultaneous claims: whoever's turn it is claims first; if two players want the same Build Row card, only the acting player's turn matters — there's no real-time grab.
- Kingmaking (a losing player choosing who wins via a bid): raising a bid always costs real materials the raiser could've spent elsewhere, so "spite bidding" has a real opportunity cost — it's a choice, not a free grieving button.
- Stuck board: impossible — Draw and Pass never have a cost or prerequisite.
- A Build Row card is Reserved and I need that slot: the row simply plays with one fewer open card until the Reserve clears — Draw, Pass, and every other Requisition remain fully legal in the meantime.
- Tie at final scoring: resolved fully by the tie-break chain in §8; there is always exactly one winner.
- Building a Computer "spends" Components — do I lose them forever? Yes, they move to the discard pile. This is intentional: it's why a Computer is worth more (5) than 3 loose Components (0) — the whole point is to convert, not hoard.

11. 2-player variant

Deal each player 5 starting cards instead of 4. Add a dummy Build Row slot: after each real player's claim, also discard the top Build Deck card face-up without anyone taking it (this thins the deck faster so the game still ends in ~25 minutes). Bidding still works normally — with only 2 players, the non-opener has one raise-or-pass before it returns.

12. Accessibility notes

- Hand size stays small (starts at 4-5, rarely exceeds 8) — no fanning a huge hand.
- Every card face uses an icon and a word for its type — never color alone.
- Card text is short sentences, numbers 1-13 spelled as digits, no shorthand ("2 Silicon," not "2×Si").
- Turn choice is always exactly one of 4 clearly-named actions — easy to hold in working memory.