

# FIASCO

RULES BOOKLET



A GAME ABOUT  
POWERFUL AMBITION  
& POOR IMPULSE  
CONTROL

# WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

- **5 player reference cards.**
- **1 Tilt/Aftermath board.**
- **1 FIASCO Engine deck (54 cards).** The Engine consists of 32 Outcomes (16 positive, 16 negative), 20 Aftermaths, and 2 Let's Not cards.
- **3 Playset decks (54 cards each).** Every Playset has a summary ("The Score") printed on the tuckbox. Each deck includes a Kicker card, 18 Relationships, 13 Needs, 9 Objects, 9 Locations, and some blank cards so you can make your own.



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READING**

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instead of reading, you can find  
tutorial videos on our website:

[bullypulpitgames.com/games/fiasco](http://bullypulpitgames.com/games/fiasco)

# WHAT IS FIASCO?

**FIASCO** is a storytelling game inspired by cinematic tales of small-time capers gone disastrously wrong. You'll tell a story about ordinary people with powerful ambition and poor impulse control. Lives and reputations will be lost, painful wisdom will be gained, and if you are really lucky, you just might end up back where you started. You probably won't be lucky.

The goal of this game is to tell a fun story about humanity and failure with your friends. Bad things will inevitably happen to the characters you control and the game will work best if you work together to find the most interesting ways to make that happen!

To play, you'll need the contents of this box, two to four friends, about two hours, and a really dark sense of humor.



14+



2 HOURS



3-5 PLAYERS

## WHAT IF I ALREADY KNOW ALL ABOUT FIASCO?

This version of **FIASCO** is similar to the classic edition you know and love, but it will play faster and be easier to understand. We hope.

For more information on the classic edition, including additional resources, tips, and tricks for the true **FIASCO** fans, visit [bullypulpitgames.com](http://bullypulpitgames.com).

# PREPARATION

To play a game of **FIASCO**, you will need the Engine deck paired with the Playset deck of your choice as well as the board and player reference cards.

1. Place the board in the middle of the table and give each player one of the reference cards. Take out the **Engine deck** and separate the **Aftermath**, **Outcome**, and **Let's Not** cards.
2. Place the Aftermath cards in their space on the board, number-side up.
3. Place one Let's Not card below the Aftermath cards.
4. Divide the positive and negative Outcome cards and shuffle them into two separate piles.
5. Randomly put two positive and two negative cards, per player, in stacks on their spaces on the board, symbol-side up. See the table below for reference.
6. Set the remaining Outcome cards aside. You won't need them for this game.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS	POSITIVE CARDS	NEGATIVE CARDS
<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

## PLAYING WITH SIX OR MORE?

If you have six to eight players, see "Playing with Six or More" in the Advanced Play section.

# LET'S NOT

**FIASCO** stories can go to some dark places, but they should never go anywhere players don't want them to. At any time, for any reason, anyone can tap the **Let's Not** card if things get uncomfortable.

If someone taps the card, rewind, revise, and change the story a little. The **Let's Not** card is a gentle reminder to play with an open heart and a desire to make your friends look and feel awesome at the table, trusting they will do the same for you.



# THE CARDS



## RELATIONSHIPS

**Relationship** cards define the tangled web of connections between characters. There will be one between each pair of adjacent players.

## NEEDS

**Need** cards set out the thing somebody wants, which will most likely form the core of the game's story.

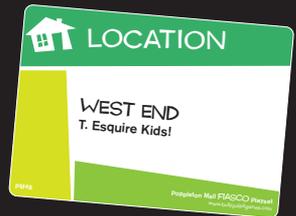


## OBJECTS

**Object** cards provide juicy details that will make the story more interesting.

## LOCATIONS

**Location** cards give you a recurring or important place in the story.



# THE SETUP

## BUILDING YOUR FIASCO

1. Choose a **Playset** deck. A playset is the setting in which your story takes place, and the box includes three of them. Read the descriptions on the back of the tuckboxes (sometimes called “The Score”) out loud and pick one everybody is excited about.
2. Take the Playset deck out of the box and set aside the **Kicker** card and any blank cards.
3. Shuffle the remaining **Relationship, Need, Object,** and **Location** cards into one big pile.
4. Divide the Playset cards more or less equally among all the players. Give everyone a chance to look over their hand.
5. Starting with the person who most recently damaged something valuable, choose and place a Relationship card between any two adjacent players. Each player will have a character, and this relationship is what connects them to another character.
6. Going clockwise, continue placing Relationship cards until there is one to the left and right of every player, forming a chain around the table. You can pass on your turn if you don’t have any Relationship cards, or if none of them inspire you.
7. Once you have Relationships established, briefly talk about the obvious broad connections. For relationships that suggest two types of people (such as “Manager and Employee” or “Hero and Chump”) which one of you is which? This might change as you add additional details to the relationships.

## EXAMPLE: ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

**AMAL:** So how do we start?

**BILLY:** We need Relationships between us.

**CARMEN:** You and Billy will have a Relationship, you and I will have one, and Billy and me as well.

**AMAL:** Gotcha. So we can pick anything we like?

**BILLY:** And put it anywhere you like!

**AMAL:** So I can take Bad Friends: Bitter rivals and put it between you two?

**BILLY:** Absolutely. Please do. And if it's all right with you two, I'll put Romance: Married, but the clock is ticking between you and Carmen.

**AMAL:** Yes!

**CARMEN:** That's fine, thanks for asking. How about Crime: Drug dealer and best customer between us, Amal?

**AMAL:** Who is the drug dealer?

**CARMEN:** We don't know yet. If you don't want it to be you we can make sure it isn't, or I can choose a different card.

**AMAL:** No, the opposite, actually!

**CARMEN:** Okay then!

**BILLY:** Right, so we have our Relationships and they look good...

- Continuing the rotation where it left off, choose an Object, Need, or Location card and place it below an existing Relationship. Each Relationship will have one card attached to it. The story should have at least one, and no more than two, of each type. See the following diagrams for how it should look on the table.

**A three-person game** has one Object, one Need, and one Location.



**A four-person game** has one Object, two Needs (that cannot be adjacent), and one Location.



**A five-person game** is the same as a four-player game, but also has either an additional Object or Location.

## CHARACTERS & SITUATION

9. Now that you have intriguing Relationships—with some juicy details attached—to your left and right, discuss what sort of person your character might be with these connections. Here are some tips:
- Go with the obvious, and make sure both sides of the Relationship are equally invested. If the Relationship implies a power differential, decide who is powerful and who is weak. If it implies a romantic entanglement, decide whether the two characters are entangled, or if there is a third party they are both interested in.
  - Be flexible and look for the most fun situation to build. You don't need to decide every detail, but you should know who hates who and why the Location is so important, for example.

### EXAMPLE: FLESHING OUT RELATIONSHIPS

**BILLY:** Okay, we have our Relationships and they look good. Let's add an Object, a Need, and a Location.

**AMAL:** Anywhere?

**BILLY:** We'll attach one to each Relationship. It will be really important to those characters for some reason.

**CARMEN:** I love this one: Location: West End: T. Esquire Kids! That sounds so boring and funny. I want it between me and you, Amal.

**AMAL:** So our characters are married, but unhappy, and working at T. Esquire Kids!

**BILLY:** I'm going to attach Need: To get laid... by the hottie at Muscle Logic to our Relationship, Carmen.

**AMAL:** I'm going to Let's Not that, Billy.

**BILLY:** Okay, no problem. How about Need: To get even... with the local drug dealer?

**AMAL:** Love it.

**CARMEN:** Nice. So we don't even like each other but we want to burn the drug dealer?

**BILLY:** Or maybe one of us wants to burn the drug dealer and the other one doesn't, but "burning the drug dealer" is equally important for opposite reasons.

**CARMEN:** That's good, since we're rivals anyway. And it means I can actually be the drug dealer. Whatcha got, Amal? We have a Location and a Need so it has to be an Object.

**AMAL:** Oh, this is so priceless. Precious moments: Framed Reagan portrait, concealing something.

**BILLY:** Perfect. That's probably in the T. Esquire Kids! office, right?

**AMAL:** Of course.

**BILLY:** So we've got a drug dealer and their best customer, and I bet they are passing drugs and money to each other behind that portrait of Ronald Reagan.

**CARMEN:** "Just Say No." I love it. Also that portrait really speaks to me. Maybe I'm the manager of the store and a super conservative Republican.

**AMAL:** Nice. And I'm your spouse, and our politics don't really match. Let's go very Midwestern uptight heteronormative. Can I be the wife?

**CARMEN:** I love you, Bunny, and I want to make it work.

**AMAL:** It is definitely not going to work.

**BILLY:** So that suggests that I'm the drug dealer and you are my best customer, Amal. You okay with that?

**AMAL:** Yes. I think I'm a middle-aged woman who is having some kind of massive awakening.

**BILLY:** And I'm some kind of drug dealer with access to the back office of T. Esquire Kids!.

**CARMEN:** Let's keep it super tight—we all work there. This is the T. Esquire Kids! story.

**BILLY:** Right, so I'm a cashier, and I have a connection for weed and pills. That's my connection with you, Amal, but what's going on with me and Carmen.

**CARMEN:** Oh, wow, I'm the manager and you are a cashier but we're the same age, and we went to school together.

**BILLY:** I can work with that. What if we were friends, and you got me this job out of nostalgia, but we've changed.

**AMAL:** And maybe you are showing me a different path, opening my eyes to progressive thought and the evils of the Republican party.

**CARMEN:** Maybe I want to steal you away from your husband.

**BILLY:** Oh yes, you definitely do. But let's not get carried away here, it feels like we have a solid Setup now and there's a ton of stuff that will emerge in play. We don't have to nail down every detail.

10. Once you have a sense of the characters and situation, turn the remaining Playset cards in your hand face-down.
11. The backs of these cards have names on them. Choose a name for your character using two cards and place the combination facing the rest of the table, given name card overlapping surname card. If your character only has one name, a single card is fine. If you don't like the name options, ask other players for help from their cards, or invent a name of your own.

**AMAL:** Oh wow, I bet my character took your last name, right?

**CARMEN:** Of course you did, honey.

**AMAL:** Sweet, look here, there are two Lewis cards. I'm Nancy Lewis.

**CARMEN:** And I'm Chad Lewis. That's exciting. I hate him already.

**BILLY:** Let's see, introducing dirtbag drug dealer Chris Puffer, everybody.

**CARMEN:** Pronouns?

**BILLY:** Let's go with they and them for Chris.



# PLAYING THE GAME

**FIASCO** is played in two **Acts**, and in each Act every player gets two **Scenes**.

You will begin with **Act One**. Anyone can start the first Scene.

It's best to let someone very excited and full of bad ideas go first. If everyone is excited and full of bad ideas, the person who brought **FIASCO** can go first.

## KICKERS

The Kickers card includes some suggested opening Scenes for the Playset. Feel free to use one of these to get you started if you're not sure how to begin.

## HOW SCENES WORK

A Scene is a moment in the story when your character is in the spotlight. The game's action revolves around your character when it is your Scene, one way or another. By the end of the Scene we will know if it was generally good or bad for them. It's usually really obvious.

When it is your turn to begin a Scene, you have a choice to make. You need to decide whether to **Establish** or **Resolve**. Both are fun.

### ESTABLISHING

If you choose to Establish, you get to set the Scene. Who is there? What are they doing? What, generally, do you want to happen? Choose to Establish if you have a strong idea already.

### RESOLVING

If you choose to Resolve, you get to determine the Scene's Outcome for your character. Will it be positive or negative for them? Choose to Resolve if you like surprises—because your friends will be setting the Scene.

## HOW TO DECIDE?

If you Establish, the other players Resolve. If you Resolve, the other players Establish. You don't get to do both!

Choosing to Resolve gives you some control over what mix of Outcome cards you will get during the game.

Aside from determining how a given Scene will end, the Outcome cards you collect will also determine your character's ultimate fate. Having a lot of either positive or negative cards will likely mean a better ending, while having an even mix will probably mean bad news for your character.

## PLAYING A SCENE

Regardless of whether you Establish or Resolve, you get to play out a short Scene. Its form is up to you—you can describe it as though you were watching a film, or act it out with your friends, or something in-between. Treating it like a scene in a movie is generally best—say what the characters are doing and speak for them.

The goal is to get to that delicious moment of indecision and learn whether the Outcome is going to be positive or negative. Along the way, breathe life into your characters and have fun with each other. The whole Scene should take no more than a few minutes.

### EXTRAS

While every player has a character, it's a big world. Feel free to introduce supporting characters, such as someone's conniving grandfather, or the mail carrier who sells weed on the side, if a bigger cast of characters is needed. You can ask anyone to play these extras. Only introduce someone new if you really have to—return to the web defined by your chosen Relationship cards whenever you can.

## EXAMPLE: ESTABLISHING A SCENE

(It's near the end of Act One—only one Scene to go. It is Billy's turn. In the five previous Scenes, we learned that Nancy is building up the courage to ask Chad for a divorce, and Chad is building up the courage to tell Nancy he knows he has been a terrible husband and wants to repair the damage he's caused. Both of them have confided in Chris Puffer, who is super into Nancy, and who Nancy sees for the opportunistic dirtbag he is.)

**AMAL:** Okay Billy. Establish or Resolve?

**BILLY:** I'd love to see what you two would cook up for Chris Puffer but I feel like I need to Establish.

**CARMEN:** Cool, then we will judge you harshly.

**BILLY:** Of course you will. Here's the situation—Chris and Nancy in the office, after work. Amal, feel free to have Chad stumble in any time it feels right, okay?

**AMAL:** Got it.

**CARMEN:** Also we get to decide if the Outcome is positive or negative for Chris, Amal, so if you get a strong feeling one way or the other just signal to me.

**AMAL:** You know it. I'm thinking negative!

**BILLY:** You could decide now, but maybe wait to see how the Scene is going, you vicious monster.

**AMAL:** Right, right.

**BILLY:** I'm gonna bring that Need into the game, wait and see. It's after-hours at Poppleton Mall. The music is off, the metal roller gates are down. Chris and Nancy are counting tills and sorting money.

## SCENE OUTCOMES

At some point during the Scene, you will need to figure out whether the Outcome is going to be **positive** or **negative** for your character.

- If you are Established, your friends get to decide. It might be obvious, but they can also talk it over.
- If you are Resolving, you get to decide.

Regardless of who is deciding, it's best if everyone starts the Scene with an open mind. Will it be positive or negative for the character in the spotlight? It may be screamingly obvious from the start, but more often it will emerge in play.



As soon as everyone knows the Outcome type, the person whose Scene it is takes a single positive or negative Outcome card in places it in front of them. Keep the card facedown for now.

Play out the rest of the Scene knowing, generally, how it is going to turn out. Once everyone knows it is going to be positive or negative, they can help steer the Scene in that direction.

When you know the results of the Outcome, the Scene is finished. The player to the left takes the spotlight and either Establishes or Resolves the next Scene.

### EXAMPLE: RESOLVING A SCENE

Billy and Carmen play out a short Scene. Chris Puffer tries to convince Nancy that Chad has been lying to her and spending her money on weed, in an effort to solidify her decision to ask for a divorce. After a few minutes it becomes clear that it isn't going to work, and Amal holds up a negative Outcome card. Carmen nods in agreement and Amal hands it to Billy. Everyone knows that the Scene will end poorly for Chris Puffer, and they make it happen. Act One ends with a cliffhanger, as Mr. and Mrs. Lewis confront Chris Puffer, unified for the moment.

## THE TILT

After everyone has had two Scenes, Act One is over and it is time for the **Tilt**. The Tilt introduces two new, destabilizing elements to the **FIASCO**.

Everyone should now have two Outcome cards (one for each of their two Scenes). Turn these cards over. On the back are Tilt elements—interesting, dangerous, and tragic themes that may show up in the second half of the game. Each also has a number on it in either blue or red, depending on the Outcome.

## DOING THE MATH

If you have only one type of Outcome (blue positives or red negatives), add the values together. If you have both blue and red cards, subtract the low value from the high.



For example, if you have blue 4 and red 3, the total is blue 1.

The player with the highest blue total chooses a blue Outcome card from any of those in front of the players (not just their own). The player with the highest red total chooses a red Outcome card.

In the case of a tie, those two players choose a card together.

Leave these chosen cards face-up where they are, and turn all the others back over. The Outcome cards should stay in front of the player who had them, with the chosen Tilt elements visible so everyone can see them.

As the game continues, look for ways to incorporate the Tilt elements into your story during the second act. Anyone can use them in any Scene as inspiration.

## AFTER THE TILT

Begin **Act Two** after the Tilt. Each player gets two more Scenes. Just like before, you can Establish or Resolve each Scene as you prefer, then play out the Scene and choose an Outcome.

Time is short, so if there's something you want, now is the time to go for it, ideally incorporating a Tilt element for extra flavor.

For the last Scene, there will only be one Outcome card left, either positive or negative.

After you have played the last Scene, your **FIASCO** is near its ludicrous, tragic conclusion.

## THE AFTERMATH

As soon as the last Scene ends, the **Aftermath** begins. This part wraps up your sad little tale, following the characters into an uncertain future. In this phase, players determine their character's fate from their Outcome cards.

## JUDGMENT

Continuing clockwise from the last Scene, each player may—if they wish—give one of their facedown Outcome cards to another player. This will shift the balance of both players' cards for better or worse. Always do this before turning the card over to reveal its value.

The card you give can be positive or negative, and you need to explain why you are helping their character have a better life or kicking them to the curb.

It doesn't have to be fair but it should be fun for everyone.

## EXAMPLE: JUDGMENT

At the end of the game, Amal has three positive and one negative Outcome cards. Amal wants a bad Outcome for Nancy Lewis, so before looking at the values, they hand one positive card to Carmen.

Carmen had three negative and one positive Outcome cards, and after Amal's judgment, she has three negative and two positive. This is likely to mean a more mixed result in the Aftermath for Chad Lewis as well, but we'll see what the cards say.

## COUNTING YOUR CARDS

Turn over all your Outcome cards and add up the numbers, as you did at the Tilt (see "Doing the Math"). The result will be a number, zero or higher, blue or red. This is your Aftermath total.

## EXAMPLE: COUNTING YOUR CARDS

Amal ends the game with two positive (+3 and +3, total of blue six) and one negative (-3, total of red three) Outcome cards. Blue six minus red three equals blue three, a very poor result for their character.

Billy ends the game with two positive (+4 and +2) and two negative (-1 and -5) Outcome cards. Blue six minus red six is zero, which is poor Chris Puffer's extremely bad luck. Billy can take either the blue or red zero Aftermath card, the results are the same.

Carmen, thanks to the card Amal handed her, ends the game with two positive (+1 and +2, total of blue three) and three negative (-4, -4, and -5, total of red thirteen) Outcome cards. Red thirteen minus blue three is red ten, which is a pretty awesome Aftermath. Nancy Lewis is going to be all right after all.

## DETERMINING YOUR AFTERMATH

Continuing clockwise, find and take the Aftermath card that matches your color and total number. If the appropriate card has already been taken, take the card with the next lowest value.



## THE EPILOGUE

Taking turns from the highest Aftermath result to lowest, read out your Aftermath result to the group, and then take a moment to explain what this means, specifically, for each of your characters. How did their story end? Did they get everything they wanted? We're guessing probably not.

Congratulations on your glorious, ridiculous **FIASCO!**

# ADVANCED PLAY

## PLAYING WITH SIX OR MORE

If you have six to eight players, split your group into two games. Use the Outcome cards normally and share the Aftermath cards when you get to that phase. You can either use different Playsets or split one Playset deck to make your games two sides of the same story!

## TUNING PLAYSETS

Feel free to adjust your experience by removing specific cards from a Playset before your Setup to avoid elements that you don't like or that aren't appropriate for your player group. You might also do this to focus on one theme over another, such as removing the cult elements from Poppleton Mall to focus on holiday hijinks.

## BLENDING PLAYSETS

You can also mix cards from two or more Playsets to get a very different game. For example, you might mash together Poppleton Mall and Suburbia into “Tales From Poppleton” or with Dragon Slayers to get a truly wild fantasy mall experience. Even just using one card from another Playset might make a huge difference.

## MAKING YOUR OWN PLAYSETS

Use blank Playset cards to create your own custom elements and names! You can embarrass and delight your friends with inside jokes, add local landmarks, or hand-craft the perfect addition to make the Playset your own and put it over the top.

If you want to make an entire Playset, consider a variation of the standard number of cards—18 Relationships, 13 Needs, and 9 each of Locations and Objects.

# CREDITS

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