TIMECHASE
Rulebook

TIME CHASE

A card game for time travelers
by Jonathan Woodard

Introduction

You've done it! You've cracked the code to unlock time travel! Your breakthrough invention has the potential to revolutionize the world as we know it, and undoubtedly your genius will be celebrated across the globe.

However, it appears that some of your scientific colleagues within the laboratory are trying to use your invention to travel back in time and take the credit for themselves. You must stop them and claim your rightful place in history!

Time Chase is a trick-taking game with a twist — you are allowed to travel back in time to previous tricks, known as events, and change their outcome. The first player to control three events in the timeline wins!

AGES 10+ | 3-6 PLAYERS | 30 MINUTES

Components

65 Element Cards
Divided into five suits. Each suit has 13 cards, numbered from 1–13.

18 Control Discs
Placed in the timeline to indicate who currently has control of each event.

10 Event Tokens
Placed in the timeline, one at a time, to form a linear sequence of events.

6 Traveler Pawns
Moved around to show where players are currently located in the timeline.

30 Fuel Crystals
Spent by the players to travel to different events in the timeline.

6 Time Machine Cards
Used to indicate how much fuel players are spending as they travel.

1 First Player Marker
Indicates who plays first.

1 Rulebook
A basic primer on time travel.

Element Card Suits

The various cards in the element deck are divided into five suits. Each suit represents an important element in the discovery of time travel.

Dark Matter

Flux

Neutrinos

Paradox

Tachyons

Game Setup

Important! Before the game, you will need to remove certain cards from the element deck, based on the number of players in the game. Consult the chart below to determine which cards to remove. Return the removed cards to the game box; they will not be used.

players	cards to remove	deck size
6	none	65 cards
5	1 and 2 of each suit	55 cards
4	1, 2, 3, and 4 of each suit	45 cards
3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of each suit	35 cards

3-Player Setup Example

1. Choose one player as the dealer, who shuffles the element deck and deals each player a **hand** of ten cards.

2. Place the remainder of the **element deck** off to the side of the play area.

3. Reveal the **top card** of the element deck. Rotate it sideways and tuck it partially beneath the deck, so that the card's suit remains visible.

4. Stack the **event tokens** in ascending numerical order (i.e., "1" on the top and "10" on the bottom). Place this stack off to the side of the play area.

5. Take the **"1" event token** from the stack and place it next to the element deck.

6. Each player takes a **time machine card** in the color of their choice, placing it with side A (standard mode) or side B (time jumble mode) face up.

7. Each player takes a set of three **control discs** in the color of their choice and places them in the three slots on their time machine card.

8. Each player takes a **traveler pawn** in the color of their choice and places it next to the "1" event token.

9. Place the **fuel crystals** off to the side of the play area to form the general supply.

10. Give the **first player marker** to the player seated to the left of the dealer.

Intro to Time Travel

"Some people say that history abhors a paradox. This is most vehemently not so. If you asked it, history would simply shrug its shoulders like an angsty teenager. 'Whatever.' History does a stellar job of ignoring paradoxes. History, however, still hates Mondays." —Garfield

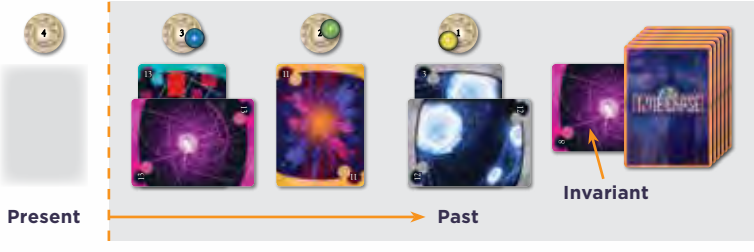
The Timeline

During each round of the game, a new event token is added to the end of the growing row of event tokens, forming a linear **timeline** of consecutive events.

The newest event token in the timeline is known as **the present**. Any player whose traveler is located at this event is considered to be "in the present."

All previous event tokens in the timeline are collectively known as **the past**. Any player whose traveler is located at a previous event in the timeline is considered to be "in the past."

Timeline with Past and Present



The Invariant

The face-up card beneath the element deck is known as the **invariant**. This card's suit indicates the most powerful suit. When an event is resolved during the game, the highest played card of this suit is the winning card, and that player gains control of the event.

However, the invariant can be **altered** if someone travels far enough back in time and swaps it out for a card of a different suit.

The Travelers

Each player has their own traveler pawn, whose position represents their current **location** in the timeline. Players can only participate in the event at their traveler's current location.

At the start of the game, all travelers are in the present. When a new event token is added to the timeline, all travelers immediately return to the present.

At the end of each round, players can spend **fuel** to move backward in the timeline, so that they can potentially change the outcome of previous events.

Spend Fuel to Move to the Past

Gameplay Sequence

A game of ***Time Chase*** is played in a series of rounds. During each round, there are three steps that occur in order:

1. **Resolve Events**
2. **Time Passes**
3. **Move Travelers**

1. Resolve Events

All events where travelers are located resolve, one at a time. Start with the event in the **present** and work backward in the timeline through all of the events in the **past**, ending with the **invariant** back at the very beginning of the timeline. When an event resolves, all players whose travelers are located at that event in the timeline must participate.

Determining Who Leads

The player who controls the previous event in the timeline **has the lead**. If that player is not participating because their traveler is located elsewhere in the timeline, then the participating player closest to them in clockwise order has the lead.

Important! When resolving the first event in the timeline, since there is no previous event, the player holding the first player marker (or the closest participating player) has the lead instead.

Determining Lead from Previous Event

Playing Cards

The player who has the lead plays a card from their hand. In clockwise order, each other participating player plays a card from their hand. If possible, each player must **follow suit** by playing a card of the suit that was led. If a player has no cards of the led suit, they may instead play a card of any suit.

Important! When playing cards to an event in the past, all participating players — including the player who currently has the lead — must still follow the suit that was originally led!

When it is their turn, if a player follows suit but their card is lower than the current highest card of the led suit, they immediately gain one **bonus fuel** from the general supply, which they should keep next to their time machine card.

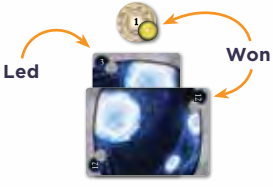
Gaining Bonus Fuel

Resolving the Outcome

After all cards have been played, determine the **winning card**. Normally, the highest card of the led suit is the winning card. However, if any cards of the invariant suit were played, then the highest card of the invariant suit is the winning card.

In the Present...

Create a stack with the led card (on bottom) and the winning card (on top), oriented so that the suits and values of both cards remain visible, and place it below the event token. If the led card is the winning card, place it by itself. Discard all other played cards.



In the Past...

If any of the new cards beat the old winning card, remove the old winning card from the stack and replace it with the new winning card, then discard the old winning card and all other played cards. Do not discard the originally led card, however.

Whoever played the winning card **gains control of the event**. That player takes the rightmost control disc from their time machine card and places it on top of the event token.

Important! When a player gains control of an event in the past, the control disc that was there previously is removed and returned to its owner.

Altering the Invariant

Despite what its name may suggest, the invariant can be **altered**, but only if one or more players send their travelers all the way back to the very beginning of the timeline. This occurs after all other events in the timeline have been resolved.

Each player whose traveler is located at the invariant secretly chooses a card from their hand, then all players simultaneously reveal their chosen cards. The highest card becomes the **new invariant card** and the old invariant card is discarded, along with all other played cards.

Important! If there is a tie for highest card, then no card becomes the new invariant card, but the old invariant card is still discarded, along with all played cards. When this happens, the timeline is **unstable!** There is no invariant for now.

Altering the Invariant

2. Time Passes

Take the **top event token** from the stack and place it at the end of the timeline, next to the previous event token, so that all event tokens in the timeline are in numerical order. This newly placed event token is now considered to be "the present."

All travelers move from their current locations in the timeline and **return to the present**, next to this newly placed event token.

All players **gain fuel** from the general supply, which they should keep next to their time machine card. Each player gains two fuel by default, minus one fuel for each of their control discs that is currently in the timeline.

Returning to the Present

3. Move Travelers

Players may — but are not required to — **spend fuel** in order to move their travelers backward in the timeline, so that they can attempt to change the outcome of previous events.

Each player uses one hand to shield their time machine card and personal fuel supply from the view of their opponents, then **secretly chooses** how much fuel they wish to spend, placing that much fuel from their personal supply onto their time machine card.

When all players have done this, the players **simultaneously reveal** how much fuel they are spending. Each player returns their spent fuel to the general supply, then moves their traveler backward in the timeline, one space for every fuel they spent.

Revealing Spent Fuel

End of the Game

After resolving all events each round, check to see if the end of the game has been reached. The game ends when **one player controls three events** in the timeline or when **ten rounds** have been played — whichever happens first.

If one player controls three events in the timeline, that player wins! If multiple players each control three events, the tied player who controls an event closest to the invariant in the timeline wins.

If ten rounds have been played and still nobody controls three events in the timeline, compare all players who control two events in the timeline. The tied player who controls an event closest to the invariant in the timeline wins. (*This can only happen in a 5- or 6-player game.*)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What happens if no travelers are located in the present when it resolves?

A: No one gains control of that event. When time passes, do not add a new event token to the timeline. Instead, all travelers return to that event token, which remains the present.

Q: If the invariant is altered, are all events in the timeline immediately resolved again?

A: No. The outcome of each event remains unchanged until one or more players send their travelers back in time to that event and it resolves again.

Q: What do we do if a player accidentally fails to follow suit when they could have?

A: When the mistake is discovered, that player loses all fuel from their personal supply.

Q: Are the fuel crystals intended to be a limited supply?

A: No. If the fuel crystals run out, use any suitable substitute.

Time Jumble Mode

"Are you hungry? I haven't eaten since later this afternoon."
—Primer

Introduction

There's been an explosion in the laboratory! To further complicate things, due to the constant and paradoxical nature of time travel in science fiction, today's or tomorrow's or yesterday's contest has apparently become unstuck in time. What is "the present," anyway?

Setup Changes

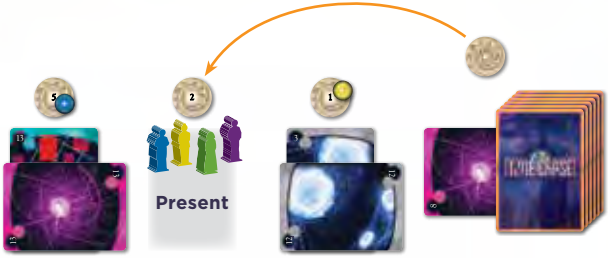
Each player should place their time machine card with side B face up, oriented so that the backward and forward arrows align with the orientation of the timeline. This side has two separate boxes for fuel, each corresponding to one of the two arrows.

Do not stack the event tokens in numerical order. Instead, shuffle the event tokens and place them in a stack, face down, without looking at them. Then reveal the topmost event token from the stack and place it next to the element deck.

Gameplay Changes

When time passes, reveal the topmost event token from the stack. Place it in the timeline wherever it falls in numerical order. This means that event tokens will sometimes be placed at the beginning of the timeline, sometimes at the end of the timeline, and sometimes between other event tokens in the timeline.

Placing a New Event Token



The most recently placed event token, no matter where it is in the timeline, is considered to be “the present.” When travelers return to the present each round, they are relocated so that they are next to this event token.

Players may now choose to move their travelers backward or forward in time. When secretly choosing how much fuel to spend, each player should place it in the box of their choice on their time machine card, indicating which direction they wish to travel in the timeline.

Spending Fuel to Move Travelers

Credits

— TIME CHASE —

Game Designer: Jonathan Woodard
Developer: T.C. Petty III
Illustrator: Allen Panakal
Graphic Designer: Jeanne Torres
Editor: Dustin Schwartz
Production Artists: Michelle Garrett and Dan Wagner

— RENEGADE GAME STUDIOS —

President & Publisher: Scott Gaeta
Controller: Robyn Gaeta
Director of Operations: Leisha Cummins
Director of Sales & Marketing: Sara Erickson
Creative Director: Anita Osburn
Senior Producer: Dan Bojanowski
Senior Marketing Manager: Teri Litorco
Customer Service: Jenni Janikowski

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