



# Rulebenders

A game by Tom Vandeweyer

Artwork by Naiade

I found it at a flea market. I'd never seen anything like it, a strange metal device, with an odd drawing at its center, a funny-looking little fella, awkwardly smiling up at me in fluorescent paint. I was instantly drawn to it, this mysterious object. The seller was an older gentleman. He saw me pick up the device, and we got to talking. He told me he had found it when he was working as a janitor in a science lab back in the 1950s. "So, you stole this from the lab?" I asked. With a little laugh he replied... "Let's just say, I forgot to bring it back." I asked what the object was for, and with a little smirk, he said, "The device has the power to bring the past back to life and even make wishes come true." I chuckled. Of course, I did not believe his fairytales, but the object intrigued me nonetheless. I decided to buy it.



That same evening, my friends, a group of fellow adventurers, gathered for our weekly game night. As usual, we couldn't decide which game to play. My friend, Nina, looking over my game shelves, spotted the mysterious device. "So, Tom, what kind of game is this?" she asked sarcastically. She took the device in her hands, started turning it around as if looking to open it. Just when I was about to relay the old man's story, we heard a click and the little painted fella in the middle began to light up. Everybody was startled, and Nina almost dropped the device, but managed to hold on. The glow intensified, so much so that before we knew it, the whole room was envelopeed by a bright light.

As the light faded, we found ourselves in a totally different world, which curiously seemed somehow yet familiar. Then it hit me. The device had transported us to one of my board games! At first, everyone panicked. "What just happened?" "Where are we?" "Is that a dinosaur?" We calmed down as we realized if the device transported us here, it should be able to transport us back.

Suddenly a voice called out to us from the device. "Hello, brave adventurers! I am Flexo! I'm here to answer any questions you may have. Are you ready to bend the rules?" And then he stood before us, this funny little fella, and explained that we held a Rulebending machine. "It allows you to experience gaming as never before. You're masters of your own adventure, as you can change the rules of the game as you play, bending them to your advantage. To do so you'll need to collect and spend energy cubes; and to control your fate you'll need to collect the precious Chips that power the machine. You can even move from one gaming universe to another if you play your cards right." In the end our mission was simple. To return home we needed to win a game, by collecting Chips. Well, simple in theory, but easier said than done. But that night, I was the first to achieve it.

Since that extraordinary evening, we experience our game nights in a completely different way. We now call ourselves Rulebenders and return again and again to this great adventure. Won't you join us?



# GAME COMPONENTS

## 10 Game board parts



## 6 Theme Panels



## 50 Flexo cards



## 35 Pirate Theme Cards



## 35 Zombie Theme Cards



## 35 Prehistoric Theme Cards



## 70 Chips



## 7 Nuclear Tokens



## 7 Electron Tokens



## 14 Multiplier Tokens



## 5 Setup cards



## 35 Arabian Nights Theme Cards



## 35 Sci-fi Theme Cards



## 35 Fantasy Theme Cards



## 60 Exchange Tokens



## 1 Start Player Token



## 2 Captain's Hook Tokens



## 1 Round Marker



## 1 Theme Marker



## 5 Rule Panel Markers



## 1 Rulebenders Die



In each of the 5 player colors:

## 20 Energy Cubes



## 7 Evolution Discs



## 1 Player Order Disc



# KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

## Rule Panels

The outer ring tiles of the board that each define one rule of the game.

## Evolution zone

## Evolution track

## Locked spaces

cards allow players to claim these permanent spots in rule panel containers.

## Rule Panel Container

## Rule

Indicates which of the 7 game rules is to be in flux here.

## Theme Panels

The inner ring tiles of the board that each define the 4 themes of the game.

## Theme

Indicates which of the 4 theme cards can be found here.



## Draw Location

## Discard Location

## Chips

Chips are essentially the victory points in the game. The player with the most Chips at the end of the game wins the game, so try and collect as many as you can!

## Items

The three types of currency that can exist in the game: Chips, Energy cubes and cards. When you gain an item, you may choose which kind.

## Currency

Will vary, the cost can either be energy cubes, chips, or cards. This is indicated on the appropriate rulefield at all times.

# GAME SETUP

- 1** Choose 4 theme card decks and their matching theme panels. Place the remaining theme decks and panels back in the box, you won't need them for this game. The 4 themes will set your game parameters; refer to the chart below to choose how confrontational you want the game play.



Hi, I'm Flexo! I'll be giving you some helpful tips for your rulebending experience, so look out for me in the following pages!

- 2** Assemble the outer ring of the board, these are the rule panels; place the 4 theme panels randomly, inside the outer ring; and finally, place the Flexo tile in the middle.
- 3** Shuffle each theme deck separately. *Note: all decks have the same back, take care not to mix decks together.* Place each deck facedown on the draw location of the matching theme panel.
- 4** Do the same for the flexo cards, and place them facedown on the draw location of the flexo card panel.
- 5** Each player chooses a colour and takes the 20 energy cubes, 7 evolution discs and 1 player order disc of their colour.
- 6** Randomly draw one of the rules setup cards.

Place the 5 rule panel markers on the appropriate locations as indicated on the setup card.

The setup card shows the playing color of the start player. If this color does not participate, take the next color that is depicted. Place the start player's disc on the start player spot and give them the Start Player Token. All other player order discs are placed on the "1 chip" spot in no particular order as play will move clockwise from the start player.

- 7** The start player places the theme marker on one of the 4 theme panels of their choice. This will be the active theme for the first round of the game.



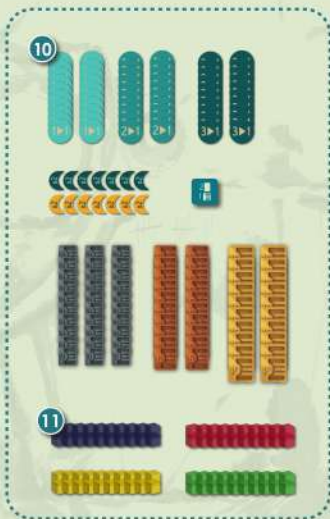
## GAME SETUP



### PERSONAL SUPPLY

*(This zone, in front of each individual player, is where you store energy cubes and chips available for use.)*

- 8 Place the round marker on the 1st space of the round track.
- 9 Shuffle the nuclear and electron tokens and randomly place one facedown on each of the matching locations on the rule panels.
- 10 Place the multiplier tokens, exchange tokens, chip, and Rulebender die in a general supply, next to the board.
- 11 Place all the energy cubes in the general supply next to the game board.
- 12 Each player places each of their evolution discs on the indicated locations.





# GAME OVERVIEW

Rulebenders is played over 4 **game rounds**. In each round, first prepare, then take turns performing one of these actions:

**A. Place an energy cube on a rule panel container or a tiebreaker spot OR**

**B. Play a card**

If players can't or don't want to perform any more actions, they pass. Once all players have passed, each of the 7 rule panels will score. In each panel the player with the majority will take control and choose how to bend that rule.

At the end of round 4, players will count all their chips, and the player with the most chips is declared the best Rulebender, and **wins the game**.

## ROUND OVERVIEW

### 1. Prepare for the round

Players prepare their round set up to match the current rule settings & evolution track modifications. **Note: You can choose to perform this step simultaneously with the rule panel scoring. But whenever a card alters the end of the round, know that the basic rule is that the preparation is done at the beginning of the round.**



**Exchange:** Draw one exchange token of the current value. See exchange token on page xx for more details.

**Example:** The Rule panel marker currently indicates "3>1". Each player receives a "3>1" exchange token.



**Start Player - Gain Chips:** In round 1, all players receive 7 chips. In rounds 2 to 4, the player whose disc is on the start player spot receives 2 chips and the Start Player Token. All other players receive 1 chip.



**Receive Energy Cubes:** Players receive energy cubes as indicated and place them in their personal supply.



**Draw Cards:** In player order, players draw as many cards as indicated, up to their current hand limit. Players draw cards from any theme or the flexo card draw deck. If a deck is exhausted, shuffle the discard pile into a new draw pile.

*Don't forget to always draw a few Flexo cards! Since these can always be played, you will never get stuck in the game!*



**Theme, Card Hand Limit, and Currency:** nothing happens

### 2. Perform an action

Players take turns in clockwise order, choosing one action in each turn. If you don't want to, or can't take any more actions, you may pass. You're not allowed to perform any more actions this round. **There are only 2 possible actions:**

#### a. Place an energy cube

Place one energy cube from your personal supply:

- » on any of the 7 rule panel containers on the board **OR**
- » on the leftmost available space of the top row of the tiebreaker track.



#### b. Play a hand card

- Based on the position of your evolutio marker in the theme rule panel, check to see which themes you may play. **Note: Players are always allowed to play Flexo cards.**



No theme cards



Cards of the active theme only



Cards of the active theme and of the theme opposite the active theme




Cards of the active theme and cards of the neighbouring themes (left and right of the active theme)



Any theme cards.

2. Then pay the cost of the card as indicated in its top left corner.

Always pay close attention to the current currency  in the game, this will have a big effect on your strategy to try and out-smart the other players!



0

Free

1 or more of the current currency

1

**Example:** The currency marker is on the chip icon, the card can be paid for in chips this round.



A variable cost (#), in the current currency, defined by the current round.

#

**Example:** In round 3, Green wants to play a Mermoid card. The currency is set to "corb", so they have to pay 2 cards of their choice to play it.



3. All played cards are kept faceup in front of you.



**Foel Cards** feature a silver coloured title and are played faceup in front of you, stacked on top of each other, and at the end of the round will be discarded.



**Dashboard Cards** feature an underlined, teal coloured title and will be kept faceup in front of you, in your dashboard, until the end of the game. These cards feature ongoing effects and should remain visible to all other players.



Dashboard cards are always neat to have since they give you more options and make you more powerful as the game progresses!

**Example:** Yellow wants to play an Ice Age card. The current currency is set to chips, but yellow has their evolution marker on the modifier spot, meaning they can also spend energy cubes instead of chips to play this card. Since yellow would rather spend energy cubes than chips, they spend 2 cubes and place the Ice Age card faceup in front of them. Since this is a dashboard card, they clearly place this card next to his other two dashboard cards. The card states the following: "Place this card in your dashboard. For the rest of the round, no one but you may play Prehistory Cards. Discard at the end of the round." So all other players can not play prehistory cards this turn. But... since this is an attack card, and Green has a shield card, they immediately play it so that everyone can still play Prehistory cards this turn.



At any point on your turn you may activate a card in your dashboard with a tap action.



Tap (rotate 90°) and resolve the effect. Cards can only be tapped 1x per round. At the start of the next round, all cards will be untapped (rotated back 90°), ready for use once again.

## Exchange Tokens

You may use an exchange token at any time during your turn, to exchange 1, 2 or 3 items of the same type into 2 other items, depending on the position of your:

**Example:** Green has a 2>1 Exchange token, and wishes to exchange some of his Energy Cubes into Chips. The Current Currency is Corb (1), but because his Evolution Marker on the Exchange Token track is on the chip position (2), he can also exchange any item type into Chips. So Green discards their Exchange token and exchanges 4 Energy Cubes into 2 Chips (3).



### 3. Rule panel scoring

Once all players have passed, starting with the themes rule panel and going clockwise around the board, each rule panel is scored and altered one by one.

The player with a majority of energy cubes in the rule panel container, including on locked spaces, scores this rule panel and may:

- » Move the rule panel marker/Theme marker/Player order discs to any position of their choice, **changing this rule of the game for the next round, AND/OR**



- » Move their evolution marker **one** step in any direction.



If there is a tie, check if anyone wants to break it, using the tiebreaker track.

### Tiebreaker track

Going from left to right, disregarding the row, the first tied player that has an energy cube on the track may choose to move that energy cube to the current contested rule panel, immediately breaking the tie, and claiming the majority.



If they choose not to break the tie, the next tied player who has an energy cube on this track may choose to do so.

If no one breaks the tie, because they can't or don't want to, this rule panel is not scored and remains as is.

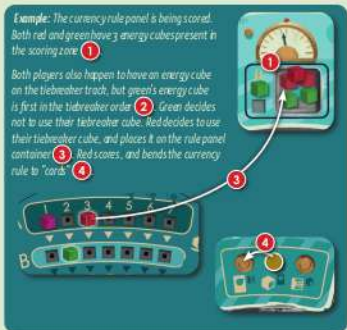
The winner then discards their energy cubes from the rule panel container back into the **general supply** and the next rule panel is scored.

**Note:** energy cubes from the locked, permanent spaces, are not removed.



**Example:** The currency rule panel is being scored. Both red and green have 3 energy cubes present in the scoring zone.

Both players also happen to have an energy cube on the tiebreaker track, but green's energy cube is first in the tiebreaker order. Green decides not to use their tiebreaker cube, and places it on their rule panel container. Red scores, and bends the currency rule to "cards".



### a. Rule changes

By winning a rule panel, you can change the game rules for the next round:



**Theme:** Place the theme totem on one of the 4 themes. That theme is now the active one.



**Card Hand Limit:** How many cards may be held in hand at any given moment: 5, 6, 7 or 8



**Exchange token:** The exchange token value: 3>1, 2>1 or 1>1.



**Currency:** The method of payment when a hand card is played:

- » energy cubes from your personal supply
- » or chips from your personal supply
- » or hand cards



**Start Player - Gain Chips:** The start player & how many chips each player will receive. One player's disc is placed on the 2 chips/1st player spot. All other player order discs are placed on the 1 chip spot.



**Energy Cubes:** How many energy cubes each player will receive.



**Draw Cards:** How many new cards each player will draw, up to their hand limit.



## b. Evolution track advancement

By winning a rule field, you may advance your evolution marker 1 step on that evolution track toward either the nuclear or electron token. If you played at least 1 Flexo card this turn that matches the icon of the rule panel just scored, you may even move your evolution marker 1 additional step.



The evolution track modifies the preset rule for the individual player. The electron side modifies the rule not at all or negatively, but the electron tokens have a higher possible chip yield. The nuclear side modifies the rule positively, but the nuclear tokens have a lower possible chip yield.

*Due to certain card effects, electrons may receive a multiplier, while nuclear tokens may disappear. Hold on to these tokens as they may come in handy later!*



When a player advances onto an electron or nuclear token space, they immediately flip the token, gain the chips indicated, multiplying when applicable. Then they take and keep the electron/nuclear token, remove any multipliers, and place their disc on the closest evolution track spot.

At the end of the game, all player discs will receive chips from unclaimed tokens in each zone.



### Theme

You can play Flexo cards and:



No theme cards



Cards of the active theme only



Cards of the active theme and of the theme opposite the active theme



Cards of the active theme and cards of the neighbouring themes (left and right of the active theme)



Any theme cards.



### Card Hand Limit

Decreases or increases your hand limit by the indicated value



### Exchange Tokens

If you choose to use an Exchange Token:



You may not use any exchange tokens.



You may use an exchange token to exchange currency items (cards, cubes, chips) of the same type and in the depicted amount against one item of the current currency, as indicated by the currency rule panel.



You may use an exchange token to exchange currency items of the same type and in the depicted amount against one item of the current currency or the secondary currency, as indicated by the currency rule panel.



You may use an exchange token to exchange currency items of the same type and in the depicted amount against one item of any currency type.



### Currency

You can play Flexo cards and:



you may pay using the current currency



you may pay using the current currency or the secondary currency



you may pay using any type of currency



secondary currency



### Start Player - Gain Chips

Decreases or Increases the number of chips you gain.



### Receive Energy Cubes

Decreases or Increases the number of energy cubes you may receive.



### Draw Cards

Decreases or increases the number of cards that you may draw. You may never draw more cards than your hand limit allows you to.



**Example:** Pink scores a majority in the Exchange token rule panel. 1 They decide to move the rule panel marker to the 1->2 spot. 2 so all players will receive one 1->2 Exchange token at the beginning of next round. Then, they decide to move their Evolution marker towards the Electron token. They are 2 spots away from the Electron token itself, and since they played a Flexo card that matches with the exchange token rule panel. 3 they can move their evolution marker TWO steps, effectively landing that marker on the Electron token itself. They take and flip the token and indicate 5 chips. 4 Since it also has a Multiplier Token attached to it. 5 Pink scores 10 chips and removes the Electron token and the Multiplier token and then places her Evolution marker on the closest evolution track spot. 6 They then remove their Energy Cubes from the Rule Panel container, but their Energy Cube in the locked space stays in place. 7 Pink will now NOT be able to use her exchange tokens, unless they win a majority here next turn and move their Evolution marker in the direction of the nuclear token in a future round.



At the beginning of the game, you may want to move your evolution marker towards the nuclear side of the track, since this will give you all sorts of advantages as you play along. But in the later rounds, you may want to end the game around the electron side, since this will yield greater chips rewards. It's all about timing and strategy!

## 4. Cleanup

### a. Discard all Fuel cards

All players must now place all their Fuel cards back onto their respective discard piles. Dashboard Cards stay in place.



### b. Move energy cubes down and left on the Tiebreaker track

Move all energy cubes down one row. If this is off the second row, the energy cube is returned to the owner's general supply along with 1 chip. Then, move all energy cubes on row B to the left to close any gaps.



### c. Move the round marker

Move the round marker one step to the right. If this is the end of the 4th round, it's the end of the game. Proceed to the final scoring.



# FINAL SCORING

At the end of the 4th round, players gain a number of bonus chips:

## 1. Chips for set collection cards.

Players gain 1/3/6/10 chips for each set of 1/2/3/4 different set collection cards they possess

*Example: Purple has one full set of set collection cards, and even has a second set with 2 different cards. They receive  $10 + 3 = 13$  chips.*



## 2. Chips for Evolution markers

First, reveal all remaining facedown electron and nuclear tokens on the board.



*Congratulations! You survived mighty dinosaurs, travelled past a cosmic nebula, had encounters with an angry dwarf, danced with a whirling dervish, shared a bottle of rum with Blackbeard, and survived a toxic zombie, but most of all... you bent the rules of the game better than everyone else. You won the game, and can rightfully gloat about your exploits until... the next time you activate this machine. Until then!*

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