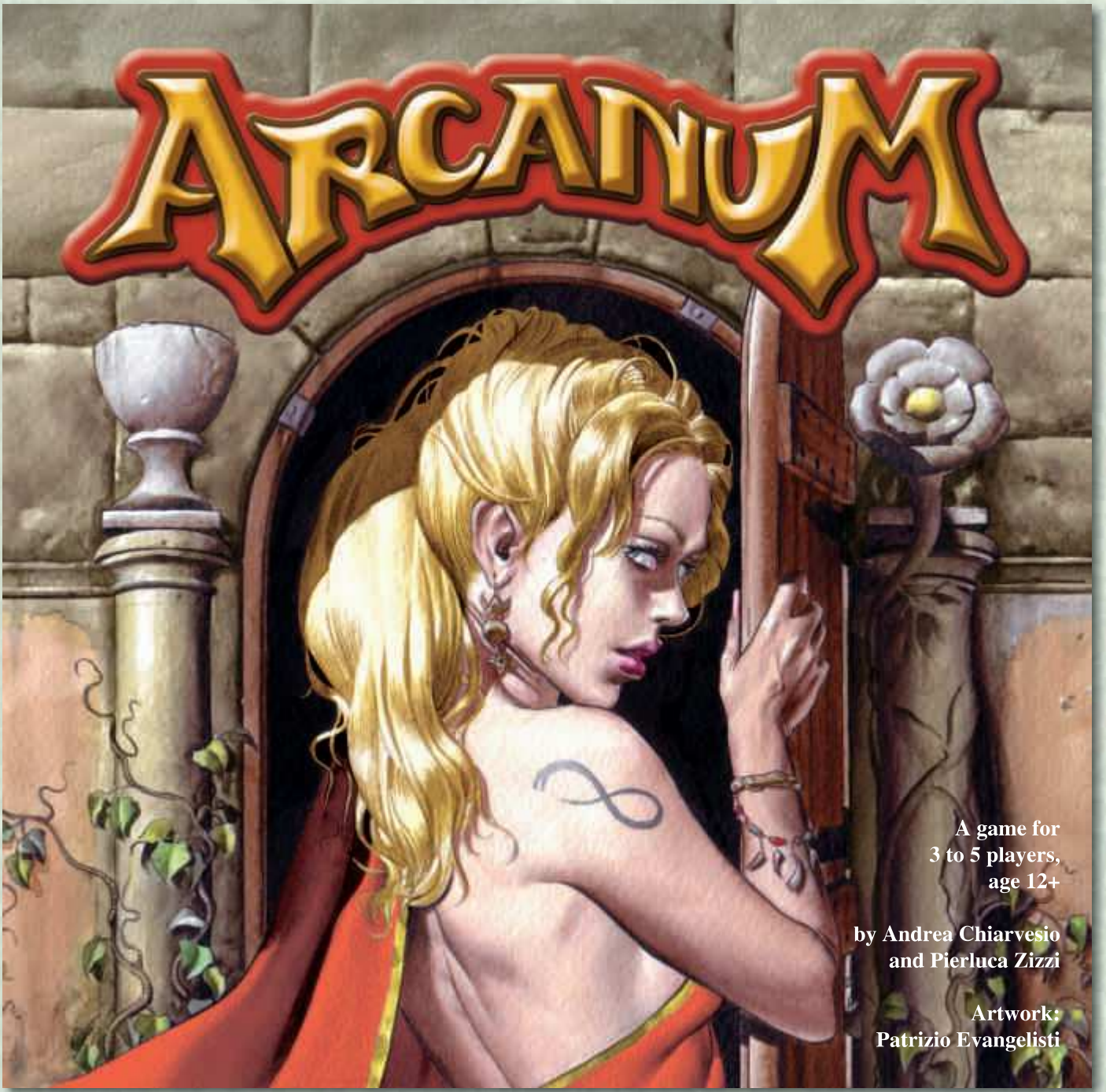

ARCANUM
A game for
3 to 5 players,
age 12+
by Andrea Chiarvesio
and Pierluca Zizzi
Artwork:
Patrizio Evangelisti

THE GAME

Fate is determining destiny and fortune of four noble Houses living in a medieval city.
Players will represent different paths for Fate, and will try to shape the destiny of those Houses to best suit their goals.
The game is played with a regular Tarot deck, used to move the game pieces on the board and generate effects. The four noble Houses are named after the Tarot suits: Chalices, Pentacles, Wands and Swords.

Game components

• 1 game board;

• A Tarot deck of 78 cards, split between 22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana;



• 4 sets of four "Court figures" (King, Queen, Knight and Knave) in four different colours (16 pawns in total);



• 5 players score token in 5 different colours to record players victory points;



• 12 player's aid sheets, detailing the effects of the 22 Major Arcana;

• 1 first player pawn (a black cylinder);



• 9 round tokens, eight House "prestige" tokens (2 each in the same colours of the court figure sets), plus 1 black "turn indicator" token;



- This rulebook in five different languages.

Important note: blue, yellow, red and green tokens are related to the four noble Houses, so they don't belong to any player. All players during the game will be able to move/influence those tokens. Blue is related to Swords, Yellow to Pentacles, Green to Wands and Red is the colour of Chalices.

Goal and length of the game
Arcanum is played on overall 6 (normal game) or 9 (long game) Turns, and the winner will be the player with the most Victory Points (VP) at the end of the game. In the case of a tie, all tied players share victory.
Most VP are awarded during the "Houses prestige" phase. This is a special phase that takes place after the 3rd, 6th and 9th turn of the game. It is also possible to obtain some extra VP by playing cards during turns.

Before starting the game, players must agree if they are playing a normal game (6 turns) or the extended game (9 turns).

Additional info about the Tarot deck

The deck included in the game is a regular Tarot deck, inspired by the esoteric school known as Golden Dawn. As mentioned above, a Tarot deck is composed by 22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana (see illustrations).
Major Arcana can be easily identified, since they all have a Latin number on them, from 0 to 21.
Minor Arcana are divided into four suits: Swords, Pentacles, Chalices and Wands. They can be easily identified by the suit icons, the frame colour and by the Arabic numbers.
Minor Arcana are numbered from 1 to 10, and each suit also has four Court Figures (King, Queen, Knight and Knave), which bring the total of Minor Arcana to 56 cards.

Please note: taking into consideration that board games are a family pastime, a few cards from the original Initiatory Tarot of the Golden Dawn published by Lo Scarabeo were modified or replaced, in the deck that is part of the Arcanum game, with other images, all from the same artist, Patrizio Evangelisti.

THE BOARD

A) House Prestige track. This is used to record the prestige of the Houses (Swords, Wands, Pentacles and Chalices). Houses are not owned by players, but can be influenced by them.



B) "Houses prestige scoring" area. This will be used during the corresponding phase (after Turn 3, 6 and 9).



C) Players Score track. This is used to record VP owned by players.

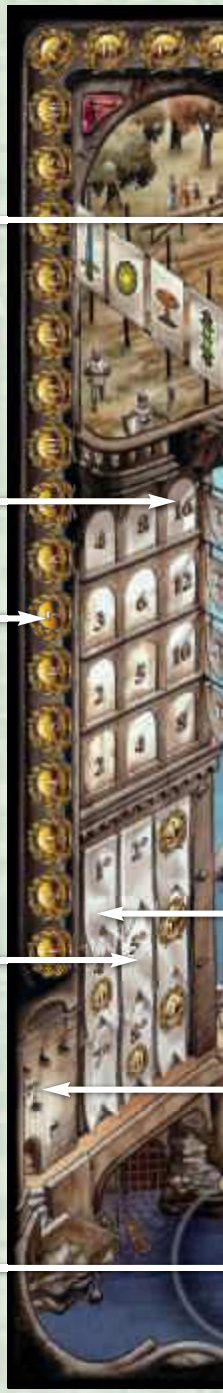


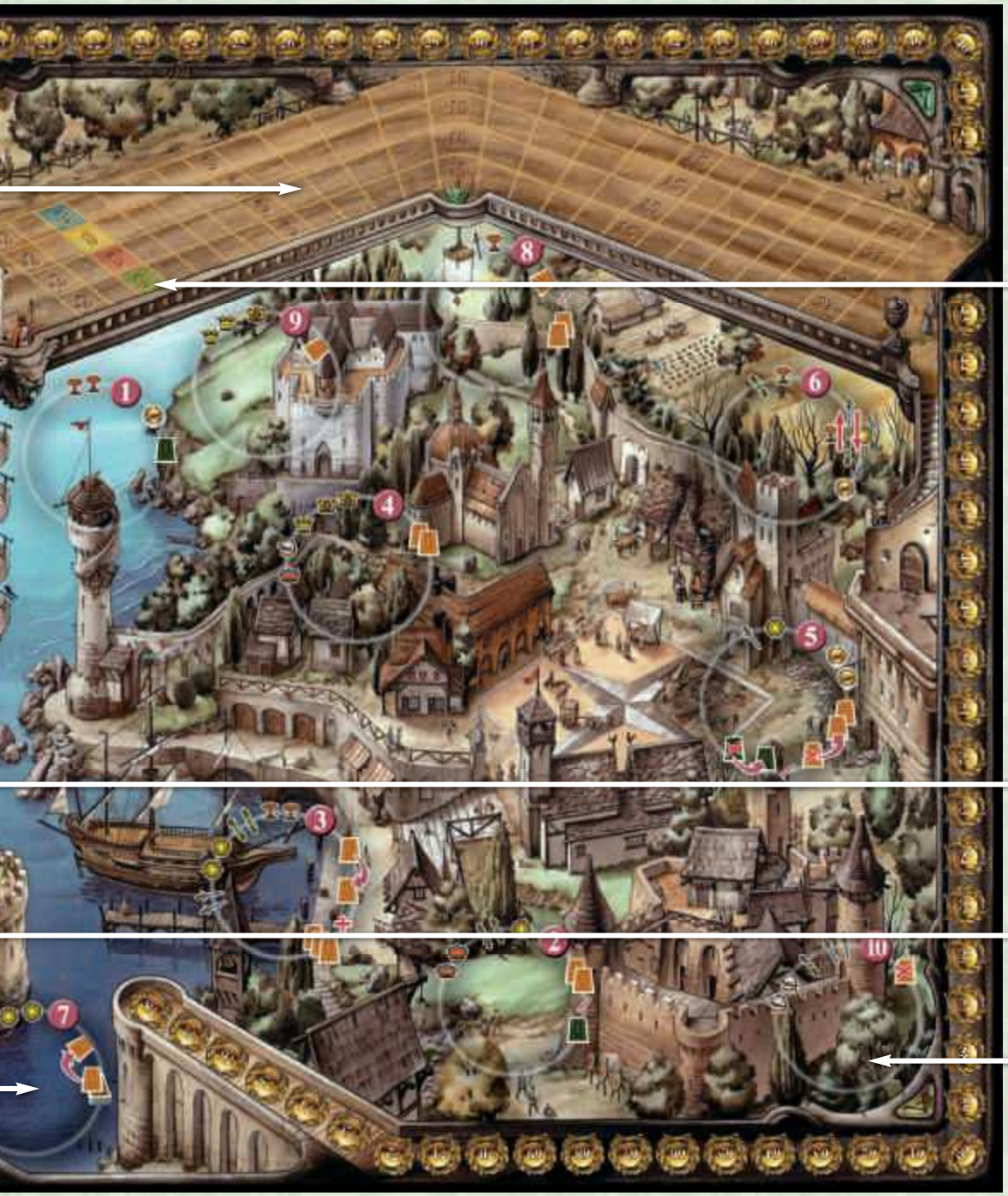
D) Turn Track. This is used to record the current turn. The game will end after the "Houses prestige scoring" phase that follows Turn 6 or Turn 9.



E) These 10 highlighted areas, numbered from 1 to 10, are the city locations where the court figures will be moved by players. Their movement will increase and/or decrease the prestige of the four Houses, as well as other gaming effects.







SETUP

Randomly choose the starting player (maybe the last one who bought a Tarot deck or who had a Tarot reading), and assign the "first player" pawn to that player (the game will always proceed clockwise).

Four House "prestige" tokens (one for each colour) must be placed on the corresponding squares (numbered "0") of the House prestige track. This track represents the prestige of the four noble Houses/suit (Swords, Wands, Pentacles and Chalices).

Keep the other four House "prestige" tokens available next to the game board or close to the "Houses Prestige Scoring Area".

Split the Tarot deck between 22 Major Arcana and 56 Minor Arcana, then shuffle both decks separately. Give one player's aid to each player.

The black round token is placed on the first square (marked with a "1") of the Turn Track.

Each player chooses a score token and puts it close to the start of the external track (the Victory Point track, that has no "0" space, so just keep the score tokens close to it).

Randomly place the 16 court figures in the 10 "E" locations, so that no location contains more than 2 figures, and no one contains 2 figures of the same colour.

HOW TO PLAY

IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME PLAYING ARCANUM

We suggest you to ignore Major Arcana for the first two Turns of the game. This way, you'll use the first two turns to familiarize with Minor Arcana and their effects on the board. Don't draw a random Major Arcana at the beginning of Turn 1, do it instead at the beginning of Turn 3. If you want to play a simpler game, you can even choose to play ignoring Major Arcana completely, in this case you can simply leave them in the box.

GAME TURNS

The game last 6 or 9 turns. Each Turn is split in two or three different phases:

- **Draw and hide cards** (every turn)
- **Play cards** (every turn)
- **House prestige scoring** (only after the third, the sixth and eventually the ninth turn)

SPECIAL RULE WITH 3 PLAYERS

In a 3 players game, the "House prestige scoring" phase takes place during the 4th and 8th turn (instead of during the 3rd, 6th and 9th). Because of this, the game ends after the 4th or 8th turn, as agreed at the beginning of the game.

Please note: at the end of every Turn, the "first player" pawn is moved clockwise.

A. Draw and hide cards phase

Starting with the player holding the "first player" token and proceeding clockwise, each player chooses if he wants to draw either *3 Minor Arcana* **or** *1 Major Arcana.*

Very important exception: in the first turn only (in other words at the very beginning of the game) all players during this phase are simply dealt 4 Minor Arcana and 1 Major Arcana.

Now, all players MUST choose one Minor Arcana from their hand and hide it in front of them (under the board is a good place, so that the hidden card(s) can be easily recovered). Players can look at any time at the cards they hide during the game, but they have to ***be very careful to not mix or swap accidentally cards in player hands with "hidden" cards.***

Hiding the Minor Arcana will allow the players to gain control over the four Houses (Wands, Pentacles, Chalices and Wands), in order to score as many points as possible during the "Houses prestige" phases.

For this reason, it's unwise to play with few or no Minor Arcana in hand.

Hand limitation: if a player, for any reason, has more than 7 cards in his hands, he must immediately discard all extra cards (this happens before hiding the Minor Arcana during the Drawing and hiding phase).

Example: *it's the start of Turn 3. Player A has 5 cards in his hand and chooses to draw 3 Minor Arcana. This brings his hand to 8 cards, so he must immediately discard one card. Now he must also hide 1 Minor Arcana under the board in front of him, so he will be left with 6 cards.*

B. Playing cards phase

The player holding the "first player" token is once again the first player to act during this phase (active player). Then the game will proceed clockwise with the player to his left who will become the active player, until each player has been the active player once during the current turn.

The active player, supposing that he has at least 1 Minor Arcana in his hand at any time during his turn, **must** play 1 Minor Arcana, and apply its effect (this always includes moving 1 Court Figure on the board).

The active player **can** play 1 Major Arcana, and apply its effect (this may or may not include moving one or more Court Figures)

The Major Arcana can be played before or after the mandatory Minor Arcana, this is up to the player.

A player can never play 2 Minor Arcana or 2 Major Arcana during the same turn.

Note: *a few Major Arcana, as part of their effect, will move one court figure into a location and activate it. Still, playing such Major Arcana with this kind of effect is not a replacement for playing the mandatory Minor Arcana.*

Note: *if a player starts this phase with no Minor Arcana in his hand, he draws immediately one Minor Arcana and he is still compelled to play one Minor Arcana.*

Playing a Minor Arcana:

As soon as a player plays a Minor Arcana, the following things happen:

a – Check the suit of the Minor Arcana that is being played. The prestige of the corresponding House is immediately raised by one.



Example: *player C plays the 4 of Swords. The blue token (corresponding to the Swords House) is moved up one square on the House prestige track.*

b1 – If the Minor Arcana played is a numeral card (a card with a number from 1 to 10), the active player chooses a Court Figure of the same suit of the card played, takes it and moves it in the location with the same number of the card. Please note that the player must move a Court Figure, so he cannot choose a Court Figure that is already in that location.



Example: *player C plays the 4 of Sword. He can choose any Swords Court Figure (a blue pawn, in other words) and move it into location number 4. This means that he cannot choose a Swords Court Figure that already is in location number 4, or a Wands, Pentacles or Chalices Court Figure (a green, yellow or red pawn).*

or

b2 – If the Minor Arcana played is corresponding to a Court Figure, the active player takes the corresponding Court Figure and moves it in any of the ten locations (the Court Figure must be moved, and cannot stay in its current location).



Example: *player D plays the Queen of Pentacles. He moves the Court Figure representing the Queen of Pentacles (the yellow Queen) into any location he wishes (but he must move it from its current location).*

c – Prestige adjustments

After moving a Court Figure in a new location, the active player checks if the suit and/or the kind of Court Figures matches any of the suit and Figure symbols listed on the left side of the location (to the left of the location number).

If there is a match, the prestige of the House whose Court Figure has been moved will be raised by as many matches that result.





Example: *Player B just moved the Knight of Swords into location number 10. The location shows two knight figures, one Wand and two Swords. The prestige of the Swords House will raise by 4 points (2 for the "match" between a Knight entering the location and the two knight figures, and 2 for the "match" between a Swords Court Figure entering the location and the two swords).*

Example: *Player B just moved the Knave of Wands into location number 10. The prestige of the Wands House is raised by 1 point, because of the match between a Wand Court Figure entering the location and the single wand).*

Note: *the House prestige track stops at square 21. If an effect causes a House's prestige to go over the 21st square, all the other Houses prestige tokens are instead moved one square back.*

d – Location effects and gains

Each location has its own effects, listed on the right side of the location (to the right of the location number). Each location has a unique effect:

1. **Mage Tower –** the active player gains 1 VP and draws 1 Major Arcana.

2. **Artisan District –** the active player draws **either** 2 Minor Arcana **or** 1 Major Arcana.

3. **Harbour –** the active player draws 1 Minor Arcana. Then each non-active player, in clockwise order starting with the one at the left of the active player, chooses if he wants to draw one Minor Arcana or not. After all non-active players have made their choice, the active player draws as many Minor Arcana as the total drawn by the non-active players. As always, if a player exceeds the hand size limit of 7 cards, he must immediately discard all excess cards.

4. **Throne Room –** the active player draws 2 Minor Arcana.

5. **Market –** the active player gains 2 VP. Then he can discard 1 Major Arcana to draw 1 Major Arcana or discard 1 Minor Arcana to draw 2 Minor Arcana.

6. **Fields –** the active player gains 1 VP and can change the Houses prestige on the House prestige track. He can raise or lower each House prestige by 1 prestige.

7. **Treasure Vault –** the active player draws one Minor Arcana card and immediately hides it under the board in front of him. He can look at the card before hiding it.

8 **Cathedral** – the active player can **either** hide under the board in front of him one Minor Arcana **or** draw 2 Minor Arcana.

9 **Ballroom** – the active player can hide under the board in front of him one Minor Arcana from his hand.

10 **Castle** – all non-active players must discard one card from their hand.

It's important to notice that the above effects apply to players, while the effects on the left of the city location number apply to Houses.

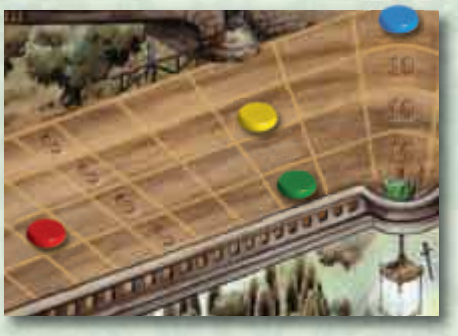
e – Discard
Once its effect is resolved, a played Minor Arcana is discarded face up next to the Minor Arcana deck to form a Minor Arcana discard pile.

Playing a Major Arcana:
Simply follow the instructions on the player's aid corresponding to the Major Arcana that is being played. Remember that the Major Arcana can be played either before or after the mandatory Minor Arcana.
Like Minor Arcana, Major Arcana are also discarded after their effect is resolved in a separate face up discard pile (with one exception: the Tower – please see the card description).

C. House prestige scoring
After the 3rd, 6th and 9th turn, the game stops and the players proceed to a phase called "House prestige scoring". During the previous turns, the players were hiding cards under the board in front of them to secretly take control of one or more Houses, and now it's time to collect the rewards of their efforts!

First of all, the house prestige tokens on the house prestige track are checked. The House with the highest score on the house prestige track is moved and placed in the first space of the "House scoring area" (below the sign with number 1). The other House prestige tokens will go in the following spaces, in prestige order.

In case two or more Houses have the same score, their tokens are all placed in the same space (if, for example, both Chalices and Wands tie with the most prestige points, both tokens will be placed on the first space, leaving the second space empty. Pentacles that had the next best score will be then placed on space 3).



Example: *Luca, Piero and Mario are playing a game of Arcanum. It's the end of turn 3, so it's now time for the first House prestige scoring phase.*

The House (suit) with the highest prestige is Swords (10 prestige), followed by Pentacles and Wands that are tied at 8 prestige, while Chalices are the lowest ranked House (suit) with 3 prestige. The Blue token (Swords) is then placed under the "1st" position of the House scoring area, both the Yellow (Pentacles) and Green (Wands) tokens are put under the "2nd" position and the Red (Chalices) in 4th position.

Starting with the House on top (first) position, all players must now reveal their hidden cards matching that House suit. Note that if no one hid the Major Arcana numbered "0" – the Fool – you can simply reveal all hidden cards simultaneously and calculate scoring easily. *Please be very careful in order to always keep the cards "in hand" and the hidden cards separated.*



Example: *Luca reveals 5 hidden cards (he managed to hide 2 extra cards during the first three turns), Piero 4 cards (he was able to hide 1 extra card), Mario instead reveals only 3 cards (the mandatory ones – remember that at each turn players must, if possible, hide 1 Minor Arcana during the "drawing and hiding" phase).*

The player that shows the highest number of cards of that suit "dominates" the House, and scores the highest PV listed aside of that House token (in the case of the House on top, the dominating player will score then 16 VP). The player second for cards of that suits scores is said to be "influencing" the House, and scores the intermediate points (in he case of the House on top, 8 VP).

The third player with more cards is said to "have a presence" in the House, and scores the lowest VP listed aside the token. Other players score no points for that House.

Example: *all players show how many Swords cards they have in their hidden cards. Luca shows 1 card, Piero 2 cards and Mario has no Sword cards to show. Piero is dominating Sword House and scores 16 VP. Luca is influencing Sword House and scores 8 VP. Since Mario has no Sword cards, he doesn't have presence in Sword House so he scores no VP (the 4 VP for third place aren't assigned).*

The same procedure is followed to determine players "dominating", "influencing" and "with presence" in the lowest scoring Houses, up to the House in fourth position, that awards less VP.

HOW TO SOLVE TIES: if two (or more) players have the same number of hidden cards belonging to the same suit, ties are solved by adding and comparing the numeric values of the hidden cards. Court Figures in this case have values ranging from 11 to 14 (Knives= 11, Knights= 12, Queens=13 and Kings=14). In case of a tie also for what concerns the numeric values, the players will evenly split the VP (rounding down).

Example: *it's time to evaluate Pentacles. Luca shows 1 Pentacle card (the ten of Pentacles), Piero 1 Pentacle card (Queen of Pentacles) and Mario 2 Pentacle cards (two and four of Pentacles). Mario is dominating Pentacle House, since he has more cards than his opponents, and scores 12 VP. Piero is influencing Pentacle, since the Queen is worth 13 versus the 10 owned by Luca. So, Piero scores 6 VP. Luca scores 3 VP for his presence in Pentacle House.*
It's Wands turn. All players have one single Wand card to show: Luca the 8 of Wands, Piero the 7 of Wands and Mario the King of Wands. This makes Mario the dominating player over Wand House, and he scores another 12 VP. Luca will be influencing the House and scoring 6 VP, while Piero scores 3 VP for his presence in the Wand House. Note that Pentacles and Wands are awarded the same values in VP, since they were tied for prestige at the end of turn 3.

Note: *a player cannot choose to not show one or more hidden cards to save them for later House prestige scoring phases!*

Example: *finally, Chalices must be evaluated. Both Mario and Piero have no hidden card left, while Luca has two Chalices cards to show. Even if Luca knows that one card would be enough to gain domination over Chalices, he is forced to show both his Chalice hidden cards (and both will be then discarded). Luca is the dominating player over Chalice House, and so he scores 8 VP. Mario and Piero score nothing, not having cards of the Chalices suit.*

After all four Houses have been evaluated, the House prestige tokens are placed back into the starting position (zero) on the House prestige track, and all hidden cards are discarded.

Example: *at the end of the House prestige scoring, Luca has scored 25 VP (8 for influencing Swords, 3 for presence in Pentacles, 6 for influence on Wands and 8 for dominating Chalices), Piero has scored 25 VP (16 for dominating Swords, 6 for influencing Pentacles and 3 for presence in Wands), Mario has scored 24 VP for his domination over Pentacles and Wands (12 VP each). House prestige tokens are placed back on starting position (the "zero" squares" on the House prestige track) and all cards hidden (and now of course revealed) by players are discarded. It's now time to move to Turn 4.*

END OF THE GAME

The game ends after the 6th or the 9th turn, as agreed by players at the beginning of the game. The player with the highest VP is the winner. In case of a tie, the player with more cards in his hands is the winner. In case of a further tie, victory is shared.

MAJOR ARCANA EFFECTS



0 – Fool: this card can act as a kind of joker, so when played you can move any court figure to any location on the board (you have to move it from his current location), and all the related effects take place. This doesn't count as playing a Minor Arcana and so it doesn't replace the mandatory Minor Arcana that you still must play during the current turn.

Instead of playing the Fool for its "joker" effect, you can choose to hide the Fool under the board in front of you (IMPORTANT NOTE: the Fool is the only Major Arcana that can be hidden) During House prestige scoring, the player that hid the Fool can assign the Fool to any single suit he wants. The Fool counts as a card of that suit of numeric value 0 (so, it counts as an extra cards to determine dominance, influence or presence, but for breaking ties its value is zero).



I – Magician: draw 2 Minor Arcana and you can hide one Minor Arcana from your hand under the board in front of you.



II – High Priestess: score 3 VP



III – Empress: when played you can move any court figure to any location on the board (you have to move it from his current location), and all the related effects take place (see "the Fool" description).
After resolving the location effect, one House of your choice gains 1 prestige point and a different House of your choice loses 1 prestige point.



IV – Emperor: you can immediately hide one Minor Arcana from your hand under the board in front of you. Then, one House of your choice gains 3 prestige points.



V – Hierophant: draw 1 Minor Arcana and 1 Major Arcana



VI – Lovers: you and the player(s) with less VP gain 2 VP. This means that if when playing this card you have less VP than any other player, you gain 4 VP.



VII – Chariot: one House of your choice gains 2 prestige points. All other players are forced to discard one card.



VIII – Strength: gain 2 VP and one House of your choice gains 3 PP.



IX – Hermit: you can hide two Minor Arcana from your hand under the board in front of you. All other players can hide one Minor Arcana each.



X – Wheel: every player, including you, must give 2 cards to the player seated on their left. If a player has less than 2 cards he gives what he can (zero or one card).



XI – Justice: draw Minor Arcana until you have 4 cards in your hand.



XII – Hanged Man: you lose 2 VP, then you draw 2 Major Arcana. You can play this card even if you have only 1 or 0 PV (you go back or stay at 0 PV).



XIII – Death: discard 1 or 2 Minor Arcana and draw respectively 1 or 2 Major Arcana.



XIV – Temperance: you can move any court figure to any location on the board (you have to move it from its current location), and all the related effects take place (see the Fool effect for a practical example).
After resolving the location effect, you can replace one or two of your hidden Minor Arcana with the same number of Minor Arcana from your hand.



XV – Devil: during your current turn, any gain or loss of VP and prestige points are doubled.
Effects related to cards (draw, discard, hide) are not doubled.



XVI – Tower: you gain 2 VP. Don't discard the Tower card, but place it on the board instead, wherever you want inside the "locations" area. All locations physically "touched" by this card are untouchable until the beginning of your next turn. This means that no player can move Court Figure outside or inside those locations and no effect related to those locations can take place. Discard the Tower at the beginning of your next turn.



XVII – Stars: draw 2 Minor Arcana and gain 2 VP.



XVIII – Moon: all players (including you) draw 1 Minor Arcana. Then, you can hide up to 2 Minor Arcana, your opponents can hide 1 Minor Arcana each.



XIX – Sun: you gain 2 VP. All other players must reveal 3 cards among their hidden cards. If a player has 3 or less cards hidden, he must reveal all his hidden cards. Cards revealed this way stay revealed until the next House prestige scoring phase (and will be discarded after that phase as usual) Cards hidden after the end of your turn will be hidden face down as usual.



XX – Judgement: all other players must discard one card. You choose any 3 Court Figures and remove them from the board. At the beginning of your next turn, place back the Court Figures in 3 different locations (doing this does not activates those locations effects).



XXI – World: you can hide 1 Minor Arcana. Then, a special "House prestige scoring" phase takes place. *House prestige tokens are NOT moved* from their position on the House prestige track (and they won't be reset to starting position after this special phase).
This special "House prestige scoring" phase doesn't allocate full VP: dominating a House will award points as for influencing the House, and influencing the House will award points as for a presence. Presence doesn't award any VP at all.
In detail: dominating the House with has currently the most prestige point will award 8 VP, influencing it 4 VP. Dominating the House in 2nd place for prestige will award 6 VP and influencing it 3 VP. The House in 3rd position for prestige will give 5 VP to the dominating player and 2 to its influencing player, and the last House will award respectively 4 and 2 VP.
Hidden cards are revealed but will NOT be discarded after this special scoring phase, so put them back hidden in front of each respective player under the board.

Additional Notes

When playing with 4 or 5 players, sometimes the Minor Arcana and/or the Major Arcana deck can run out of cards. In this case, just form a new drawing deck by shuffling discards.
In the very unlikely event that a player is supposed to draw cards, and there are no cards in the deck (even after making a new deck by shuffling discards), the player draws as many cards as possible.