

RÜDIGER DORN MERCADO

False Money and True Status

For 2 – 4 players who enjoy extravagant purchases, ages 10 and up



GAME OVERVIEW

You are filthy rich and itching to spend the coins in your purse. In Mercado, you must use your wealth to build your reputation, and gain fame by buying expensive treasures, trinkets, and baubles. You must use your coins shrewdly and watch out for the counterfeit ones. An ever-changing group of merchants in the market offers many valuable objects for sale — but other wealthy people are competing to buy the coveted items before you. You can also buy bottles of enchanting perfumes to put spells on the other players and give yourself special advantages. Additionally, paying the head merchant and the coin changer can give you special privileges and rare coins.

Your reputation (score) increases as you purchase valuable objects. When one player goes all the way around the score board, the rest of the players finish out the current round. Whoever goes farthest, wins.

GAME MATERIALS

36 Merchandise Tiles



24 Valuable Objects

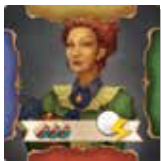


12 Enchanting Perfumes

2 Market Tiles



Head Merchant



Coin Changer

4 Coin Purses



140 Wooden Coins



22x Gold

22x Silver

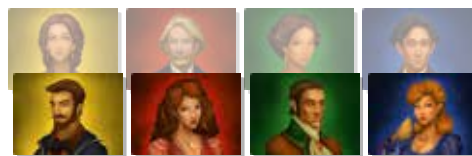
22x Copper

22x Turquoise

38x Black

14x White

4 Character Tiles



Printed on both sides

1 Game Board



Printed on both sides

4 Coin Purse Pendants

Printed on both sides



18 Privilege Tokens



15 Seals



1 Starting Disc



4 Scoring Markers

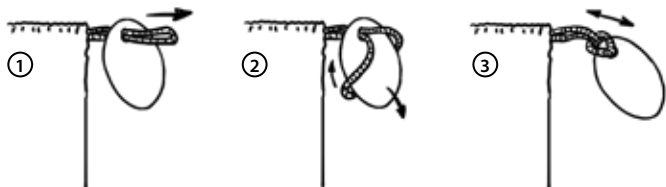


GAME PREPARATION

Before you start, carefully remove all of the pieces from their cardboard frames.

To help keep track of whose coin purse is whose, you can attach a pendant to each one.

- ① Thread the purse's cord through the hole in the pendant.
- ② After that, pass the pendant through the loop.
- ③ Then tighten the loop.



Note: This game comes with two extra gold, silver, turquoise, and copper coins that aren't used in the game. These extra coins are just **replacements** for coins that are lost or damaged.

Sort the **merchandise tiles** into two stacks (**valuable objects** and **enchancing perfumes**) according to the images on the backs, and shuffle the stacks well.

Set up the playing area like this:



At the edge of the playing area, the **game board** is laid out with **side A facing up**. Place two stacks of **privilege tokens** face down, and the pile of **seals** in the center of the board. Use the **starting disc** to cover one of the spaces of the scoring track on the game board. In the first game, use the circle in the top right with the picture of the counterfeit coin on it (see the illustration on the next page). In later games, the players can decide together where they should place the starting disc. In this way, players move around a slightly different track each time.

Note: After you've played a few rounds, you can try playing on side B of the game board for even more variations. On this side too, all of the players choose the initial position for the starting disc.

Place **four randomly chosen valuable object tiles** and **two randomly chosen enchanting perfumes** face up in the middle of the table.

Set the **two market tiles** beside them. All eight tiles should be laid out so that **the colors on their borders are all oriented the same way** (for example, with all the red borders at the bottom, as shown here). There should be enough space between the tiles so that coins can be set down next to any tile (see the placement of the tiles in the illustration below).

Each player selects a color and receives the **coin purse** with the pendant of that color, as well as the corresponding **character tile** and **scoring marker**. Players should sit at the table in such a way that corresponds to the colored borders on the tiles that are laid out. Each player can decide which side of the character tile to place face up (male or female).

In addition, each player receives **1 seal**, which he or she sets down next to his or her character tile.

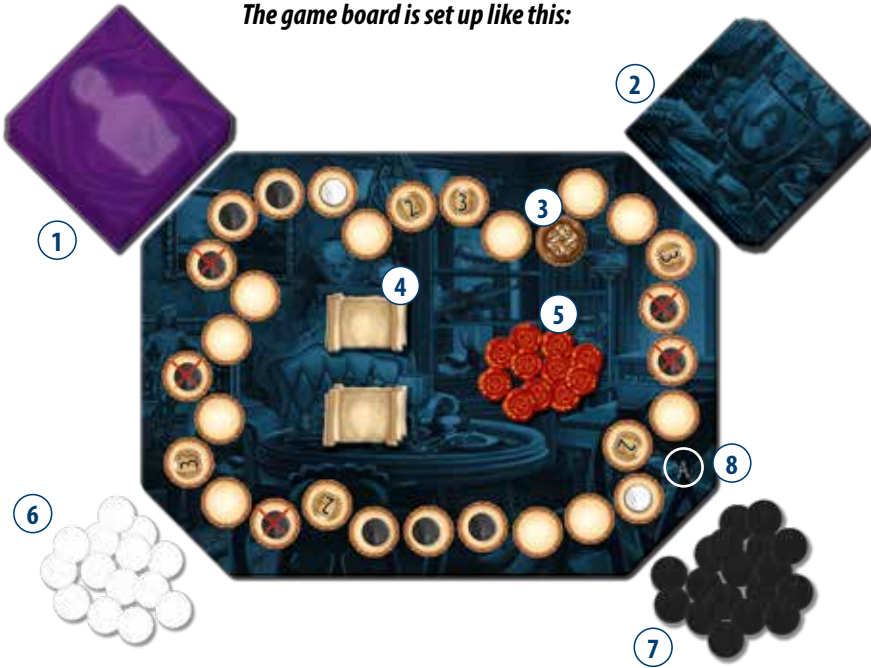
Each player receives 25 coins as starting capital and puts the coins into his or her coin purse: **5 x gold, 5 x silver, 5 x turquoise, 5 x copper, 5 x black** (counterfeit). If you'd like to play with fewer than four players, you can place the extra purses, character tiles, scoring markers, as well as the extra gold, silver, turquoise, and copper coins back into the box.

The player with the most real coins in his or her pocket goes first. If there's a tie, the oldest player goes first.

All of the scoring markers are **stacked** together on the starting disc on the scoring track. The one on the **top** is the **starting player's scoring marker**, followed by the other players' scoring markers, in clockwise order from the starting player. So in other words, the player to the starting player's left is second in the stack from the top, and so on.

After that, the **white coins** and the **remaining black coins** are placed next to the game board.

The game board is set up like this:



- ① “Enchanting perfumes” draw stack
- ② “Valuable objects” draw stack
- ③ Starting disc
- ④ Privilege tokens
- ⑤ Seals
- ⑥ White coins (universal tender coins)
- ⑦ Black coins (counterfeit coins)
- ⑧ Game board side A

THE MERCHANDISE TILES AND THE MARKET TILES

In the **top left** of each merchandise tile, it shows which coins the merchant **demand**s in exchange for the item shown on the tile. Depending on the item, the price is a combination of two, three, or four coins.



When the tile shows **multi-colored coins**, you are **free to choose** which color of coins you want to pay. When the tile shows a stack of several multi-colored coins, they all need to be the **same color**; e.g. 3 gold coins.



If there is a “not equals” sign (≠) shown between them, the player has to pay coins of **different colors**. In this case, none of the coins you pay can be the same color; e.g. 1 gold coin, 1 silver coin, 1 turquoise coin.

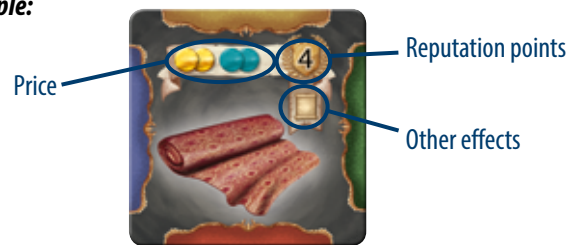


In the **top right** of each tile, it shows how many **reputation points** the player who buys it earns.



Below the reputation points, some merchandise tiles also have **other effects**, which are carried out immediately when the tile is purchased. These are usually advantages for the buyer and disadvantages for the other players. However, sometimes it's the other way around.

Example:



In order to buy this fine tapestry, a player must pay 2 gold coins and 2 turquoise coins. The player then receives 4 reputation points and 1 privilege token.



For this precious metal pitcher, a player must pay 2 silver coins. The player then receives 4 reputation points, but also 1 black counterfeit coin.

In addition to tiles that show valuable objects, there are a few tiles that show bottles full of **enchanting perfumes**. Most of these tiles don't give the player any **reputation points**, but they have **advantages** for the buyer.

Finally, there are **two special tiles**: the **market tiles**. These tiles show two people who work in the market and who can help you: the head merchant and the coin changer. Players can receive their services in exchange for coins. These tiles don't yield reputation points.

All of the tiles have four differently colored edges — one edge in each of the four players' colors. Each player sets his or her coins next to the tile, along the edge with his or her color on it. That is the player's initial payment for the item he or she wants to buy. In this way, everyone can always see who has paid which coins.

HOW TO PLAY

The player whose turn it is currently is the **active** player. At the beginning of the active player's turn, he or she may play **1 privilege token** and follow its instructions. After that, he or she must perform **one** action. The player can either . . .

A) ... **draw coins** from his or her **coin purse** and **set them next to merchandise tiles and/or market tiles** ...

... *or* ...

B) ... **take all of the coins** from his or her character tile and put them **back into his or her purse**.

Note: If the player happens to have fewer than three coins in his or her purse, then the player must choose action B.

ACTION A: DRAWING COINS AND PLAYING THEM NEXT TO THE TILES

The active player draws **three coins** from his or her purse and lays the coins out in front of himself or herself.



By paying one **seal** and adding it to the pile on the game board, the active player can draw **two more coins** and play them. But each player can pay only **one seal per turn**. Even if he or she happens to have more seals, he or she can't use more than one per turn.



If the player happens to draw **black coins**, then the player has to set these black coins onto his or her character tile. *Because these coins are counterfeit, every merchant will recognize them right away.* So the counterfeit coins can't be used to purchase the merchandise. If the player chooses action B at a later point in the game, the counterfeit coins are also put back into the purse.

The player sets the remaining coins next to the merchandise or market tiles. The player can choose to set each of these coins next to the same tile or different tiles. If they can, players must play at least one coin. Any coins that the player can't play or doesn't want to play should go back in the purse.

PLAYING COINS

A player always sets his or her coins **next to the tile, along the edge of the tile with his or her color** on it. Coins must be set out in such a way that all of the other players can always see how many coins have been played for each tile. Players can play only the coins that the tile shows on it.

If the tile shows stacks of **multi-colored coins**, the **player can choose which color of coins** he or she will play for that tile. If the tile doesn't show a "not equals" sign, **all** of the coins the player sets down must be the same color. **Important:** The choice of this color applies only to this player. Each of the other players can choose a different color or the same color.



Example:

The red player has chosen to play 3 silver coins here. The blue player has chosen to play 2 gold coins, and the green player has chosen to play 2 silver coins.



White coins are **universal tender coins**, which players can receive throughout the course of the game. They can be used in the place of any color of coin. **Note:** Some special perfumes require a universal tender coin to be played.

The merchant always sells to the first buyer who has paid the required coins. Final sales take place at the end of the active player's turn. If, at the end of a player's turn, there are multiple tiles that have all of the required coins, the player can decide **in which order** he or she wants **each sale** to take place.

Tip: Because final sales happen at the end of the turn in which a player pays the required coins, players should pay attention to how much all of the players have paid already and decide whether it's still worth it to compete with them for a tile.

If there aren't enough coins set out for certain tiles, nothing else happens with them right now. Then it's the next player's turn (the next person clockwise).

FINAL SALES FOR THE MERCHANDISE TILES

If there is one (or more) merchandise tile that has the right combination of coins next to it at the **end of a turn**, then **final sales** can take place.

Important: The final sale of a merchandise tile happens when **one edge** of the tile has all of the necessary coins needed to buy that tile. The final sale of a tile is not influenced by whether or not the other players have set coins next to this tile.

The player who successfully purchases the tile receives the number of **reputation points** shown on the tile, moving his or her scoring marker forward that many spaces in a **clockwise direction on the game board**.



Most valuable objects are worth between two and seven reputation points.



Valuable objects with this symbol are worth reputation points according to **where on the board** the player's scoring marker is in relation to the other players' markers. **For example:** *If a player is in second place, he or she gets 2 points. If a player is in fourth place, he or she gets 4 points.* If more than one scoring marker is on the same space on the board, the scoring marker on top counts as farther forward and thus receives fewer points.



Enchanting perfume tiles with this symbol are worth an **unknown number of reputation points at first**. You must draw the top tile from the valuable object draw stack and use its number of reputation points. Afterward, both tiles are put onto their discard stacks.



If other players have coins on the merchandise tile that is up for final sale, the one who has the **second-highest number of coins** on the tile receives **one seal** as a consolation prize. If multiple players are tied for having the second-highest number of coins, each of them gets one seal.

Sometimes the successful purchaser gets lucky and receives not just the merchandise (and the reputation points that come with it), but also a valuable universal tender coin from the merchant, as a bonus. However, sometimes merchants can also pass off counterfeit money to the buyer ...

There are **other effects** shown below the reputation points on the merchandise tiles. The symbols are explained on **page 7** of this rulebook.

After that, the **active player** who bought the merchandise tile has to take **his or her coins** from the tile that went through its final sale and place them onto his or her **character tile**. These coins return to the game when the player chooses action B in a later turn. If these coins include a **universal tender coin** (white), it is returned to the **communal pile** since it can only be used **successfully** one time.

The other players receive their coins back. They **put the coins** (including universal tender coins) that they had on the merchandise tile back into their **purses** and can use them later.

When an item is sold, its merchant closes up her market stand and disappears. But no sooner has she left the market than another merchant pops up in the market stall and immediately opens a stand where he is now selling a new item.

As soon as the merchandise tile has been sold, another valuable object or enchanting perfume tile **takes its place**.

At the end of the active player's turn, all of the **merchandise tiles that sold are removed from the playing area** and placed into a discard stack. They are replaced by new merchandise tiles from the **respective draw stacks**. **Note:** *If one of the draw stacks is used up, the tiles from that discard stack are shuffled and set face down to make a new draw stack.*

DON'T FORGET:

After the final sale of a merchandise tile, the **active player** places the coins that he or she had placed next to that tile onto his or her **character tile**.

The **other players** get to take their coins from the table and put them back into their **purses**.

FINAL SALES FOR THE MARKET TILES

These two tiles show two market people who can help the players. As is the case for the merchandise tiles, a player has to play the required coins to receive the market people's services, which are sold at the end of the turn.



Head merchant: The player has to set down **three different coins**. The player then gets **one privilege token** from the stack.



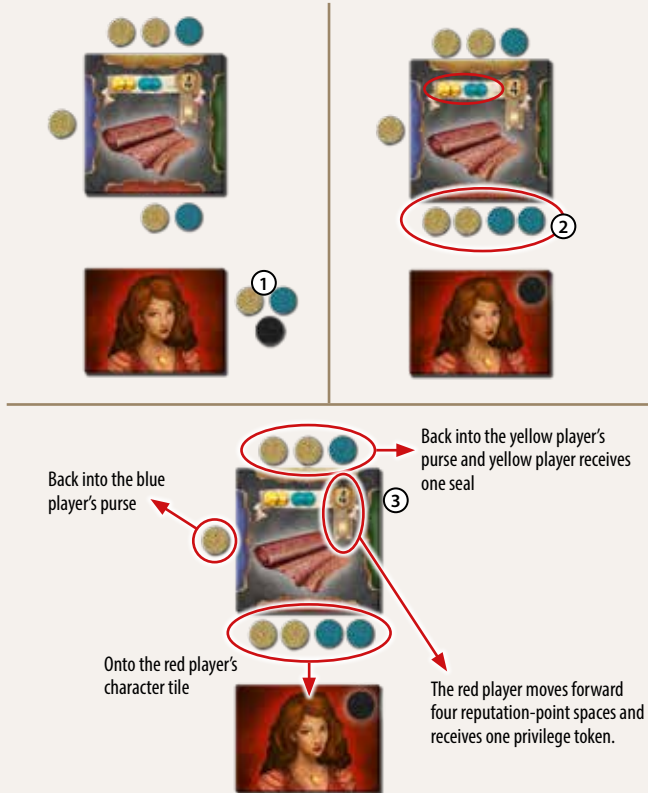
Coin Changer: The player has to set down **three coins of the same color**. The player then gets **one universal tender coin** from the pile. He or she must be able to use this universal tender coin **immediately**, setting it on another tile where a final sale can take place.

Just like with the merchandise tiles, after the final sales, the player places the coins onto his or her character tile.

Other players who had also set coins onto the market tile that went up for final sale must **leave them there**. There is **no seal** awarded to the player with the second-highest number of coins on this tile.

Note: The two market tiles are **not** removed from the **playing area**. They stay there throughout the game so that you can ask them for their services at any time.

Example of one player's turn:



It's the red player's turn. She doesn't want to play a privilege token.

① She chooses action A and takes 3 coins from her purse: 1 counterfeit coin, 1 gold coin, and 1 turquoise coin.

② She has to set the counterfeit coin on her character tile. She sets the 2 other coins on the merchandise tile for the tapestry. In an earlier round, she set 1 gold coin and 1 turquoise coin on this tile. So now she has all the coins necessary to buy the tapestry tile.

③ She receives four reputation points and moves her scoring marker forward that many spaces on the board. She also receives 1 privilege token from the stack. The 4 coins she had on the merchandise tile go onto her character tile. After the red player, the yellow player has the second-highest number of coins on this tile. So he receives one seal from the pile. His 3 coins go back into his purse. The blue player doesn't get a seal. Her 1 coin goes back into her purse as well. After that, the tile that was sold is put into the discard stack and is replaced by one from the draw stack. Next it's the blue player's turn.

THE GAME BOARD

After a final sale, a player moves his or her scoring marker forward (in a **clockwise direction**) on the game board according to the number of reputation points shown on the tile. The player may not move fewer spaces than the number shown. The player should count spaces that are occupied by other scoring markers as he or she moves his or her scoring marker forward.

If the player's scoring marker ends on an **unoccupied** space with a symbol on it, the player **must** do whatever action it says (see page 7).

If a space is already **occupied** by one or more scoring markers, the active player sets his or her scoring marker **on top** of the other scoring marker(s). In this case, the symbol on the space does **not** have any effect.

Example:



The red player moves forward 4 spaces. The space occupied by the yellow player counts as one of those four. The red player ends on a space that allows her to take one counterfeit coin out of her purse and place it back into the pile.



If the red player had bought a tile that moved her 3 spaces, she would have landed on the space with a symbol that allows her to move forward 3 more spaces.



If that space had been occupied by the yellow player, the red player would have set her scoring marker on top of the yellow one. The symbol on the space wouldn't have an effect this time.

Important: If a player lands on an unoccupied space by **playing a privilege token**, the player can **choose** whether or not he or she wants to take the action indicated by the symbol.

ACTION B: PUTTING COINS BACK INTO YOUR COIN PURSE

Instead of action A, the player takes **all of the coins from his or her character tile and puts them back into his or her purse**.

In order to do this, there has to be at least 1 coin on his or her character tile.

The earlier a player decides to take this action, the better the chances are that he or she will draw a certain color later on.

However, this move also means that the counterfeit coins get returned to the player's purse again.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE SYMBOLS



The player receives one universal tender coin from the pile, which he or she puts into his or her purse.



The player receives one counterfeit coin from the pile, which he or she puts into his or her purse.



The player removes one counterfeit coin from his or her purse and places it back onto the pile. **Note:** *If the player doesn't have any counterfeit coins in his or her purse, he or she takes it from his or her character tile. If the player also doesn't have any counterfeit coins on his or her character tile, nothing happens.*



The player receives one privilege token from the stack, looks at it, and sets it face down in front of himself or herself. Privilege tokens allow you to move one to three spaces on the board. Privilege tokens that allow you to move one or two spaces often have other advantages.



The player receives one seal from the pile and sets it down in front of himself or herself.



After the player's turn is over, he or she immediately gets to go again. He or she can use one privilege token again and afterward can choose action A or action B. If the player chooses A, he or she can use one seal again and draw two more coins.



Symbols with this illustration affect all of the players except the active player whose turn it is:

Examples:



Every player (except for the one whose turn it is) has to take two counterfeit coins from the pile and put them into their purses.



With this merchandise tile, the other players do not receive any seals.



The other players don't get any seals. Each player has to choose one privilege token from his or her hand to discard (these are taken out of the game). Those players who don't have any privilege tokens don't have to discard anything.

When a merchandise tile has other effects for the other players as well as the active player, these are separated by a horizontal line.

Example:



The player whose turn it is receives 1 seal and 1 privilege token. The other players don't get any seals, and they each have to discard 1 privilege token if they have one.



When the active player's turn is over, he or she immediately gets another turn. Every other player has to take 2 counterfeit coins each from the pile and put them into their purses. The other players don't get any seals.

ADDITIONAL SYMBOLS ON SIDE B:



Every other player receives one counterfeit coin each from the pile, which they put into their purses.



Every other player receives 1 universal tender coin each from the pile, which they put into their purses.



Note: *If there are no more counterfeit coins, universal tender coins, or seals in the communal piles, then the symbol is simply ignored.*

END OF THE GAME



The last round of the game is triggered when a player **reaches or passes the starting disc**. The current round is played out completely, so that all of the players have the same number of turns.

Important: Symbols on spaces which lie beyond the starting disc are **no longer** valid.

At the end of the last round, starting with the player who went first, players receive **one point for each unused seal**, and the indicated number of **points for each unused privilege token**. Other symbols on the privilege tokens no longer have any effect.

After the players have advanced according to these final extra points, **the player who is farthest along wins**. If two players end up on the same space, the one whose marker is on top wins.

Example:



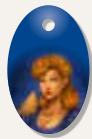
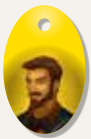
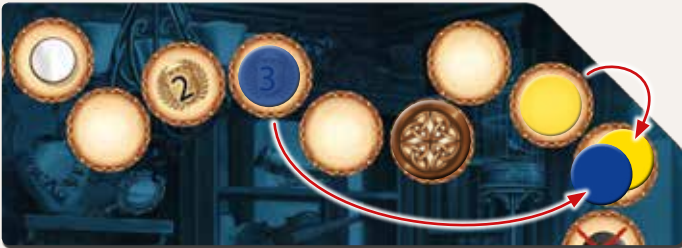
The yellow player passed the starting disc. At the end of the round, there are a few more points for remaining seals and privilege tokens.

The yellow player has 1 seal and therefore moves forward 1 space. The symbol in the space that indicates "move forward 3 spaces" is no longer valid.

The blue player has 2 privilege tokens, and the points on those privilege tokens add up to 3. The seal and universal tender coin symbols shown on the privilege tokens are no longer applicable.

In addition, the blue player has 2 unused seals. So she moves forward a total of 5 spaces, landing on the same space as the yellow player.

The blue player's scoring marker is now on top of the yellow player's, and the blue player wins the game.



The author and the publishing house would like to thank all the test players and rule readers.



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Rüdiger Dorn, born in 1969, lives with his wife and three children in Southern Germany. A certified business educator, he has created numerous games for children, families, and adults, including the critic's choice "Istanbul" and the two games nominated for game of the year: "Las Vegas" and "Karuba." With his exciting game "Mercado," he is represented by Kosmos again after producing many other games.

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