

COAL N' WRITE – How to Play

~~VERSION 4 RULE SET. ~~

A “roll n’ write game” for 1 to several players.

Plays in 25-60 minutes, ages 12 and up.

Saddle up, pardner! Here in the hills of the Oklahoma Territory in the illustrious 1870’s, you’ve just come into possession of a land claim. To your surprise, there’s the beginnings of a mineral mine dug into the side of a hill. You and two of your friends plan to dig out as much of the minerals as you can, cart it off to the General Store, and rake in the cash!

You have cleaned out your savings to buy a bunch of tools and hire six burros for your first foray into the mine. Your goal is to collect and sell as much of the valuable minerals from the mine that you can, and either invest your reward, or bank it for when you go back home. The mining team with the most riches after cashing-in six deliveries wins!

HOW TO START PLAYIN’

You’ll need the following for a game:

At least 3 six-sided dice. It’s a good idea for each player to have a spare die for their own use, too.	A buncha counters or tokens for each player. Like 10 or more cubes, chips, or the like. Each player needs their own supply.	If you’re a real fancy-pants, maybe you wanna try laminatin’ player sheets and using dry-erase markers or somethin’ . Like I give a hoot...
The deck of Boom Town Cards.	One copy of the player sheet for each player.	

GAME FRAMEWORK

The game is composed of six ROUNDS (represented by the “Deliveries”). Each Round is comprised of several TURNS (throws of the dice). Some Rounds will be short, while others may be longer. You just don’t know until the dice are thrown. Also, even though the die results are the same for each player in a given Turn, each player is welcome to use the dice in any way they wish. While all players use the same dice results, no one has to agree upon what to do with the dice. In fact, a lot of the fun and surprise of the game is in comparing all the different things to do with the dice results they have.

Since different players will likely be doing different things with the same dice results, it’s important to keep the player sheets within view of all players. It’s also helpful to set a convention of calling out loud one’s intentions for the use of a die. This way, no player is accused of dirty dealin’, and fun stays the main objective of the game.

You’ll see pictures here and there to help describe and explain some of the key game concepts a little bit better. There’s also one o’ them Appendixes at the end of this rule sheet to help describe the Boom Town Cards. But first things first...

THE MINE

Imagine a long tunnel going deep into the side of a hill in the middle of the desert. You begin to dig out to the “sides” of this tunnel, seeking out mineral deposits. As you dig, you form longer side tunnels that allow you to dig more minerals of that same kind, following a “vein” of that mineral.

It’s the same idea here in “Coal n’ Write.” You first dig out the minerals closest to the long central tunnel, and side tunnels are constructed as you dig more and more mineral deposits. These other deposits can become more challenging to dig out, represented by higher numbers and more Dig Bubbles. These are explained later.

LET’S PLAY!

Choose one player to throw the three dice. Throw the dice once, and follow these steps to complete your first Turn:

1. You may send one of your workers to the TOWN if they were part of a matching pair or trio (optional).
2. Assign any remaining dice to DIGGING or CLAIMING mineral deposits. Any one die may be assigned once per Turn.
3. If one or more dice had the result of 1, place one die in the BUNKHOUSE at the end of the turn. This miner is plum tuckered out and needs some rest! You will not throw that die for future Turns during this Round.
4. If ya got only one Miner left to do work, they’re gonna work on their own for a bonus, then you’ll wrap-up this Round. You’ll learn more about all this in a later section. For now, let’s just start diggin’ for rich stuff.

HOW TO CLAIM MINERAL DEPOSITS

You can use the value of one die, or the sum of multiple dice, whose results MEET OR EXCEED the number printed in the Mineral Cavern. Sometimes, a number is low enough (and the dice results are high enough) that you can use a single die for claiming a mineral. Sometimes you'll want to add two or three dice together for a higher value: high enough to dig out a tough deposit.

To claim a mineral deposit, set aside the dice used to MEET OR EXCEED its number, then scratch out the mineral deposit from that section of the vein. Finally, write the letter that mineral begins with ("B" for Borax, "C" for Coal, "T" for Tin, and "S" for Silver) in an unused spot of your Ore Stash.

Did you claim a mineral deposit? Good news! The next Mineral Cavern in that vein is now available. Chances are the number is higher, but at least you can still dig out more of it. In fact, you are welcome to use any dice you have left to claim a mineral deposit in the same tunnel, beyond any mineral deposit you've just claimed. In this manner, lucky dice results can allow you to quickly dig many minerals from the same vein.

DIGGIN' AT MINERALS

If none of the available dice results are high enough to help you MEET OR EXCEED the number on a mineral deposit, then you can instead DIG at it. This makes it possible for a die result of any number to eventually be good enough to dig out any mineral deposit.

Each deposit has anywhere from 1, 2, or 3 smaller circles above it. These are DIG bubbles, and can be scratched-out by assigning a **die of any number** to it. If all DIG bubbles are scratched out on a mineral deposit, then the mineral can be claimed by any die roll. Set aside any die, scratch out that mineral deposit like usual, and record it in your Ore Stash.

CLAIMIN' MINERALS or DIGGIN' MINERALS

Here's an example of a typical Turn of play. Look at the following Figure 1 and Figure 2 for some visual details.

1. The player throws the dice, and the results are 2, 3, and 4. Not the best roll! But here's what they choose to do. They look at the "Borax" section of the mine, just to the left of the main tunnel.
2. They assign the "4" to the first Borax mineral deposit. They scratch it out in the mine, and fill in a "B" in the Ore Stash.
3. They then use the 2 and 3 to DIG the next Borax deposit. Both DIG boxes are scratched out above the mineral. Since both DIG boxes have been filled, then any future die result can be used to CLAIM that Borax on a future turn.

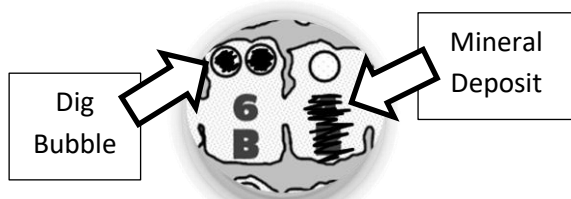


Figure 1: The miner assigns dice to either CLAIM or DIG.



Figure 2: Claimed Minerals are recorded in the ORE STASH.

HEADING IN TO TOWN

If you've rolled a matching pair or trio, then you are welcome to assign a mine worker to visit the nearby **BOOM TOWN**. This is a place where you can earn some cash, or – most importantly – spend your cash on improvements and investments that allow you to bring home more cash. To visit, simply set a die from that pair or trio aside, and choose one available option at the Boom Town. Brush yer hair, comb yer teeth, and see what's in Boom Town for ya.

SETTIN' UP THE BOOM TOWN

The first time you visit Town, follow these instructions.

1. Lookit the cards. If it's a solo game, take out any cards labeled "multiplayer only." If you have a minin' rival or two, take out any cards labeled "solo game only." You ain't gonna use these cards this game, so put 'em away.

2. Set out the “starter” cards face-up where everyone can see ‘em. For the current print n’ play version, each of the starter cards has a little arrowhead pointin’ at its title: **Wash Day, Strike Gold! , Gunsmith, Tack & Harness, Workhorse Tonic, and Sheriff’s Deputy.**
3. Shuffle the rest of the cards face-down, then deal out one more. And listen to this: any time a miner elects to visit the Boom Town, set out one more card until this deck is exhausted. The Boom Town is growin’, hear?

These different options are explained in the Appendix and on the Boom Town play sheet. However, keep in mind that you need to already have some money in order to purchase upgrades and improvements. Nobody’s got time for yer tall tales about credit back East, dude...! Some cards call for using claim markers, but consider that y’all have an unlimited supply of these. If you run out somehow, find more markers or use something else to mark the card.

The town grows as the game continues. If one or more miners choose to visit the Boom Town in a turn, draw another Boom Town Card and add it to the tableau of face-up cards. All these face-up cards are options for players to visit.

LONE MINER BONUS

So sometimes a turn’s gonna start when there’s only one miner not in the BUNKHOUSE. Stop what you’re doin’ for a moment. You gotta figure out what this turn’s Lone Miner Bonus is gonna be. Before throwin’ that last die for the round, lookit the Lone Miner Bonus options, and pick one, writin’ its letter in one of the Lone Miner Bonus boxes.

If you make it through three throws of that last die without goin’ to the BUNKHOUSE, you end the Round and take that Bonus as a reward. If you go to the BUNKHOUSE before you resolve three throws of that last die (and even when your third throw is a 1), you get nothin’ extra.

The options you can pick from for this Lone Miner Bonus are as follows:

- ☞ **C = 2 Coal.** Just add these two Coal Ores to your Ore Stash.
- ☞ **D = Dynamite.** You have 3 free Digs to do whatever you want with. If you Dig out a Mineral, add it to your Ore Stash.
- ☞ **P = Pistol.** Scratch off one Bandit from a future delivery.
- ☞ **T = Visit the Boom Town.** Other miners don’t git to go with you.
- ☞ **G = Gamblin’ Credit.** If the “Backroom Gamblin’ “ card is available, you go there and don’t have to pay nothin’. But if you git caught cheatin’, you still gotta add a Bandit to a future delivery.
- ☞ **\$ = \$10.** Just add \$10 to your next delivery. ...Suit yerself.

After all that Lone Miner stuff is all done with, move that Lone Miner to the BUNKHOUSE.

ENDING A ROUND

If all dice have been moved to the BUNKHOUSE, then this Round is over and you do not start another Turn. This is what you need to do next.

1. Choose the next Burro in line. Notice they’re numbered from 1 to 6. Pick ‘em in order, pardner.
2. Move minerals from your Ore Stash to the burro storage spots one at a time by scratching it out in your Ore Stash, and writing that same letter in one of the burro storage spots: the solid-line squares. You start with six slots for minerals, but if you’ve invested in TACK AND HARNESS, you may fill the two dashed-line boxes with minerals as well.

3. Count up the value of the minerals you’ve sent out for this round, and add it to your total. In future rounds, you are welcome to use this cash to purchase improvements and investments from the Boom Town. The value of the different minerals you can mine is listed on the player sheet as follows:

S = Silver, \$12 Each

T = Tin, \$8 Each

C = Coal, \$5 Each

B = Borax, \$3 Each

BANDIT TROUBLE

See them little black hats in the same squares as some of the burros? Those are foul bandits! They’re gonna be big trouble unless you defend yourself. To scratch off a bandit from a burro, you need to use a **Pistol**. One Pistol allows you to scratch off one Bandit. Buy ‘em from the Gunsmith, or win ‘em as a reward for yer Lone Miner Bonus.

If you load up a burro that has at least one Bandit still active (not scratched out), then the most valuable mineral type (even multiples of that mineral) you load onto that burro is scratched off, and its value is not added to your cash total.

BURRO

X	X	X	
X	T	T	

\$ 16.

Figure 3: When sending out this delivery, there’s a Bandit remaining. The player collected a lot of Silver and some Tin that past Round, and decides to load it all onto their burro.

Unfortunately, the Bandit steals all the Silver from that delivery! It’s the most valuable part of the burro’s load, but now it’s all gone.

After removing the Silver, the delivery is valued at \$16. Dag nabbit!

BURRO

X	T	T	
T	C	B	

\$ 32

Figure 4: When sending out this delivery, there’s a Bandit remaining. The player had lots of Silver to delivery, but wisely held most of it back. Instead, they load one Silver onto the burro, and fill the rest of the slots with other Minerals.

The Bandit steals that player’s Silver, but ignores the other Minerals. After the Bandit has done their dirty work, the player’s delivery is valued at \$32.

CONTINUING THE GAME

A new Round begins by reclaiming all the dice from the BUNKHOUSE, and throwing them for the first Turn of the new Round. Play is the same as the first round, except that players will likely have some more appreciation for rolling doubles, and investing in the various improvements found in the Boom Town.

If there are no burros remaining, then the game is over. Add up each player’s total remaining cash (but ignore any minerals left in the Ore Stash). The player with the most cash is the winner! Ties are won by the player with the highest value of minerals remaining in their Ore Stash.

ABOUT SOLO PLAY

“Coal N’ Write” also supports a single-player game for y’all Lone Range Rovers out there. Instead of competing with others, the first challenge of the game is to fill in all the spaces in yer Ore Stash. Once you’ve reached that milestone, you can compare yerself to the following table to rank how ya done. Measure your cash reserves:

• Less than \$300: Go Back East, City Slicker!	• \$341 to \$360: Gold Level
• \$300 to \$320: Bronze Level	• \$361 or More: Holy Smokes!
• \$321 to \$340: Silver Level	

...The layout for this rule sheet is uglier than a cross-eyed mule’s tuchus, ain’t it? Well I’m workin’ on it. If you have suggestions on these rules, a lead on an artist who might want a paid gig in graphic design and layout, or if you’ve played this and have some news to share, please contact the designer, Stephen B. Thomas, at:

editor@let-off.com

Seriously: thank you for reading! I know your time is precious and I’m grateful you spent some of it to review these rules or maybe even play the game.

APPENDIX: THE BOOM TOWN

The Boom Town is a special, useful place! By payin' up with a little of your earnings, you can gain all manner of worthwhile investments that will help you earn more cash. Although the Boom Town Cards have explanations on them, below are some additional details that may help you deal with confusion and questions about them.

ARM WRASSLIN': You can't do this unless you already got \$10 in your pocket. Same goes for any opponent you choose. Even if somebody didn't bring a Miner to town, you can still wrassle 'em. It's anybody's game though, so don't say I didn't warn ya.

BACKROOM GAMBLIN': You can't do this unless you already got \$10 in yer pocket. To start gamblin' with the locals, throw one die, and double the result. Choose to **Hit** or **Stay**. If you wanna Hit, throw another die (but you don't double this result) and add it to yer current total. If you wanna Stay, or yer total meets or exceeds 21, consult the table below for results:

Total = up to 15: Ante \$10. No winnin's... You're outta luck!	Total = 20: Collect \$20 and add a Tin to your next Burro
Total = 16 or 17: You break even, pardner (no winnings or losses)	Total = 21: Collect \$25 and add a Tin and a Coal to your next Burro
Total = 18 or 19: Collect \$10	Total = 22 or more: Busted, pal! Pay \$10 and add a Bandit (black hat) to any remaining Burro

BURRO # 7: SUGARFOOT (solo game only): Solo players may purchase this upgrade to play a 7th Round of the game. Note that this Round has a Bandit that you gotta deal with if you hope to earn cash from all yer Ore in this delivery.

COAL BARON: The first player to report to the Coal Baron that they have at least 12 Coal in their Ore Stash earns an immediate \$60 bonus. They do not need to deliver the Coal, they just need to have it in their Stash, and then choose this option to "report in" about their Coal stash. If there's a tie, then all tied players split the bonus evenly among themselves. Once this bonus has been claimed and the winnins are resolved, remove the card from the current game.

COW PUNCHIN' (solo game only): No, you ain't really gonna punch a cow, greenhorn! Some rancher has hired you to brand some new steer in his herd. This is just what we normal folks call it. Sheesh.

DRANKIN' CONTEST (solo game only): You always throw two dice to drank. But you pick the number of times yer gonna throw 'em before you start throwin'. I know this is only fer solo games, but don't be a lowdown cheater.

MULE TEAM (multiplayer only): Yeah, the cowpoke who buys this first is the one who gits the bonus, while **everyone** uses the "Sugarfoot" delivery. You can hold off on a valuable delivery to reduce the buyer's bonus, but hell: when you git at least somethin' it's better than nothin', right?

GUNSMITH: Yeah, if you buy more Pistols at once, it's more expensive: the Gunsmith is savvy snake. Meanwhile, you're terrible at negotiatin' and even worse at math. The only way to solve this dilemma and maybe save some cash is to pay the Gunsmith multiple visits, or win a couple Pistols as a Lone Miner Bonus. Oklahoma Territory ain't for sissies.

PONY EXPRESS: The Federales are runnin' a contest to help git the mail out West. If you're the only one smart enough to git in on this, then nobody earns the 2nd place reward. That's even if you only chose one mail delivery. Be smart about this: S-M-R-T.

RODEO CONTEST: If somebody chooses this then everybody else can too, even if they didn't send a Miner to Boom Town and even if they've chosen a different thing to do in Boom Town.

STRIKE GOLD! Make sure you take back yer claim marker when you resolve this round's delivery. Another thing: you don't do any of that fancy pro-rating or whatever you wanna call it. For example, a \$27 value delivery earns you a \$10 bonus that Round. A \$40 delivery earns you a \$20 bonus that round. Take back yer claim marker once you're done addin' this bonus to the Round total.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY: If yer gonna be one of those upright citizen types, then this is yer cash cow. Spend a time keepin' Boom Town all civil like, and eventually you'll git paid.

TACK AND HARNESS: Once purchased, you may add inventory to the dotted-line boxes of each future Burro. It's helpful to draw in the full squares of these new inventory slots as a reminder that they're available. Load 'em up, cowpoke!

TRICK SHOOTIN': Pick a target before throwin' the die. If you meet or exceed that target's number, put a claim marker on it and pick a different target (cause you blasted that first one, Eagle Eye). You got six chances to do this so use claim markers to keep count. After six shots, double all the target numbers of the targets you blasted. That's how much money you win. Take back your markers once yer done.

WAGON WHEEL FIXIN': Yeah, your second visit is gonna git you more money, most of the time. You git better at somethin' the more you do it, I reckon. Or I don't know. You just convince some carpetbagger dopes to pay ya more.

WASH DAY: Once you've placed a claim marker here, you and your deliveries are good for the rest of the game. You don't need to visit here again to collect the bonus each time.

WORKHORSE TONIC: Yeah, there's a limited supply of these. And they git mighty expensive! But you can buy more than one at the same time. This is pretty strong stuff, so there are some special rules that go along with it:

- ☞ The +2 bonus is only good for one of your Miners. Discard the token once you use it so you don't "conveniently fer-git" you used it. Other players don't add the +2 to their Miners too. That just wouldn't make no sense.
- ☞ No, you don't make another set of doubles – and thus, another visit to Boom Town – with the Workhorse Tonic.
- ☞ No, you don't escape the BUNKHOUSE by using the Workhorse Tonic on a throw of 1. You can still add on the bonus, though.
- ☞ Yes, one worker can drink more than one Workhorse Tonic at once. Dang, you must be loco!

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