

Automata Rules

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Version 1.0

As inventors the players fight each other to become the wealthiest and most prestigious creator of robots. These robots function as a workforce the players must use to build new robots, improve existing robots, or collect materials in the form of scrap metal. Furthermore, players may sell their robots on the market to get richer or research new technology increasing the fame of the inventor. Not all robots are designed equally; Some robots are fast but weak whereas others are slow but powerful. Even worse, these robots are rarely reliable in their effects. The players must make sure their plans execute in the right order – without being blocked by smart competitors sending fast robots to grab the scarce resources and ruin your plans. Luckily, robots can cooperate or be combined, granting the clever inventor the tools to manage these robots efficiently.

OVERVIEW


The robots in Automata are represented with dice and even though all rolls are useful, players will still be forced to reconsider their plans and options on the fly. It is important to both master the long game and manage the immediate options.

A game of Automata lasts 5 rounds. Each round is comprised of two phases in which the players deploy robots and perform actions respectively. At the end of the fifth round, players sum up their Victory Points.

Automata is a worker placement game, but the delayed nature of executing actions allows players to offensively cut each other off. This can be mitigated by keeping an eye on the opponents dice and trying not to get caught off guard.

COMPONENTS

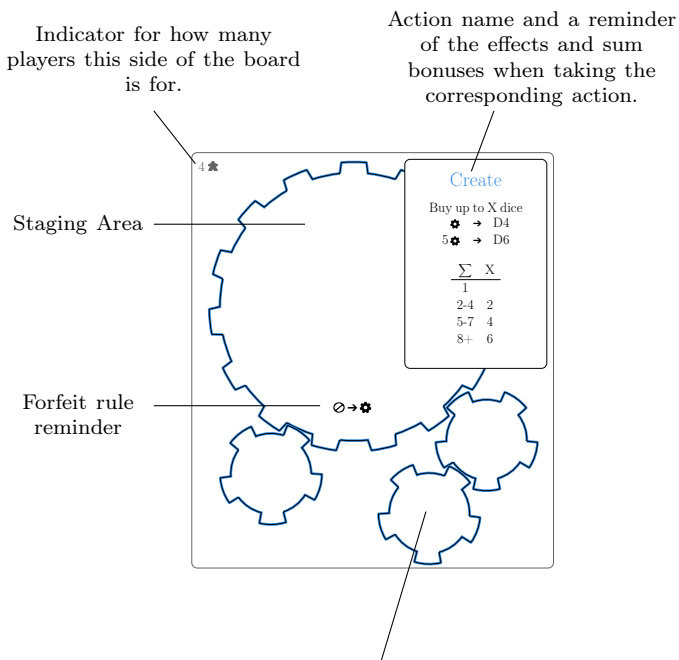
Besides the rulesets, this box should contain the following

- 5 Game Boards. 2 single sided board (Research and Market) and 3 double sided Game Boards (Scavenge, Create, and Upgrade). Please see page ?? for a description of gameboard details.
- 1 Turn Order Game Board.
- 20 Cards divided between 5 Head cards and 15 Part cards in 4 colours (4 Arms, 4 Legs, 4 Torsos, and 3 Master Plans). Please see page ?? for a description of card details.
- 52 Gear Tokens divided between 40 smaller 1-value Gear Tokens and 12 larger 5-value Gear Tokens. Gears are used as a resource during the game and are usually referred to using this symbol: .
- 53 Coin Tokens divided between 8 gold 10-value Coin Tokens, 15 silver 5-value Coin Tokens, and 30 copper 1-value Coin Tokens. Coin Tokens are used to track Victory Points gained throughout the game for selling dice.
- 4 Turn Order Pawns – 1 for each player colour. These are placed on the Turn Order Board indicating the internal player order for the different phases of this game.
- 48 Dice – 12 for each player colour. Each player has 3 types of dice: Four sided dice (from now on D4), 'standard' six sided dice (from now on D6), and eight sided dice (from now on D8). Each player should have 6 D4's, 4 D6's and 2 D8's.
- 4 Player Boards. These are meant to help players separate their Available Pool of dice, their Reserve Pool of dice, and their Spent Pool of dice. When instructed to place dice into

any of Reserve, Available, or Spent simply place the dice in question on the corresponding side of the Player Board.

Action boards layout

Action Boards in Automata has 3 main features; A name, A Staging Area and some Action Spaces. The Research Action board is special, as it does not have any Action Spaces but instead have a Victory Point effect that affects all players.

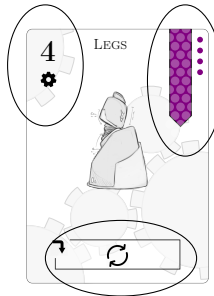


Action Space. The amount of Action Spaces depends on the amount of players, and limits how many times an action can be done in any given turn.

Card layout

Cards in Automata has 3 main features; Cost, Type, and Abilities. These can be found on the card as indicated below. Besides these features all cards have a name and an image. All cards of the same Type will have the same name. Images are purely decorative and has no effect on the game.

The required sum and gear cost for buying this card.





The Type of the card, as indicated by the coloured banner. Players earn Victory Points by collecting sets of different cards. The dots indicate how many cards of a type there is in the game.

Cards have special abilities. Some abilities are passive, some are active (indicated with ↗), and some are only used during scoring (indicated by ↻).

SETUP

To set up a game of Automata, follow these steps

1. Place all the Action Boards and the Turn Order Board in the center on a table. Their placement does not matter, as long as all players can reach them. Three of the Action Boards are double sided – be sure to use the side that match your player count.
2. Place all Gear Tokens () , and all Coin Tokens within reach of all players.
3. Take all the Head Cards (yellow, pattern-less banner) and place them in a pile in order of increasing cost. The 6-sum Head Card without a Gear Cost should be on top.
4. Shuffle the Parts Card and place this Parts Deck on the table. Then deal 3 cards next to the Research board.
5. Have each player choose a colour and take all dice of their colour and a matching player board.
6. Each player places 3 of their D4s and 2 of their D6s into their Spent Pool and the rest of their dice into their Reserve Pool.
7. Give each player 2  .
8. Randomly determine player order, and place the Turn Order Pawns on the spaces for Deployment Phase on the Turn Order Board.

You are now ready to start.

GAME ROUND

Each game round consists of two separate phases; The Deployment Phase and the Activation Phase. In the Deployment Phase players are placing their dice on Staging Areas for actions they want to take, but they will not actually perform those actions until the Activation Phase. In the Activation Phase players will take turns activating their dice, starting with the lowest numbers. Finally any Part Cards left next to the Research board are returned to the box and replaced by 3 new ones, before a new round starts.

Reading or teaching the rules



The most important decisions in Automata are made in the Deployment Phase, but I have found it easier to teach the game starting with the Activation Phase, then talking about Deployment Phase, and lastly going through the individual actions in detail. I humbly suggest reading the Activation Phase section first (page ??).

DEPLOYMENT PHASE


At the beginning of the Deployment Phase all players take all dice from their Spent Pool, roll them and place them into their Available Pool. Then, in the order indicated by the Turn Order Board, players take turns placing a single die from their Available Pool unto any of the five Staging Areas. The Deployment Phase will last until all players have used all their dice. The players will not actually perform the actions during the Deployment phase, but clever placement of dice will allow players to ruin each other's plans.


In the first turn players will have the same amount of dice, but as the game progresses players can have differing amounts and types of dice.


Modifying Dice





During a player's turn in the Deployment Phase, that player may modify any dice left in her Available Pool. Modifying dice can be done in three different ways; Using Parts Cards, paying , or spending other dice from the Available Pool. A player may modify any amount of dice on her turn, as long as she has the cards, the , or the dice left to do so.


The two common modifications found in Automata are

 Roll a die again. Keep rolling until you get a different result than the one you started with.

 Add or subtract one from a die. You cannot produce a number that cannot be shown on the die.

Some Part Cards will have an exhaust symbol () which means that they can only be used once per turn. When using cards with the exhaust symbol, rotate them 90 degrees to indicate that they cannot be used again. Exhausted cards will be refreshed at the end of the round.

When modifying dice through s, a player pays 1  to either  or .

Rather than using cards or s, a player may combine dice. When combining two dice, a player will choose one die from her Available Pool and move it to her Spent Pool. Then the player will choose to either add the value of the spent die to another die in the Available Pool or deduct the value of the spent die from another die in the Available Pool. When spending a die to modify another die, a player must use the full value of the spent die; A player cannot remove a die showing 3 and then add only 1 to another die.

No matter how a die is modified it cannot be increased or decreased to numbers it cannot represent on its faces.

During their turn, players may combine all these modifications any way they see fit on any on their available dice. However, once a die is placed unto a Staging Area, it cannot be modified any further.

Modifying dice does not count as a player's turn.

Note

Adding two dice will allow the player to retain the total strength of dice, while placing fewer dice, allowing her to fight for Activation Turn Order. On the other hand, subtracting dice, will reduce overall strength, but give the player fewer and faster dice.

Example

A player has a 2 and a 3 left in her Available Pool. It is imperative for her plan that she has a low initiative in a certain action space. She therefore spends the 2 in order to subtract 2 from the 3, turning it into a 1. She now places the newly created 1 on the Staging Area she wanted, and as it was her last available die, she moves her Turn Order Pawn to the next available space for the Activation Turn Order.

Example

Blue player has 2 D4 left showing 2 and 3 respectively. She wants to spend one to modify the other, but as a D4 cannot show less than 1 or more than 4, she cannot deduct 3 from 2 nor can she add 2 to the 3. Her only modification option with these dice are subtracting the 2 from the 3, turning it into a one.

Passing

A player cannot pass if she has any dice left in her Available Pool.

If a player has no dice left in her Available Pool after placing a die unto the board, she will immediately move her Turn Marker Pawn to the next available spot on the turn marker track marked *Activation*. That player will take no more actions in this Deployment Phase.

ACTIVATION PHASE

In the Activation Phase, the players take turns to activate dice and take the corresponding actions.

Initiative and turn order

The Activation Phase is itself divided into several sub-phases numbered 1 through 8. During each of these phases all dice matching the number of the phase must activate. This number is often referred to as *initiative*.

Initiative always start at 1 and goes towards 8, which means that lower dice will get to activate before higher dice.

During each initiative the players take turns activating a single die whose number matches the current initiative phase. When no players have dice left matching the current initiative, continue with the next initiative. For the Activation Phase, turn order is determined by the turn order track indicated with *Activation*. During the Activation Phase, turn order for the Activation Phase will not change.

Example

Red player has two dice showing '2' on the board, Green player has zero, and Blue player has one. Assuming the above player order matches the Turn Order, and we are in initiative phase 2, Red will start activating one of his 2s. When Red has activated a group of dice containing at least one 2 and taken the action, it will be Green's turn to act. Green has no 2s, so we will skip green and instead let Blue act. Once Blue has taken her turn, Red will activate his second 2, if it is still on the board. Now there are no more 2s and we go to the next initiative phase, again starting with Red.

Taking actions, grouping, and sums

When a player activates a die, he may activate as many other dice from the same Staging Area as he would like. The only rule is, that he must activate at least one die matching the current initiative. All activated dice are moved to one of the empty Action Spaces belonging to the Staging Area from where they were taken.

The player then immediately performs the action granted by the Action Space. The higher the total sum of all the just activated dice, the better the effect will be. Refer to the description of the individual actions for a full overview of these sum-effects.

If there are no more empty Action Spaces for this Staging Area, the player must forfeit the action.

If a player cannot benefit from a given action, the player must forfeit the action instead.

Furthermore, players may choose to forfeit an action, even if they could take that action.



Benefit

A player cannot occupy an Action Space unless that player will benefit from the action. This is covered in more detail for the individual actions, but the short version can be phrased thus:

If taking an action space causes nothing to change, then the player did not benefit.

Forfeit

A player who cannot, or choose not to, take an action, must instead forfeit that Staging Area. Forfeiting a Staging Area means removing *all* dice of your colour from that Staging Area.

When forfeiting a Staging Area, a player will receive a single  from the supply. No matter how many dice are removed, a player will only receive 1  .

You cannot forfeit a Staging Area unless it is your turn to act. Therefore one of the removed dice must match the current Initiative.

Note

It is perfectly acceptable to choose to forfeit an area, even if you could take the action. Sometimes an action costs resources, that a player will prefer to spend elsewhere.

Passing

A player cannot pass if she has any dice left on any Staging Areas.

If a player has no dice left on any Staging Areas after activating a group of dice, she will immediately move her Turn Marker Pawn to the next available spot on the turn marker track marked *Deployment*. That player will take no more actions in this Activation Phase.

Scavenge Action

The player sends her robots into the world to collect valuable scrap material.

When taking the Scavenge Action, the total sum of dice used to activate the Action Space determines how many Gear Tokens (⚙️) the player will get. See table ??

Σ	⚙️
1	0
2-3	2
4-5	5
6-9	9
10+	12

Table 1: Scavenge Table

As indicated in the table, a player cannot benefit from the Scavenge Action Spaces if they have a total sum of 1 when taking the action.

Upgrade Action

Using spare parts, the engineer manages to improve her mechanical friends.

When taking this action, players may turn their D4s into D6s and their D6s into D8s. Only dice used to activate the Action Space may be improved during this action, but a player is never forced to improve all activating dice. The player must pay 1 ⚙️ to improve a D4 and 2 ⚙️ to improve a D6. Calculate the total cost for all the improvements a player want to make, and then modify the total cost based on the sum of the dice used to activate the Action Space. See

table ???. Finally replace the improved dice from the action space with their improved versions from the Reserve.




Σ	Price modifier
1	+1 
2-5	
6-11	-1 
12+	-2 

Table 2: Upgrade Table

In order to count as having benefitted from the Upgrade Action, a player must upgrade at least one die.

Note

It is not possible to improve a D4 into a D8 in a single activation. The D4 can be turned into a D6, but that D6 was itself not used to activate the action space, and therefore it cannot be improved further.

Note

Players are limited by the dice in their reserve. If there are no more D6s left in their Reserve, they cannot improve a D4. If there are no more D8s left in their Reserve, they cannot improve a D6. During a single action all things are assumed to happen simultaneously, so even if a player is improving multiple dice, none of them enters the Reserve before the action is finished.

Example

Blue player activates an Upgrade Action Space with 2 D6s and a single D4. She wishes to upgrade all of them, which costs a total of 5 ⚙️s. However, her total sum is 8 which grants a modification of -1 ⚙️. She pays 4 ⚙️s and replaces her dice on the Action Space with 2 D8s and a single D6 from her Reserve. The 2 D6s and the D4 she used to activate the Action Space are then moved to her Reserve.

Example

Red player wishes to upgrade a single D4 for the cost of 1 ⚙️. He has a total sum of 1 and must therefore pay an additional gear for this upgrade. He pays 2 ⚙️s and replaces his D4 with a D6 from his Reserve. Lastly he moves the D4 he used to activate the Action Space to his Reserve.

Example

White player wishes to upgrade a single D4 for the cost of 1 ⚙️. He has a total sum of 2 and therefore receives no cost modification. However, he has no more D6s in his reserve and therefore cannot take the Upgrade action at all. Since he cannot benefit, he is forced to forfeit the space instead, earning him a single ⚙️.

Create Action

Toiling at her work bench, robots spring to life at her fingertips.

When taking the Create Action a player may add new dice to their Spent Pool from their Reserve Pool. New D4s cost 1 ⚙️ whereas new D6s cost 5 ⚙️. It is not possible to create D8s – players must instead upgrade existing D6s using the Upgrade Action.

The amount of dice a player can create in a single action is determined by the sum of the dice used to activate this Action Space. See table ???. A player may create any combination of D4s and D6s, as long as the total number of new dice does not exceed the value indicated by table ???.

Σ	Total Dice
1	0
2-4	2
5-7	4
8+	6

Table 3: Create Table

In order to count as having benefitted from the Create Action, a player must create at least a single die.

Note

Players are limited by the dice in their reserve. If a player has no more D4s left in her Reserve, she cannot use the Create Action to create D4s. Similarly, if a player has no more D6s in her Reserve, she cannot use the Create Action to create D6s.


Research Action

Aided by her mechanical servants, the engineer manages to produce the impossible.

This Staging Area has no corresponding Action Spaces. Instead of moving dice used for activation to an action space, the activating player will instead return all those dice to their Spent Pool.

When taking the Research Action, a player must perform one of four different actions:

- Buy a parts card
- Buy a head card
- Buy a reserved card
- Reserve a parts card

When buying a card – whether it is a parts card or a head card – the total sum of the activated dice must match or exceed the value on the desired card. The player then pays an amount of  as indicated on the card. Finally the player takes the card and places it in front of herself and returns the activated dice to her Spent Pool.

During a single activation a player can only buy a single card or reserve a single card. If a player wants to acquire multiple cards in a single round, she must activate the Research Action multiple times with separate groups of dice.

The parts cards are only refilled at the end of an entire round.

Buying a reserved card works just like buying any other card, except you buy it from your hand of reserved cards rather than from the table.

In order to count as having benefitted from the Research Action, a player must either buy or reserve a single card.


Note

It is perfectly okay to spend more dice than needed when paying for a card.

Note

When buying a Head Card, a player must buy the topmost card of the Heads Card pile.

Reserving Cards

When reserving a card, a player does not need to match the cards requirement nor does she pay any . The player simply takes the card into her hand and returns any dice used for this activation to her Spent Pool.

In order to later buy this card, the player must take the Research Action again.

Players may only reserve Parts Cards. Head Cards cannot be reserved.

There is no limit to how many cards a player can hold in their hand at a given time, but all reserved cards will be worth negative Victory Points at the end of the game.

Fame and infamy

At the end of the game, players will get Victory Points for every set of cards they have. Sets are worth an amount of Victory Points depending on the amount of different colours they contain. Players may score as many sets as they would like, but any given card may only be counted as part of one set. For the actual Victory Points values, please refer to table ??

For each reserved card a player has left at the end of the game,



Different colours	1	2	3	4	5
	2	5	10	18	30

Table 4: Research Table

that player will receive -5.

Note


The Master Plan cards cannot be counted as part of a set unless it the set is complete (i.e the set contains all 5 colours). If a player had a Master Plan card and three other colours, that set would be worth only 10 Victory Points, as it would count as a set of three cards.

Example

At the end of the game, the blue player controls 2 Master Plans, 2 Heads, 2 Torsos, 1 Arms, 1 Legs and a single reserved card. This means she has a single complete set (one of each card) and a single set of three cards (Heads, Torso, Master Plan). However, since Master Plans cannot count towards an unfinished set, this last set is actually only two cards (Heads and Torso). She therefore gets 30 Victory Points in total; 30 for the complete set, 5 for the 2-card set, and -5 for her reserved card. In addition she will gain some extra Victory Points for her Torso and Head cards as indicated on those cards.

Sell Action

Building a giant robot is one thing, but who cares about infamy unless you are also filthy rich.

By sending dice to the Sell Action, the player will earn  at the cost of returning dice to the Reserve Pool. The total sum of the activating dice does not matter when selling dice, only the type of the dice (D4s, D6s, or D8s). Only a single type of die can be sold on each of the Action Spaces for the Sell Action as indicated on the Action Spaces themselves.

When a player activates a group of dice on the Sell Action, that group must be moved to a single Action Space. Then the player *must* sell all dice matching the selected action space. When selling dice, the player moves all the sold dice to her Reserve Pool and then – for each die sold – collects the rewards as indicated on table ???. Victory Points gained from selling dice are received in Coin Tokens. At the end of the game Coin Tokens are worth Victory Points on a 1:1 basis.


Dice	Reward
D4	2 
D6	4  + 
D8	8  + 2  + D4

Table 5: Sell Table

In order to count as having benefitted from the Market Action, a player must sell at least a single die.

Note

Since dice are returned to the reserve during the Sell Action, this can free up the action space for other players to use in the same turn.



Note

A player cannot choose to not sell dice matching the chosen Action Space. A player *must* sell all the matching dice.



Note

The Sell Action Spaces only indicate what dice are sold there, not which dice you can use to activate the space. As long as you sell at least one die, you can take the action with any combination of dice – and any dice not matching the space will simply stay there until the Reset Phase, thus blocking that space.

Example

Red player has 2 D6s on the Sell Action Staging Area, when it is her turn to act. She decides not to forfeit, and moves both dice to the Action Space indicating 'D6'. She will then immediately gain 8  (4 per dice) and 2  s (1 per dice), before moving the 2 D6s to her Reserve.

Example

Red player has 2 D6s and a D4 on the Sell Action Staging Area, when it is her turn to act. Blue player has 3 D6s on the Sell Action Staging Area. Red player decides to move all her dice to the Action Space indicating 'D6'. She will then immediately gain 8  (4 per D6) and 2  s (1 per D6), before moving the 2 D6s to her Reserve. However her D4 cannot not be sold as it does not match the type accepted by the Action Space, and thus will stay on the 'D6' Action Space, blocking it from the blue player.

RESET PHASE



In the Reset Phase players take back all their dice from the Game Boards and put them into their Spent Pool. Then players will refresh all their exhausted Parts Cards. Then take the Part Cards remaining next to the Research board and return them to the box. These will remain out of the game from now on.

Lastly, if there are any cards left in the Parts Deck, draw 3 new Part Cards from the Parts Deck and place them next to the Research board. Then begin the next round starting with the player first on the turn order track for Deployment.

If there were no more cards left in the Parts Deck that indicates the end of the game. See the next section on Game End and Scoring for details.

GAME END AND SCORING

The game will end after 5 rounds. The rounds are counted by the Parts Deck; As 3 cards are laid out each round, the game will end at the end of the round when the Parts Deck is empty.

When the game ends, players will tally up their final score to figure out who won. Players will get Victory Points for leftover resources, leftover dice, money acquired, for card sets collected, and for any effect on boards or cards indicated with . The Victory Points for these individual sources are outlined in table ???. Many references to Victory Points throughout the game material use this icon  instead of writing Victory Point.






		Points
D6	→	
D8	→	3 
1 coin	→	
	→	X 

Table 6: Scoring table