

# TERRAFORMING MARS

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*A Complete Guide for New Players*

1–5 Players • 120–180 Minutes • Ages 12+

*Original game by Jacob Fryxelius. This companion guide rewritten for clarity.*

Part One

# What You're Here For

*The story, the goal, and the one thing you need to understand before anything else.*

## The Year is 2400-Something




Earth has sent your corporation to Mars with a single mandate: make it livable. The planet is frozen, airless, and dry. Your job is to change that — using technology, ambition, and a healthy dose of corporate rivalry.

You will fund projects, build infrastructure, warm the atmosphere, spread plant life, and fill riverbeds with ocean water. Around you, other corporations are doing the same. The planet gets terraformed no matter what. The question is who gets the credit.

*You are not just racing to terraform Mars. You are trying to become the corporation that benefits most from terraforming Mars.*

## The Three Things Mars Needs

Mars needs exactly three things before humans can survive there. These are the game's shared goals:

 <b>TEMPERATURE</b>	Starts at <b>-30°C</b>	Goal <b>+8°C</b>	<i>Warm enough for liquid water to exist on the surface.</i>
 <b>OXYGEN</b>	Starts at <b>0%</b>	Goal <b>14%</b>	<i>A breathable atmosphere thick enough to sustain life.</i>
 <b>OCEANS</b>	Starts at <b>0 tiles</b>	Goal <b>9 tiles</b>	<i>A stable water cycle—nine ocean tiles placed across the map.</i>

When all three goals are complete, the game ends. But whoever raised the last parameter doesn't automatically win. Victory goes to the corporation that accumulated the most points throughout the whole game.

## The One Number That Ties Everything Together

Every time you raise a global parameter—warm the planet a little, spread oxygen a little, place an ocean—your Terraform Rating (TR) goes up by 1.

T  
R

**Terraform Rating does two things at once**

It adds directly to your income. Every generation, you earn M€ equal to your TR.  
It counts as victory points at the end of the game.

Everyone starts at TR 20. The more you terraform, the richer and more powerful you become.  
Never pass up a free TR gain. It pays for itself many times over.

Part Two

# Everything on the Table

*A quick tour of all the pieces before you start playing.*

## The Board

The main board shows the surface of Mars—a hex grid where you'll place tiles, terraform the planet, and fight over prime real estate. Around the edges are three important tracks: Temperature, Oxygen, and the Generation marker.

### Bonus spaces on the board



Many hex spaces have small icons printed on them. When you place a tile on that space, you immediately collect those resources as a bonus. Location matters.

## Your Player Board

Each player has a personal board tracking two things for each resource: how much you currently have (your storage), and how much you'll gain next round (your production).

**Production is the key to winning.** A card that raises your MegaCredit production by 2 earns you 2 M€ every remaining round—potentially 30+ M€ over the game. A card that just gives you 8 M€ now is usually worse than it looks.

## The Six Resources



### MegaCredits

Your currency. Pay for everything—cards, projects, milestones, awards.



### Steel

Worth 2 M€ each when paying for Building-tag cards. Free discount.



### Titanium

Worth 3 M€ each when paying for Space-tag cards. Very efficient.



### Plants

Spend 8 to place a Greenery tile. Greenery raises Oxygen and scores points.



### Energy

Powers some cards. At round end, all your Energy converts to Heat.



**Heat**

Spend 8 to raise Temperature by 2°C—which earns +1 TR.

**The Cards**

Project cards are the heart of the game. They represent everything your corporation can fund. There are three types:

<b>GREEN CARD</b> Automated	<b>BLUE CARD</b> Active	<b>RED CARD</b> Event
Play it, resolve the effect, and keep it face-up. Its tags stay active for future combos. <i>Most common card type.</i>	Stays in front of you. May give you a special action you can use once each round, or a passive ongoing bonus. <i>Powerful over many rounds.</i>	Play it, resolve the effect, then flip it FACE-DOWN. Its tags are gone. It's a one-time blast. <i>Often powerful but temporary.</i>

**The most commonly missed rule in the game**

Red Event cards flip FACE-DOWN after playing. Their tags no longer count for synergy, card requirements, milestones, or awards. The only exception: the Scientist Award counts Science tags on all cards, including face-down events.

Part Three

# Your First Game

*Setup, then a guided walk through your first generation.*

## Setup in 5 Steps

Do these once before the game begins. It takes about 10 minutes.

1

### Prepare the board

Place the Mars board in the center of the table.  
Set the Temperature marker on  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  and the Oxygen marker on 0%.  
Keep all 9 Ocean tiles beside the board—none go on the map yet.  
Place the Generation marker on space 1.

2

### Give each player a board

Each player takes one player board.  
Set ALL production markers to zero except MegaCredits—it also starts at 0,  
but your TR (starting at 20) adds to it every round automatically.  
Set your TR marker on 20.

3

### Deal the cards

Shuffle the Project deck (red backs) and place it face-down.  
Deal each player 2 Corporation cards and 10 Project cards.

4

### Choose your corporation

Privately review both your Corporations and all 10 Project cards.  
Choose 1 Corporation. Return the other to the box.  
From your 10 Project cards, buy any you want for 3 M€ each.  
Return unchosen cards to the BOTTOM of the deck (don't shuffle them in).  
All players reveal their Corporation at the same time and collect their starting resources.

5

### Choose first player and begin

Give the first player marker to whoever most recently did something good for the environment.  
Begin Generation 1.

#### First game corporation picks

Recommended for new players: Creditor, Interplanetary Cinematics, Phobolog.  
When choosing starting cards, keep ones that match your corporation's theme,

improve production, or that you can afford to play within 2–3 rounds.  
Don't overthink it. You'll buy more cards as the game goes on.

## How a Generation Works

Every round of Terraforming Mars follows the same four phases, in the same order. Here's what each one looks like—with an example to make it concrete.

Phase

1

### Research — Buy cards

Draw 4 cards from the deck. Look at them privately. For 3 M€ each, you may keep any of them. Discard the rest (they don't go back in the deck).

*“Sample turn: I draw 4 cards. One improves my plant production, one builds a city, two don't fit my plan. I pay 3 M€ and keep the plant card. Discard the others.”*

Phase

2

### Action Phase — Your turns

Players take turns clockwise. On your turn, you take 1 or 2 actions from the list on the next page, then the next player goes. Once you're done for the round, you “pass.” The phase ends when everyone has passed.

*“Sample turn: I play the plant production card I just bought (cost: 7 M€). Then I use a Standard Project to raise Temperature (cost: 14 M€). Two actions, turn done.”*

Phase

3

### Production — Collect resources

Everyone collects resources simultaneously, in this order:

1. All your Energy converts to Heat (slide those cubes now).
2. Collect all other resources per their production tracks.
3. Collect M€ equal to your TR + your M€ production value.

*“Sample result: TR 21, M€ production 2 → I gain 23 M€. Plus 2 plants from my new production card.”*

Phase

4

### Advance — Next generation

Move the Generation marker forward. Pass the First Player marker one seat clockwise. Reset all used Blue card actions (turn them upright). Begin the next generation.

Part Four

# The Full Rules

*Everything you need for complete, confident play.*

## The 8 Actions

On your turn in the Action Phase, choose 1 or 2 of these. You may repeat the same action twice if you can afford it.

1

Card  
cost  
in M€

### Play a Project Card

Pay the cost printed in the card's top-left corner. Apply all effects immediately.  
Steel (worth 2 M€ each) may substitute toward Building-tag cards.  
Titanium (worth 3 M€ each) may substitute toward Space-tag cards.  
Overpayment is lost—no change given.

2

11–2  
5 M€

### Use a Standard Project

Standard projects are always available on the main board—no card needed.  
Power Plant (11 M€): +1 Energy production.  
Asteroid (14 M€): raise Temperature 1 step.  
Aquifer (18 M€): place 1 Ocean tile.  
Greenery (23 M€): place 1 Greenery tile.  
City (25 M€): place 1 City tile; +1 M€ production.  
Sell Patents (free): discard cards from your hand for 1 M€ each.

3

8 M€

### Claim a Milestone

If you currently meet a milestone's requirement, pay 8 M€ to claim it.  
Only 3 milestones may be claimed per game total. Each can only be claimed once.  
Worth 5 VP at game end.

4

8 / 14  
/ 20  
M€

### Fund an Award

Pay to lock in an award category for end-game scoring.  
The leader in that category at game end earns 5 VP; runner-up earns 2 VP.  
You don't have to be winning the category when you fund it.  
Only 3 awards may be funded per game total.

5

Per  
card  
text

### Use a Blue Card Action

Any Active (blue) card in front of you with an ACTION box may be used.  
Each card's action may only be used once per generation.  
Turn the card sideways to show it's been used. It resets next generation.

6

8  
Plant  
s

### Convert Plants → Greenery

Spend 8 Plants to place 1 Greenery tile on the board.  
Raises Oxygen 1 step (if not maxed), giving +1 TR.  
Must be adjacent to one of your own tiles—if you own any.

7

8  
Heat

### Convert Heat → Temperature

Spend 8 Heat to raise Temperature 1 step (+2°C, +1 TR).  
Check the temperature track—some steps have bonus icons. Collect them when triggered.

8

Free

### Sell Patents

Discard any number of cards from your hand and gain 1 M€ per card discarded.  
Use when your hand has become unplayable given the current game state.

## Milestones Reference

Milestone	Requirement to claim it
<b>Terraformer</b>	Your TR is 35 or higher
<b>Mayor</b>	You own 3 or more City tiles on the board
<b>Gardener</b>	You own 3 or more Greenery tiles on the board
<b>Builder</b>	8 or more Building tags among your played cards
<b>Planner</b>	16 or more cards currently in your hand

## Awards Reference

Award	Who wins it at game end
<b>Landlord</b>	Player who owns the most tiles on the board (any type)
<b>Banker</b>	Player with the highest M€ production
<b>Scientist</b>	Player with the most Science tags in played cards (including face-down events)
<b>Thermalist</b>	Player holding the most Heat cubes
<b>Miner</b>	Player holding the most Steel + Titanium cubes combined

## Tiles and the Board

### Placement rules at a glance

- Oceans — Only on the 12 blue-reserved ocean spaces. Nowhere else.
- Cities — Cannot be adjacent to another City (unless a card says so).
- Greeneries — Must be adjacent to one of your own tiles—if you own any.
- Special — Follow the card that places them.

### The Ocean Adjacency Bonus — never miss this

Whenever any tile is placed next to one or more existing Ocean tiles, the player placing that tile gains 2 M€ for each adjacent Ocean tile.

- ▶ You place a City next to 2 oceans: +4 M€ for you. Right now.
- ▶ You place an Ocean next to a rival's City and Greenery: you get 4 M€.
- ▶ A rival places a tile next to 3 of your oceans: they get the 6 M€, not you.

Good ocean placement keeps paying dividends for the rest of the game. Cluster oceans near future city locations for maximum value.

## The Global Parameters — Detailed

### Temperature

Runs from  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $+8^{\circ}\text{C}$  in  $2^{\circ}\text{C}$  increments. Raising it 1 step = +1 TR.

Bonus icons are printed on certain steps of the Temperature track. When your action crosses one, collect the bonus immediately:

- At  $-24^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ : gain +1 Heat production each.
- At  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ : place 1 Ocean tile immediately at no cost. (Still earns +1 TR and adjacency bonuses.)
- At  $+2^{\circ}\text{C}$ : gain +1 Energy production.

### Oxygen

Runs from 0% to 14% in 1% steps. Raising it 1 step = +1 TR.

**At 8% oxygen, a chain reaction triggers:** raise Temperature 1 step immediately. That temperature step also gives +1 TR. Going from 7% to 8% oxygen is actually worth +2 TR total.

### Oceans

Nine ocean tiles. Each must go on one of the 12 blue-reserved ocean spaces. Placing an ocean gives you +1 TR plus 2 M€ per adjacent tile already on the board.

Once all 9 oceans are placed, this parameter is permanently complete. No more ocean placements are possible.



## End of Game and Scoring

### When does the game end?

The game ends at the conclusion of the generation in which all three parameters max out.

This is crucial: even if the last ocean is placed on the very first action of a generation, every player still gets their full remaining turns that generation.

After the final Production Phase, players may spend Plants to place last Greeneries.

Then count victory points from every source:

Source	Amount	Notes
<b>Terraform Rating</b>	<b>1 VP per TR</b>	Your TR marker position at game end
<b>Milestones</b>	<b>5 VP each</b>	For each milestone your name is on
<b>Awards</b>	<b>5 VP (1st) / 2 VP (2nd)</b>	Evaluated now—whoever leads each funded category
<b>Greenery Tiles</b>	<b>1 VP per tile you own</b>	Count your tiles on the board
<b>City Tiles</b>	<b>1 VP per adjacent Greenery</b>	Any player's Greenery counts, including yours
<b>Project Cards</b>	<b>Varies</b>	Each card with a VP icon—read its formula

Tiebreaker: most M€ wins. If still tied, share the victory.

Part Five

# Reference

*Keep these pages open during your first few games.*

## Common Mistakes

These rules trip up nearly every new player. Read them once before you start.

✗ What people do wrong	✓ The correct rule
Not counting TR as income each round	Your M€ income = TR + M€ production. At TR 25 with 0 production, you earn 25 M€.
Forgetting +1 TR when raising a parameter	Every time you raise any global parameter, move your TR marker up 1 immediately.
Using Event (red) card tags after play	Red cards flip face-down. Their tags are gone. They don't count for synergies or requirements.
Placing Greenery anywhere on the map	If you own any tiles, your Greenery <b>MUST</b> be adjacent to one of them. No exceptions.
Placing Cities next to other Cities	Cities cannot be adjacent to other Cities unless a card explicitly permits it.
Forgetting the 2 M€ ocean adjacency bonus	Every tile placed next to an ocean gives you +2 M€ per adjacent ocean. Every time. Don't skip this.
Using a Blue card action twice in one round	Each Blue card action can only be used once per generation. Turn it sideways as a reminder.
Taking resources immediately from a production card	Production changes move the production marker only. Resources arrive next Production Phase.
Thinking the game ends mid-round	The game ends at the <b>END</b> of the generation. Everyone finishes equal turns.

## Quick Numbers

Number	What it means
<b>20</b>	Starting TR for all players
<b>3 M€</b>	Cost to buy one card during Research Phase
<b>8 Plants</b>	Cost to place 1 Greenery tile
<b>8 Heat</b>	Cost to raise Temperature 1 step (+2°C, +1 TR)
<b>2 M€</b>	Bonus per adjacent Ocean when placing any tile
<b>8 M€</b>	Cost to claim first Milestone or fund first Award
<b>5 VP</b>	Value of each Milestone; value of Award 1st place
<b>9</b>	Total Ocean tiles in the game
<b>Max 3</b>	Milestones claimable per game; Awards fundable per game

## Strategy Principles

Terraforming Mars rewards long thinking. These principles will carry you far in your first games:

- Production beats immediate resources. A card giving +2 M€ production can earn 30+ M€ over the game. An 8 M€ payout is less impressive than it looks.
- TR is double-duty—it's both income and points. Players who terraform frequently build an income advantage that compounds every round.
- Lean into your corporation's strengths. Every corporation suggests a path. Follow it, at least early on.
- Fund an Award early. The first Award costs only 8 M€ and pays 5 VP. Fund one in a category you're already winning. Others will pay 14 or 20 M€ to challenge you.
- Watch the pace. Count the remaining ocean spaces, temperature steps, oxygen steps. When the end is 3–4 moves away, shift from engine-building to direct points and TR.
- Oceans near cities pay twice. Placing oceans where future cities will go creates a windfall of adjacency bonuses for whoever builds there.

## Solo Rules

Solo Terraforming Mars is a timed challenge: fully terraform Mars by the end of Generation 14.

- Start TR at 14, not 20.
- Place 2 neutral City tiles and 2 neutral Greenery tiles on the board at setup.
- TR does not add to M€ income in solo. Your income equals your M€ production track only.
- Win condition: all three parameters maxed by end of Generation 14.

- If you fall short, you get one final action phase in Generation 15—Standard Projects only, no cards, no blue actions.

Score normally if you win. A strong solo run is generally 70+ VP. Keep playing to beat your own score.