

CLEAN HANDS

Clean Hands is a game for 4-8 players aged 12 and up, in which each player controls part of the political landscape. Using diplomacy and cunning, players wield their political influence to shape the Cabinet, whose Members stand ready to take bribes, kickbacks, and emoluments, or to pilfer public money by passing laws, decrees, and executive orders for well-heeled clients. Players without influence may hamstring the Cabinet by launching investigations, leading to indictments or impeachments, embarrassing Cabinet Members and sometimes forcing them to resign. Cooperation is necessary to get ahead, but beware! Treason always lies in wait, and alliances may change at the drop of a hat.

Game components

- A PROFIT deck with thirty-six green cards of varying value.
- An ACTION deck with fifty-eight red cards representing different facts of political life, three yellow PLAY IMMEDIATELY cards representing unstoppable events, and five purple SCANDAL cards.
- Eight gold Cabinet cards, one PRESIDENT and seven SECRETARY cards.
- Twenty blue CAUCUS cards representing different interest groups and their value to Congress.

Not included

- A pencil and scoresheet to keep score, or about 100 tokens (e.g., poker chips).
- Replacement friends.

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Getting Started

The players each lead a political faction. The ideology is not important – only money talks.

1. Designate one player as the Dealer.
2. The Dealer removes the yellow GENERAL ELECTION card from the ACTION deck and places it face up on the table. This is the start of the ACTION discard pile.
3. The Dealer removes the green SELL STATE SECRETS card from the PROFIT deck and places it face up on the table. This is the start of the PROFIT discard pile.
4. All the blue Caucus cards are distributed among the players. The Dealer deals Caucus cards clockwise one by one, beginning with the player to their left. Players may have unequal numbers of Caucus cards. Each player puts their Caucus cards face up in front of them, and counts their votes (see **Counting Votes in Congress**, p. 4). Each player then declares their number of Caucus votes, which reflects their power in Congress.
5. The Dealer then shuffles the remaining ACTION cards and deals two ACTION cards and four PROFIT cards to each player. If any player is dealt a gold PLAY IMMEDIATELY card as part of their initial hand, they must immediately return that card to the ACTION deck, draw a replacement ACTION card (or more, if they were dealt multiple PLAY IMMEDIATELY cards), and reshuffle the ACTION deck (leaving the GENERAL ELECTION card as the start of the discard pile).

Important: PLAY IMMEDIATELY cards are the only cards that you must show upon drawing them.

6. The Dealer selects the same number of SECRETARY cards as there are players, then adds the PRESIDENT card. The remaining Cabinet Member cards are not used.

Example: If there are 5 players, only 5 SECRETARY cards and the PRESIDENT card are used.

7. The player who controls the most votes in Congress (see **Counting Votes in Congress**, p. 4) wins the Presidency and places the PRESIDENT face-up in front of them. They must then begin the Cabinet Confirmation process (see **Cabinet Confirmation**, p. 4).
8. The player to the left of the Dealer takes the first turn (see **Order of a Turn**, p. 3).

Order of a Turn

1. **Cash in** (see **Cashing in**, p. 5)

Cash in by taking any PROFIT cards that are on one of your Cabinet Members and, if the card requires it, winning votes in Congress or Cabinet.

Note: The player who has the most cash at the end of the game wins.

2. **Exercise executive powers** (see **Executive Powers**, p. 9)

If you control the President, you may discard any one INVESTIGATION card that is currently blocking a Cabinet Member. However, if the PRESIDENT card itself is blocked by one or more INVESTIGATION cards, you can only discard one of the INVESTIGATION cards that is on the PRESIDENT.

3. **Play cards**

Play any number of PROFIT and ACTION cards in any order.

Note: You can play cards on yourself, or on other players, or on your own or other players' cards. Use cards wisely to help your allies and frustrate your competitors.

4. Draw two cards

Draw two cards (one from the ACTION deck and one from the PROFIT deck *or* two from the same deck). This ends your turn.

Important: There is no restriction to the number of cards you may hold in your hand.

Important: Discarding cards from your hand is not allowed.

Important: Players can never show cards in their hand to other players.

Counting Votes in Congress

Influence in Congress is indicated by the CAUCUS cards a player controls. To count a player's votes in Congress, add the number of votes displayed on each single CAUCUS card in front of the player.

Identical CAUCUS cards are *stackable*. If a player controls multiple identical cards, they are put in a stack. In a stack, the face value of each card in the stack is multiplied by the number of cards in the stack.

Example: If you own three TRANSPORTATION (1 vote) cards, each one is worth three votes, so nine votes in Congress altogether.

Example: If you own two BANKERS (2 votes) cards, each one is worth four votes, for a total of eight votes in Congress.

Cabinet Confirmation

The Secretaries and the President are the Cabinet Members. Initially, there are as many SECRETARY cards as there are players. Cabinet Confirmation happens at the start of the game, and again after a successful impeachment (see **Impeaching the President**, p. 8).

Cabinet Confirmation proceeds in these steps:

1. The player who has the President distributes the SECRETARY cards. They may distribute them any way they like, so some players may end up with several Secretaries and others with none.

Important: Since the proposed Cabinet must be confirmed by Congress, the player may have to appease other players to obtain a majority of votes in Congress, possibly by giving them some Secretaries (or other promises) in exchange for their support.

Important: Promises can be broken.

2. Once a Cabinet has been proposed, the proposal must be approved by a vote in Congress (see **How Congress Votes**, p. 6).
3. If the vote passes, the Cabinet is confirmed and the process ends. If the vote fails, the task of forming the Cabinet goes to the player with the second most votes in Congress. If this proposed Cabinet is not confirmed either, the task passes on to the player with the third most votes, and so on, until a Cabinet is at last confirmed by Congress. If no player succeeds in confirming a Cabinet, all players receive one SECRETARY and the player with the most votes in Congress receives the PRESIDENT (see **Ties**, p. 11).

Cashing in

The only objective of *Clean Hands* is to cash in. Cashing in is the first phase of each player's turn. It relies on PROFIT cards, which are green cards with a number in the top left and middle. During the game, players may place as many PROFIT cards as they like under any Cabinet Member (including the President and including Cabinet Members controlled by other players). Place the PROFIT cards so that the value of each card is visible underneath the Cabinet Member card (see **Example Layout**, p. 12). At the start of their next turn, a player may select any PROFIT cards on their own Cabinet Members (and only on their *own* Cabinet Members) to try to cash them in, using these rules:

- Cabinet Members with an INVESTIGATION card on them cannot cash in. PROFIT cards on these Cabinet Members must remain there.
- Players may try to cash in PROFIT cards in any order.
- Players may always choose to leave a PROFIT card for a later time.
- Many PROFIT cards require a vote by Congress (see **How Congress Votes**, p. 6) or the Cabinet (see **How the Cabinet Votes**, p. 6). If the vote is unsuccessful, the PROFIT card is discarded but it is not cashed in and does not add to your score (do not note

it on the score sheet). If the vote is successful, register the value of the PROFIT card on the score sheet and discard the card.

Important: Since PROFIT cards can be cashed in by a player only at the beginning of their turn, a player can never play a PROFIT card and cash it in on the same turn.

Conducting Votes

Votes are always to approve or deny something. To call a vote, a player must declare “I am calling for a vote on...” Each player then declares whether they approve (‘Yes’) or deny (‘No’). Votes are declared out loud, in a clockwise way, starting with the player to the left of the player calling the vote. Players cannot decline to vote.

How the Cabinet Votes

Cabinet votes based on the number of unobstructed Cabinet Members: Each Cabinet Member without INVESTIGATION cards on them contributes one vote. The option with the most votes in the Cabinet is successful.

If there is a tie in the number of votes in the Cabinet, the player who controls the President decides whether the vote is to approve or deny (even if the PRESIDENT is under INVESTIGATION).

How Congress Votes

Congress votes based on the total number of votes in Congress (see **Counting Votes in Congress**, p. 4). The option with the most votes in Congress is successful.

If there is a tie in the number of votes in Congress, the player who controls the President decides whether the vote is to approve or deny (even if the PRESIDENT is under INVESTIGATION).

Note: A vote may involve some discussion.

Important: Anything said at the *Clean Hands* table stays at the *Clean Hands* table.

How to Hamper the Competition

Players who control no Cabinet Members have no way to gain money. Their objective is to prevent the other players from doing so while also trying to regain influence in the Cabinet. To stop others from making money, players can:

- Play INVESTIGATION cards on other players' Cabinet Members. Place the INVESTIGATION card face up on the Cabinet Members. This prevents the player from cashing in (see **Cashing in**, p. 5), prevents all players from placing PROFIT cards on that Cabinet Member, and prevents the Cabinet Member from voting (see **How the Cabinet Votes**, p. 6).

Note: Cabinet Members can be under multiple investigations at once.

- Play a FORCED RESIGNATION card on a SECRETARY card already under an INVESTIGATION card. This removes the target SECRETARY card from the game, and any cards on it are discarded.

To regain influence in the Cabinet, players can:

- Play DEFECTION cards to steal a target SECRETARY card from another player, along with any cards it carries (PROFIT and INVESTIGATION cards).
- Gain control of Congress by playing enough MANIPULATION cards and by joining forces with other players, then start an impeachment (see **Impeaching the President**, p. 8) to form a new Cabinet.

Important: All cards may be played by any player on any valid target without restrictions. You can cause your own SECRETARY to defect if you want.

How to Defend your Majority

Players can remove INVESTIGATION cards that are currently blocking their Cabinet Members in several ways:

- Play the COVER-UP card to discard one INVESTIGATION card that is blocking a Cabinet Member. The COVER-UP card is also discarded.

- The **POLITICAL AMNESTY** card requires a Congress Vote (see **How Congress Votes**, p. 6). If the vote is successful, all **INVESTIGATION** cards are removed from all Cabinet Members and are discarded. The **POLITICAL AMNESTY** card is discarded whether the vote succeeds or not.
- The President may remove one **INVESTIGATION** card from a Cabinet Member (see **Executive Powers**, p. 9).

Impeaching the President

To make sweeping changes to the composition of the Cabinet, Players may attempt to impeach the President. A player may start an impeachment in two ways:

- By playing an **IMPEACHMENT** card (which is discarded immediately), *or*
- When all Cabinet Members (including the President) are under one or more **INVESTIGATION** cards simultaneously, the Cabinet is discredited and any player may call for an impeachment during their turn (during the card playing phase of their turn, but without playing a card).

The impeachment trial is decided by a Congress Vote (see **How Congress Votes**, p. 6). If successful, follow these steps:

1. Discard all cards on Cabinet Members (including **PROFIT** cards).
2. Remove all **SECRETARY** cards.
3. The Dealer selects a new full set of **SECRETARY** cards (previously used **SECRETARY** cards may be selected) so that there are again as many **SECRETARY** cards as players.
4. Assign the President to the player with the largest number of votes in Congress (see **Counting Votes in Congress**, p. 4), *except* if that player had the President before the impeachment, in which case the President is assigned to the player with the next largest number of votes in Congress.
5. Start the Cabinet Confirmation process (see **Cabinet Confirmation**, p. 4).

If the impeachment fails, the President is exonerated. Remove all **INVESTIGATION** cards from the **PRESIDENT** card.

Manipulation

Influence in Congress depends on the changing loyalties of caucuses – groups who tend to vote the same way. Their loyalty can be changed with **MANIPULATION** cards. Playing a **MANIPULATION** card enables a player to shift some **CAUCUS** cards to one player from one

or more adjacent players. Two players are adjacent if one follows the other in the order of turns.

CAUCUS cards can be protected against manipulation with the ZEALOTS card. The ZEALOTS card is placed face up either on a single CAUCUS card or a stack of identical CAUCUS cards. This protects the CAUCUS card (or all CAUCUS cards in a stack) against MANIPULATION cards as well as against the effects of SCANDAL and IDEOLOGICAL SCHISM cards.

Executive Powers

Certain powers are unique to the President:

- Once per turn, after the Cash In phase (see **Order of a Turn**, p. 3), the player who controls the President may remove and discard one INVESTIGATION card that is blocking a Cabinet Member. However, if the PRESIDENT is under investigation, the player may only remove one INVESTIGATION card that is on the PRESIDENT.
- The FORCED RESIGNATION card has no effect on the PRESIDENT.
- The DEFECTION card has no effect on the PRESIDENT.
- The President may break a tied vote in the Cabinet (see **How the Cabinet Votes**, p. 6) or in Congress (see **How Congress Votes**, p. 6).

Scandals

SCANDAL cards are special: If you hold a SCANDAL card, you have a problem. You cannot play a SCANDAL card on another player. You can only play it on yourself, in which case you lose CAUCUS cards (see **Forcible removal of Caucus cards**, p. 10). Alternatively, you can choose to keep it in your hand. At the end of the game (see **End of the Game**, p. 11) every player subtracts from their score the amount of money printed on each SCANDAL card they still have in their hand.

Note: The best time to play a SCANDAL card is if you don't have any CAUCUS cards to lose. CAUCUS cards that are protected by ZEALOTS cards are not affected by SCANDAL cards.

Note: It is recommended, but not required, that the player who plays a SCANDAL card tells the story behind the scandal.

Play Immediately Cards

PLAY IMMEDIATELY cards are cards you must play as soon as you draw them. There are three:

- **IDEOLOGICAL SCHISM:** The player with the most votes in Congress loses four unprotected CAUCUS cards. These cards are taken away by adjacent players the same way as with SCANDAL cards (see **Forcible removal of Caucus cards**, p. 10). The discard piles (both the ACTION and the PROFIT piles) are then added to their respective draw decks and reshuffled.
- **PARTY CRISIS:** All ZEALOTS cards on the table are discarded. The discard piles (both the ACTION and the PROFIT piles) are then added to their respective draw decks and reshuffled.

Important: The IDEOLOGICAL SCHISM or PARTY CRISIS cards are removed from the game after they are encountered. Do not add them back into the draw deck.

- **GENERAL ELECTIONS:** The game ends.

Note: The GENERAL ELECTIONS card starts in the ACTION discard pile, and only enters the draw deck when the discard pile is shuffled back into the draw deck. Similarly, the SELL STATE SECRETS card starts in the PROFIT discard pile.

Forcible removal of Caucus cards

A player who plays MANIPULATION actions may move CAUCUS cards to one player from adjacent players, following these rules:

- If there are multiple CAUCUS cards being moved, they may be taken from one or both adjacent players, so long as the total number of cards is no more than the number indicated on the MANIPULATION card (but it is possible to move fewer CAUCUS cards than the MANIPULATION card indicates).
- When a player loses CAUCUS cards due to other reasons, for example a SCANDAL or an IDEOLOGICAL SCHISM, the two adjacent players, beginning from the one on the affected player's left, choose and take possession of one CAUCUS card at a time until the total due is reached.
- CAUCUS cards protected by ZEALOTS cards cannot be moved by any means.

- If a player does not have enough CAUCUS cards to lose (either because the CAUCUS cards are protected by ZEALOTS cards or the CAUCUS cards are in short supply), they will lose all the unprotected CAUCUS cards they have.

Ties

There are two possible kinds of ties in the game:

- A tied vote in Congress (see **How Congress Votes**, p. 6) or the Cabinet (see **How the Cabinet Votes**, p. 6): In any tied vote, the player controlling the PRESIDENT has the power to decide. This is true even if the PRESIDENT card is under an INVESTIGATION card.
- All other ties, for example in deciding which player is affected by a card or which player has the most votes in Congress: Starting with the player to the left of the Dealer, move clockwise until one of the tied players is encountered. That player is considered the ‘largest’ or as having the most votes in Congress.

Example I: An IDEOLOGICAL SCHISM card is drawn. It is unclear which player has the most votes in Congress because there are two players with the same number of votes in Congress. The player nearest to the Dealer (clockwise starting with the player to the left of the Dealer) is considered the largest.

Example II: After a successful IMPEACHMENT, two players have the same number of votes in Congress to form a new Cabinet. The designated player is the one nearest to the Dealer (clockwise starting with the player to the left of the Dealer).

Ratfucking

Whenever a rule is unclear or there is reasonable disagreement about its interpretation, the player who has achieved a new status quo and is trying to get away with it has the advantage.

End of the Game

When the GENERAL ELECTIONS card is drawn, the game ends immediately. Every player shows the remaining cards in their hand. Any SCANDAL cards cause the player’s final score to be decreased. After that, the wealthiest player is declared the winner.

Example Layout

