

Nobody is bored,

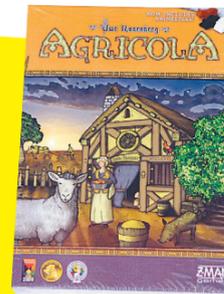
Keith Done shares his top-20 picks for every household's game cupboard

Agricola

You are a poor farmer with a family to feed. On a turn, you get to take two actions - one for you and one for the spouse. These actions draw upon numerous farming activities (collecting resources such as clay, wood, or stone; building fences; planting etc). You must balance expanding your family to create a larger workforce with being able to feed everyone and turn a profit.

Blokus

You have 21 different-shaped pieces and you place one on a board grid on your turn. You must place your piece so a corner of it touches the corner of one of your pieces already on the board. Starts off very easy but gets more difficult as space on the board becomes limited. Each piece has a score based on its size.



Carcassonne

Players draw from a stack of tiles with pieces of cities, roads, monasteries etc printed on them. You must lay a tile each turn so the picture on it connects with the pictures already on the table. As you complete cities and connect them with roads you score points. A simple but very strategic game.

Memoir 44

This is a two-player game full of plastic soldiers, tanks and artillery. It re-creates World War II battles using a customisable board. You can re-create the terrain of each battle. It is a hybrid between a miniatures game and a strategic board game and is very easy to learn - a great game for dads and their young sons to get together and an opportunity to learn about the history of World War II. The base game contains 15 scenarios and there are hundreds more to add.

Magic: The Gathering

The original collectible card game that spawned many copies. Its attraction is that a player must construct their own deck of cards using a set of defined rules (eg no more than four of the same card). There are literally thousands of cards out there and you obtain them by buying sets, booster packs and by trading cards.

Last Night on Earth

A game that emulates situations from B-grade zombie movies. One player manages the zombies and the others play a unique character with a special ability (eg the nurse can heal people, the sheriff is good with guns, the school football hero is fast on his feet). The game has different scenarios and a customisable board representing small-town America. A great game to drag out at Halloween!

Dominion

It's a card-based game where the focus is on how efficiently you build a set of cards that work well together from a selection available to all players at the start of the game. The game has many expansions that make it a different game every time.

Chicken Cha Cha Cha

A memory game for kids aged 4-10. Unique tiles are placed face down on a table. Players have a playing piece that is a large wooden chicken with a specific coloured tail feather. Players keep moving on a track as long as the symbols match the overturned tiles in the centre. The aim is to steal the tails of everyone else's chickens.

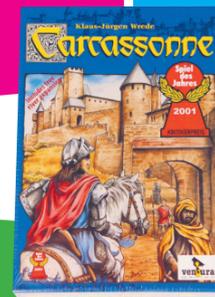


Pandemic

This is a co-operative game where the players must band together to beat the game (or the game will beat them). Players are given the roles of experts, such as a research scientist, a field medic, a transport co-ordinator etc and must work effectively to eliminate the spread of outbreaks of disease around the world. A very challenging game and not easy to win.

Puerto Rico

An excellent resource management game. You get to control a different role in Puerto Rico each turn (eg the mayor, the trader, the builder etc). These roles give you the ability to complete certain actions on your turn. You establish buildings to help you grow a diversity of crops and ship them to Europe to score points.



Quarriors

Players are warriors in a fantasy land where they must capture dangerous creatures from the wilderness. Each turn, players roll sets of unique dice that provide them with the ability to capture creatures and score points. The core of the game is about deciding the best dice to use from the collection rolled each turn.



7 Wonders

Players are given a culture at random, such as Egypt, Rome, Rhodes etc. The game is played in three rounds and players manage resources, trade with neighbours and improve their culture by building civic works, developing sciences and erecting monuments. It's an easy game and can be played within 30 minutes. Great game for a larger group (caters for up to seven people).

Settlers of Catan

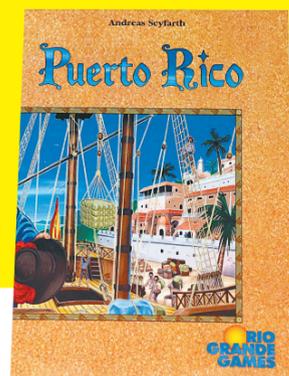
The best-known of the Euro-games (published in the mid-'90s). Involves trading with other players and managing resources effectively to build villages, roads and cities.

Robo Rally

You try to navigate your robot through the dangers of a factory, using a set of cards to do so. You get dealt nine cards a turn, such as "Move Forward 3", "Turn Left" etc. You put these all down in order and hope you will get where you want to go. But the fun happens when other players accidentally push you off course and your pathway changes.

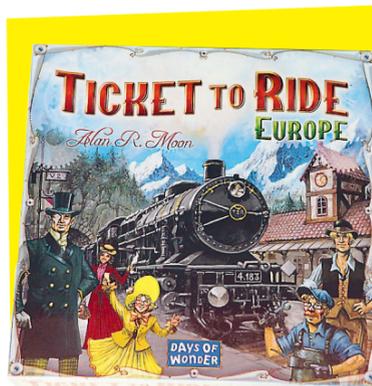
Ra

Over three rounds, players try to collect tiles with different ancient Egyptian themes. They have a limited amount of bidding tokens each round and must use these effectively to win auctions of tiles. Combinations of these tiles will deliver the best score and stop you losing points each round.



Thunderstone

You try to collect cards that will give you the best shot at dealing with monsters that dwell in an ancient dungeon.



Ticket to Ride

A very easy-to-learn game where you need to collect sets of matching coloured cards in order to lay down pieces that make railway links between cities. Each player has a set of "tickets" drawn randomly at the start of the game. Each "ticket" lists two cities and connecting those cities before the end of the game scores bonus points.

Twilight Imperium

This is a complex game about colonising the galaxy and ultimately coming into conflict with alien empires. It has a customisable board and a large selection of alien races that make the game different every time you play it. The game contains heaps of high-quality starship and ground force pieces, cards and components. This is one for those dedicated to the long game and takes about 3-8 hours to play.