

# Panorama Rules

2-5 Players | One Hour | Version 0.3 (12/3/2015)

## Overview

Panorama is a collaborative worldbuilding game focused on exploring a specific time and place. Players take turns creating elements of the setting and showing how they connect. By the end of the game, players will understand the key locations, groups, and individuals within the world they've created.

All you need to play are blank index cards and a pen or marker. The core of the game has players making new cards and placing them on the table; each card represents a part of the world. The game can last as long as you want, but I'd budget at least an hour.

## How to Play

### Setup

To start, you need to create a few cards that will provide context for the rest of the game. First is the **High Concept** card that outlines the general flavor and genre of world.

A good High Concept captures the time and breadth (e.g. Distant Galaxy, Ancient Rome, Wild West, Post-Apocalyptic Wasteland). It can also indicate something about the technology or culture of the world (e.g. warring factions, steampunk, superheros, aliens, nanotechnology, interstellar travel, slavery, magic).

Write the phrase on the card and leave it prominently on the table. Interesting settings usually have conflict, either among organizations or against the environment.

High Concept examples:

- A small town full of secret societies
- A frontier town in the middle of a gold rush
- A galactic civilization in the throes of civil war
- A fantasy world with warring groups of intelligent animals
- Earth in the near future where 99% of the population is wiped out by a pandemic

Take a little time to discuss what aspects of the world you are set on including and which you want to avoid. In one game, a player might want the space empire to only have humans (i.e. no

aliens). In another, a player might want the world of magic creatures to include steampunk contraptions.

Don't take too long, but make sure everyone has similar expectations for the tone and setting. Continue when everyone is excited about the High Concept.

In the last part of Setup, players add some initial **Location** cards (see the later section for how to create cards). Each player should create one Location to help establish the world. Location cards should have a name and an **Attribute** - something that makes them interesting. Put these cards in the center of the table.

## Rounds of Play

The game is played over a series of rounds. At the start of each round, the first player chooses a **Topic**. The topic can range from general (e.g. Technology, Economics) to specific (e.g. Duke Gloor's Schemes, The Smugglers). All cards played this round should be related to the topic.

Once the initial player has chosen a topic, they should create a new card. There are four types of cards: **Location**, **Group**, **Person**, and **Extra Info**. When creating a card, write its name and two **Attributes** on it; then they place it on the table. The next section explains card creation in detail.

Each player's turn should be fairly quick: a minute or two, max. Not every card has to be amazing; if you keep the game moving, you'll soon get another chance to play. It's totally okay to ask the other players for advice if you're stuck or permission if you think your idea might violate group norms / expectations.

Once the initial player places their card, go around the circle and have each player create a card and place it on the table. The card should be related to the round's Topic but it can be tangential.

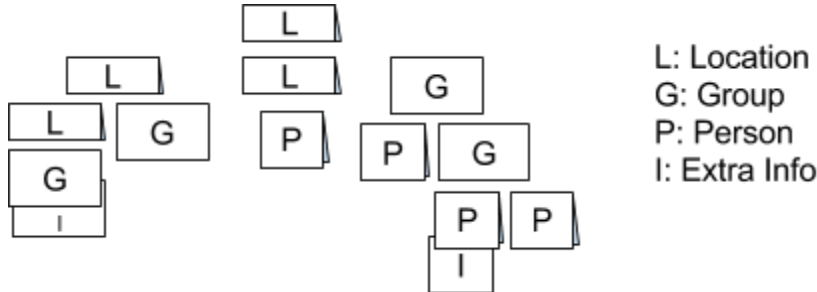
When once everyone at the table has played, the player who chose the Topic gets to add a **Truth** about the world. This Truth should be something interesting and important to the world that isn't captured in any of cards (Example: the civilization uses pictographs instead of letters). It should be related to the Topic and might be implied by the cards played this round. Keep track of the Truths on a separate index card.

Once the initial player shares the Truth, a new round begins. The player to their left selects a new Topic and play continues.

As you add cards to the table, their placement shows the relationships between them. If you place a Group below a Location, then that Group is at that Location. If you place a Person below a Group, that Person is part of the group. A Group placed under a Group is a sub-group (e.g.

faction or team). If multiple cards are adjacent to each other (i.e. under the same card) then they are at the same Location or part of the same Group.

Here's how the table might look after several rounds of play:



## Card Creation

There are four types of cards and each has a unique orientation (landscape or portrait; propped up or lying down). Each card also has a different set of possible **Attributes**. Attributes are important aspects that are written on the card (e.g. Agendas, Secrets, Assets, Allies). Cards can be played above, below, left, or right of other cards. If a card is below another, it is within the higher card (e.g. a Person would be part of a Group or in a Location).

Groups and People must have an Agenda - the main thing they're trying to accomplish. Example Agendas include: Overthrow the King, Escape the Bandits, Recover the Lost Artifact, Protect the Orphanage.

## Location Cards

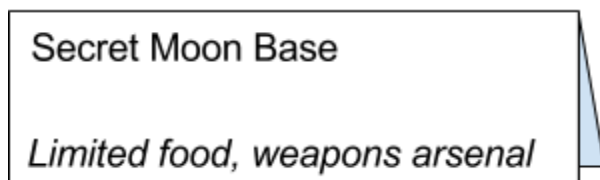
These cards represent a place; they can be as broad as a galaxy or narrow as a room. Each Location must have at least one Facet.

*Orientation:* Folded longwise, upright

*Attributes:* Facets (something unique about the Location)

*Placement:* Locations can be played alongside, above, or below existing Locations

*Examples:* "The Orion Nebula", "The Duchy of Brent", "Tom Smith's Farm"



## Group Cards

These cards represent a group; it can be as broad as an empire or narrow as a team. Each group must have an Agenda and at least one other Attribute.

*Orientation:* Horizontal, laid flat

*Attributes:* Facets, Agendas (what they are working toward), Allies, Enemies, Assets, Secrets, vulnerabilities

*Placement:* Groups can be played alongside or below Locations, or above or below other Groups

*Examples:* “The Klang Oligarchy”, “The Merchant Guild”, “Strike Team Bravo”



## Person Cards

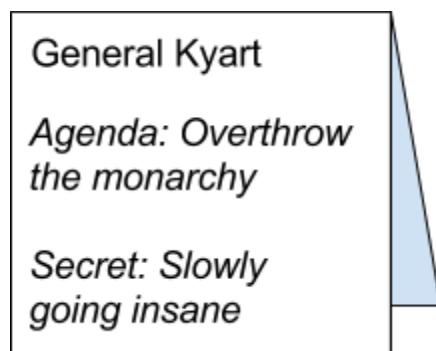
These cards represent an individual. Each Person must have an Agenda and at least one other Attribute.

*Orientation:* Folded shortwise, upright

*Attributes:* Facets, Agendas, Allies, Enemies, Assets, Secrets, Fears

*Placement:* Person can be played alongside or below Locations and Groups

*Examples:* “King Gravlox”, “Joey the Janitor”, “Robot Z97X”



## Extra Info Cards

These cards allow you to revisit previous cards and add more details. When playing an Extra Info card, add at least two Attributes. Any Group, Location, or Person card can only have one Extra Info card attached to it.

*Orientation:* Horizontal for a group or location, vertical for a person. Write on only the bottom half of the card.

*Attributes:* Same options as the card type you're revisiting

*Placement:* Slide an info card underneath a Person, Group, or Location card.



## The Cardinal Rule: Maintain Internal Consistency

The key to this game is maintaining internal consistency; never contradict something that has already been established.

## Ending / Resolution Round

There is no right time to end the game, so play for as long as you enjoy it. I recommend going long enough so that everyone gets a chance to set the Topic.

When you're ready to bring the game to a close, each player has one final action. On each player's turn, they choose one Person or Group and describe how their agenda resolves and their new place in the world. The Person or Group can succeed or fail, just make sure you keep the world internally consistent.

# Types of Cards and Agendas

## Locations

- Planets
- Countries
- Regions
- Cities
- Neighborhoods
- Structures

## Groups

- Governments
- Companies
- Guilds
- Religions
- Families
- Secret Societies
- Faction
- Team

## Individuals

- Leader
- Administrator
- Laborer
- Apprentice
- Merchant
- Soldier
- Crook
- Child
- Researcher

## Agendas

- End the war
- Discover new lands
- Win the affections of the princess
- Monopolize the market
- Assassinate the Duke

## Notes

This game is inspired by another collaborative worldbuilding game: [Microscope](#). Where Panorama is about exploring space and relationships, Microscope focuses on fractally building a timeline. Check it out!

I'm always looking for feedback and constructive criticism - please leave it as a comment here or email me at [randy@hyperdiegesis.com](mailto:randy@hyperdiegesis.com)

Finally, you should modify or ignore any rule in favor of telling a better story or having more fun!

## FAQ

*Should this card (e.g. Kingdom) be a Location or Group?*

When in doubt, make something a Location, you can always fill in Groups underneath. A Kingdom location can contain a monarchy, military, parliament, etc.

*Can I revisit a card if I've already played an Info card on it?*

This game works better if you flesh out the world by exploring its breadth rather than returning to the same elements. You can always create a new card that has some relationship with the old one. Example: to further explore General Splake you might add a Location: Splake's Hidden Arsenal.

*On my turn, can I discuss my decision with other players?*

Yes, but don't take long. You can always ask if the group is okay with a certain card you want to add.

*Can I add a card between other cards in a hierarchy?*

Yes, you can insert a Location or Group if it makes sense. For example, you might create a kingdom Location below a continent card and above a city card.

*Can I play a Group or Person outside of any location?*

Yes, just play them alongside the the highest level location. You can later go back and add a location card.