

TERRAFORMING MARS

Your first table, without the fog

Original board game. Not Ares Expedition. The printed rules and card text take precedence; expansion rules can change the defaults below.

1. Agree on the game before dealing

For a first lesson, use the base game. The introductory setup gives each resource one production and omits Corporate Era cards; Corporate Era uses zero production and the fuller deck. Agree which version you are learning. Regular corporations start at 20 TR and use their printed resources; ordinary starting project cards cost 3 M€ each. A Beginner Corporation instead gets 42 M€ and all ten starting projects free.

With Prelude: deal four Prelude cards, keep two, and resolve them after corporations. Do not add the entire expansion collection to a first lesson just because it fits in the box.

2. Repeat the generation

Player order: pass the first-player marker. **Research:** draw four project cards and pay 3 M€ for each kept card; skip this phase in generation one because setup supplied the hand. **Actions:** take one or two actions per turn. Passing means sitting out the rest of that generation, not only one turn.

Production: once all players pass, collect income equal to TR plus M€ production. Stored energy becomes heat; then produce new resources, including fresh energy. A blue-card action is normally once per generation; a triggered effect can happen whenever its condition is met.

3. Read the cost, not only the dream

Check requirements, research fee, printed cost, immediate benefit, continuing benefit and points. Steel normally pays 2 M€ per cube for building-tag cards; titanium pays 3 M€ for space-tag cards. They do not normally pay research fees or standard projects. No change for overpayment.

Example: 3 M€ to keep a card plus 10 M€ to play it commits 13 M€. If its only benefit is +2 M€ production, it needs seven collections to exceed that outlay. Discounts, immediate benefits, scoring and timing can change the decision.

4. Know the finish

The original multiplayer game ends when oxygen reaches 14%, temperature reaches +8°C and all nine oceans are placed. Finish the generation, including production, then resolve final greenery conversions and scoring. Do not buy an income engine that cannot repay before the finish.

Base solo uses a 14-generation deadline and starts at 14 TR; Prelude shortens the normal solo deadline to 12. Read the chosen solo module rather than importing multiplayer ending assumptions.

BETTER DECISIONS. FEWER BOXES.

A competitive reminder and expansion route

The board is part of your engine

Placing a tile earns its printed placement bonus plus 2 M€ per adjacent ocean. Owned greenery scores 1 VP at the end. Your city scores 1 VP for each adjacent greenery, regardless of who owns that greenery. Cities do not score an automatic point just for existing. Oxygen and temperature only grant TR while their tracks can still rise.

Milestones are races; awards are bets

A milestone requires meeting its condition and paying 8 M€; it scores 5 VP. Only three milestones can be claimed. Award funding costs 8, then 14, then 20 M€. Funding does not reserve the points: the final result decides who scores 5 VP for first and 2 VP for second. Two-player games have no second-place award points. Use the rulebook for ties.

Before spending, ask these four questions

What can score before the game ends? Which milestone or placement will disappear if I wait? Does my opponent benefit more from another generation? Can I keep one coherent corporation-and-card plan instead of collecting attractive possibilities? These are strategic prompts, not a guaranteed winning formula.

The expansion route

Prelude: my first recommendation for stronger openings. **Hellas & Elysium:** new maps, milestones and awards with little extra procedure. **Colonies:** contested trading and energy decisions. **Venus Next:** another card ecosystem. **Turmoil:** political policies and events, for tables that want the administration. **Automa:** dedicated solo opposition. None is required to enjoy the base game.

Prelude 2 requires the original Prelude. Mix eligible cards into that deck; normally still choose two of four. Filter expansion marks for the modules in play. Its ongoing actions and effects do not make Prelude cards blue. If a Prelude cannot perform its required effects, reveal and discard it for 15 M€. Optional Extended Start offers three corporations and six Preludes, but still keeps one corporation and two Preludes.

Protect the table you actually have

Recessed player boards help prevent production cubes sliding. Sleeves protect frequently handled cards; confirm size and count. A fitted organiser must match the original game, box edition, sleeve thickness and expansion collection. Ares Expedition is a separate game with its own components and expansions.

Sources and the illustrated guide:

[Puzzlewick: Terraforming Mars rules, strategy and expansions](#)
[FryxGames original rulebook | Prelude 2 rules](#)