

CHAPTER 1

The Basic Basics

Think back to the last time you played a game of Monopoly. Do you remember who won? If it wasn't you, don't worry—that's about to change. More importantly, do you remember why the winner won? The odds are good that he employed some of the basic strategies of winning Monopoly. What's basic strategy in Monopoly? We weren't sure at first, so we the authors decided to take a survey. Here are some of the more serious answers we received:

"Always remember to move clockwise around the board. Forget that and you're through!"

"Roll the dice with both hands."

"The car always wins!"

"Never spend your \$500 bills."

"Always roll the dice on the board, knocking off your opponents' hotels if possible."

"Never mortgage the pretty blue ones."

A survey was obviously not the right approach, so we did some research. Although most readers will either know or recognize many of the basic principles which we have decided to include, it is a good idea to review them before going on to the more advanced concepts. By doing so, every reader will start with about the same amount of Monopoly knowledge, no matter how often or how rarely he has played the game. Here is a compact summary of the fundamental principles.

BUY EVERY PROPERTY WHICH YOU LAND ON. This first principle may come as a surprise to many players. Some have the mistaken notion that having

money is better than having property, especially cheap property. This just isn't true. Even Mediterranean Avenue, with its measly \$2 rent, can be a major influence in the game. A smart player not only will buy every property which he lands on, but will also mortgage property which he already owns if that is what's necessary to buy a new property. There are several reasons why it pays to buy property:

1. *Property can produce income.* Okay, some rents don't amount to much at first, but unless you buy properties in the first place, you will never get the chance to buy the other properties to complete a color group. Once you own a *complete* color group, you will be able to start building houses and hotels. When you have built houses on a property, the rents become quite profitable and pay back the original cost of the property many times over.

2. *It can be mortgaged for half the purchase price.* By turning the title deed card face down, you may receive from the Bank a loan of one-half the price you paid for the property (the exact mortgage value is printed on the back of the card). Therefore, whenever you buy a property, its real cost to you is only half its purchase price. Remember, however, that you may never collect rents or build houses on a mortgaged property.

3. *It can be traded.* Property is the most important single item that can be offered in a trade. Since other players want properties to complete their own color groups, the trading value of a property is always a good bit higher than the price you pay for it. Because of this trading value, property is a good long-term investment. In the words of the great American humorist Will Rogers, "Property is a great investment because God ain't making any more of it."

4. *It can stop your opponents from completing their own color groups.* The more properties from different color groups that you own, the harder it is for your opponents to trade and form complete color groups which will hurt you. This is good defensive strategy. It has happened that one player owned all of one color group

and at least one property in every other color group. He refused to trade, knowing that without his property his opponents could never complete a color group. He then built houses on his own color group to guarantee victory for himself. Every time you buy a property, you know that your opponents will not be able to complete that specific color group without trading with you. When you own a property that another player needs, its trading value skyrockets.

STRIVE TO OWN A COMPLETE COLOR GROUP. Once you own all the properties of a color group, you can start building houses on those properties and making it very expensive for your opponents to land there. This is the way to win. Nobody ever won a Monopoly game by collecting \$22 rent on Atlantic Avenue, or even \$50 rent on Boardwalk. All of a winner's efforts are built around the need to possess a complete color group, which he can use to bankrupt his opponents. By bankrupting them, he gets their properties to use as he wishes. Combining his original properties with all of the new properties he acquires from his bankrupt opponent, he proceeds to wipe out all of his remaining opponents. There are very few substitutes for owning your own complete color group.

WHEN YOU HAVE SECURED A COMPLETE COLOR GROUP, BUILD THREE HOUSES ON EACH PROPERTY AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. Examine the chart of sample rents shown here, paying close attention to the way the rents change as more houses are built. Notice that the rent due jumps tremendously when the third house is added. For some properties, the rent can increase to as much as 300% of the two-house rent.

	New York Avenue	Kentucky Avenue	North Carolina Avenue
1 House	\$ 80	\$ 90	\$ 130
2 Houses	220	250	390
3 Houses	600	700	900
4 Houses	800	875	1100
Hotel	1000	1050	1275

This level of three houses on each property in a color group is known as the *critical level* of color group improvement. Notice also that to reach this critical level on a three-property color group, you must actually buy nine houses—three for each property. Only six houses are required to reach the critical level on the Purple and Dark Blue groups, as these color groups consist of only two properties each.

The strategy of building quickly to the critical level is probably the most widely known and seldom stated principle among winning players. It is especially important to reach this level if you are fortunate enough to be the first to own a color group. To delay building houses may be to pass up an opportunity to prevent your opponents from ever having enough money to develop their own color groups when they acquire them. Strike first and strike hard—this is elementary strategy at its best.

Of course, there are times when you can't afford to build to the critical level immediately. In such cases, build two houses on each property for the time being. A little later, you can nonchalantly buy the critical third houses. In other words:

Building one house . . . no go.

Building two houses . . . for show.

Building three houses . . . for dough!

TRADE—THE EARLIER THE BETTER. Trading is the key to almost every Monopoly victory. Since it is uncommon to land on all the properties of a color group before any other player, skillful trading is necessary for

any player who wants to win. In addition, it is important to trade as early as possible. By trading early, you can get a headstart in building houses on your color group—an advantage which your opponents will find difficult to overcome.

When trading, remember to strive to own a complete color group, not just a bunch of properties which give you a stronger trading position. Also keep in mind that the properties you trade away may come back to haunt you. Give up as few properties as possible, remembering that your opponents will trade properties which they can't use to complete their own color groups. You can always raise more money, but once properties are traded away, they are gone for a long time—maybe even for the rest of the game!

KNOW HOW THE JAIL SQUARE AND THE CHANCE AND COMMUNITY CHEST CARDS ALTER THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE GAME BY INFLUENCING THE LANDING PROBABILITIES OF EACH PROPERTY ON THE BOARD.

THE JAIL SQUARE

Over 150 million Americans have been to Jail, and most of them are repeaters. This statistic is even grimmer when you realize that many of these criminals are only seven and eight years old. We're referring to the Jail square in Monopoly, of course. But just as prisons in the real world have a significant effect on people's lives, so the Jail square in Monopoly has a significant effect on the entire game.

A player can go to Jail in one of three ways: by rolling doubles three times in a row, by landing on the Go to Jail square, or by drawing a Chance or Community Chest card which sends him to Jail. Because there are more ways to go to Jail than there are to do anything else, Jail is the single square landed on most frequently (or should we say "landed in"?). During an average game, each player will be sent to Jail five to ten times. There are two simple strategies pertinent to this fact:

1. When you go to Jail, you must decide whether to

pay the \$50 fine and leave Jail right away or to sit back and enjoy prison life for a while. You may spend up to three turns in Jail, during which time if you roll doubles, you get out free; on the third turn, however, you must move what the dice show. Generally, while there are still important properties which are owned, it is a good idea to leave Jail immediately. However, if an "enemy" color group is developed (has houses or hotels built on it), then leaving Jail would expose you to expensive rents, so it is a good idea to stay put for as long as you can. Another player might land on one of your properties and give you the money you need to pay a few rents. There's no reason to rush out of your comfortable cell if nothing awaits you but trouble. If rents are high, serve the longest sentence you can (it's no disgrace in Monopoly).

2. The Jail square influences the frequency with which players land on the other squares of the board. Because Jail is so popular, the squares which lie six, seven, and eight squares after it have significantly higher landing frequencies than most other spaces on the board. (The numbers six, seven, and eight are the most frequently rolled numbers with dice. In fact, they constitute more than 44% of all numbers rolled.) If you glance at a Monopoly board, you will immediately see that the Orange group lies six, eight, and nine squares beyond Jail. (The numbers six, eight, and nine are rolled almost 39% of the time.) Since Jail is visited so often, and the Orange properties are such a strategic distance away, it would seem logical to suppose that the Orange group would be landed on a great deal. Computer testing has shown that the Orange group is indeed the most frequently visited color group (though not necessarily the most profitable).

The Go to Jail square also affects how often the different properties are landed on. Since this square sends players away from the last street on the board, any properties in that area will often be deprived of customers. The two color groups on that street are the Greens and the Dark Blues. If you examine the table of probabilities in Appendix A, you will see that these two color

groups have the slightly lower landing frequencies which you would expect. Since these color groups are landed on less often, their true values are reduced. Exactly how much they are reduced will be discussed later.

THE CHANCE AND COMMUNITY CHEST CARDS

The Chance and Community Chest cards also have an impact on the play of the game. It is completely unnecessary (and probably foolish) to attempt to memorize the exact landing probabilities for each property. Rather, you should understand what makes those probabilities vary from property to property. The Jail square is one factor, the cards are another. If you read through the Chance cards, you will find that 10 out of the 16 cards in the deck send the player who draws them to another square (such as "Advance to Boardwalk" and "Advance to Illinois Avenue"). These cards reduce the probability of landing on those squares which lie six, seven, and eight spaces after Chance squares, and increase the chances of landing on Boardwalk, Illinois Avenue, and the other properties to which the Chance cards can send a player. A smart player knows that the cards influence the game in this important way, and he uses that knowledge when he makes trades.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR OPPONENT'S MISTAKES. If your opponent seems ignorant of these basic principles of strategy, it is to your great advantage. There is no reason to make trouble for yourself by educating him. Let him learn the superiority of your play the hard way. If he doesn't know enough to buy every property he lands on, compliment his shrewd judgment! Admire the way he avoids wasting his money on "worthless" properties! After all, if you already own a property in a color group, there's no reason for him to buy another property in that color group—he could never acquire the entire color group! (If you can't say this with a straight face, don't try.)

Remember, if you fail to take full advantage of your opponent's errors, it is *you* who are making an error.

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These are the basics. If you understand them, then you are ready to move on to the knowledge which will form the groundwork for all future advanced winning strategies. The first step in this process is a comprehensive review of the rules to make sure that you aren't making mistakes which can cost you in the future. Ignorance is your worst enemy.

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

- I. Buy every property you land on.
- II. Strive to own a complete color group.
- III. Trade—the earlier the better.
- IV. Jail and the Chance cards affect probabilities and strategies.
- V. Take advantage of your opponent's mistakes.

CHAPTER 2

The Laws of the Land in the Palm of Your Hand

No matter what your reasons for reading this book may be, before going any further you will have to be certain that you have a firm grasp of what you are dealing with. A Monopoly game is a separate world in itself. It is not governed by the U.S. Anti-trust Laws, and its income tax never exceeds 10%. This entire world is governed by the official Parker Brothers rules. These rules are "the law of the land" and, like any laws, they should be understood and obeyed. If your Monopoly set is one of the older ones, don't panic. The "laws" have changed very little in 40 years. And even if you've lost or thrown out the rules which came with your Monopoly set, the rules are explained in this book.

In the Monopoly world, it's the law-abiding citizen who prospers. To be a good player, you will have to learn the rules of the game fairly well. You don't have to memorize them; you only have to understand their implications and see how they can shape strategies to overpower your opponents.

There are two reasons why it is necessary to be so conscious of the rules. First, the rules support several little-known, but legal traps and maneuvers which are by themselves enough to win many games for you, or—if you don't know them—for your opponents. Second, and more importantly, there are large "gray areas" in the rules which leave much to the discretion of the players in each game. These areas have given rise to simple, logical concepts like immunity, revenue sharing, options on unbought properties, agreements of forbearance, and priority of hotel breakdown. All of these strategies can

be game-winning devices when they are employed by players who understand that imagination makes winning easy. A player can learn as many or as few of these concepts as he likes, and each can be learned without the others. Naturally, the more you know, the easier winning will be, and this book will make you an expert at every one of them.

We assume that you know how to play Monopoly, but we don't expect you to know all the finer rules of the game. After all, most people learn to play by watching others or by having the game explained to them by a friend or relative.

To explain the basic rules as painlessly as possible is no easy trick. Reading a list of rules is enough to put anyone to sleep, so instead, this chapter explains only the most commonly overlooked aspects of the rules of the game. The chances are very good that you have at some time or another misunderstood or violated one or more of these regulations. But rest assured, once you have read this chapter, no one will ever again exploit your ignorance of a rule.

1. The Bank can never "go broke." It issues "play money" if it runs out of its original supply.

2. A player gets \$200 every time he passes over or lands on Go. Some players think that if they *land* on Go, they get \$200 for landing, and another \$200 when they leave Go. But they are *wrong*.

3. A property is mortgaged when a player turns the title deed card face down and collects the mortgage value printed on the back from the Bank. Once a property is mortgaged:

a. If it is part of a color group, no houses or hotels may stand on *any* property in that color group. In other words, you may never mortgage a property in a "developed" color group.

b. The rent remains unchanged on an unmortgaged property which is part of a group which contains mort-

gaged property. This applies to Railroads and utilities, as well as to properties in color groups. For example, suppose that a player owns all four Railroads, but has mortgaged the Pennsylvania and Short Line. As long as his opponent lands on an *unmortgaged* Railroad, the player collects rent on all four. (If the opponent lands on a *mortgaged* Railroad, the owner doesn't get a penny!)

4. Properties may *never* be sold back to the Bank. Money may be borrowed from the Bank through mortgaging, but a mortgaged property always remains in the custody of the owner—not the Bank—and may not be claimed or unmortgaged by any other player.

Whenever a player unmortgages a property, a fee of 10% of the mortgage value is paid in addition to the mortgage value itself. Many players agree to ignore this extra 10% fee, since it generally amounts to little more than a nuisance. If at any time all the players in your game agree to ignore such an official rule, it should be made clear before the game begins that a "house rule" is in effect and that the official rule has been suspended.

5. This next "point of law" is probably one of the least known Monopoly rules, but many players use it or abuse it in one form or another. Simply stated, the owner of a property may not collect any rent owed to him if he fails to ask for that rent before the *second person following* the person who landed on his property, throws the dice. Still unclear? Maybe an example will help to clarify things.

In order of their turns, the four players are Maxine, Mike, Clay, and Mr. Expert. Maxine has just rolled a seven and landed on Mike's hotel on Illinois Avenue. She says nothing. Mike doesn't notice that she has landed on his hotel and rolls the dice for his turn.

MIKE: Let's see, I got a nine. That's . . . What are you laughing about, Maxine?

MAXINE: Ha ha. Boy, did you ever make a mistake! You were so busy talking to Clay that you failed to ask for your rent when I landed on your Illinois

Avenue. That's \$1100 I would have had to pay you!

MIKE: Well, you're still on my property. I'll collect my rent now!

MAXINE: You can't! You're the player following me and you've already rolled the dice. The rules say that if you don't ask before the next player rolls the dice, you can't collect your rent.

MR. EXPERT: I'm afraid the joke's on you, Maxine. You should have read the rules more carefully. The rules say that a player may not collect his rent if he fails to ask before the *second* player following rolls the dice. Mike is only the *first* player following you. Clay is the second player following, and he hasn't rolled the dice yet!

MIKE: That's great! Give me my money, Maxine.

MAXINE: Boy, it sure pays to know the rules!

6. If a player rolls three sets of doubles, he does not move his man the number of spaces shown by the third roll; rather, he goes straight to Jail. For example, if on your third consecutive roll of doubles you would land on your opponent's property with a hotel on it, you don't pay any rent—you move straight to Jail.

7. A player in Jail retains all of his rights. He may buy and sell properties, build houses, and in general do just about anything that a law-abiding player may do. Many players make the mistake of thinking that a player in Jail cannot collect rents. This is not so. The rules specifically state that a player may collect rents while in Jail.

8. A player may get out of Jail in either of two ways: by throwing doubles or by paying a \$50 fine *before* he throws the dice. A player who throws doubles does not get to roll again if those doubles got him out of Jail. Except for the time he rolls three consecutive doubles, this is the only other time that a player does not roll again when he throws doubles.

9. The rule of "even building" seems to cause a lot of confusion, especially among younger players. It says that the number of houses on any property of a color

group may not differ by more than one from the number of houses on any other property in that color group. The only real complication of this rule is that when computing the difference in houses between two properties, a hotel is considered to be the equivalent of five houses. Consider the following situation:

JEANETTE: I think I'll build a hotel on New York Avenue. That's \$500 for one hotel, right?

ARTHUR: You can't build a hotel on New York Avenue yet.

JEANETTE: And why not? I followed the instructions. The card says that a hotel costs \$100 plus four houses. That totals \$500.

ARTHUR: But the rules say that you have to build *evenly*. You haven't put any houses up on either of the other two Orange properties. You'd have to build four houses on each of them before you could build a hotel on any one.

JEANETTE: I'm allowed to have a one-house difference between properties. Can I build one house on St. James Place, two houses on Tennessee Avenue, and three houses on New York Avenue?

ARTHUR: Always trying to change the rules! That would be illegal, since the difference between the number of houses on St. James Place and New York Avenue would be two houses. The maximum difference within any color group must be one house.

10. According to the rules, a player may build houses or hotels at any time he desires. It is implied, however, that there is some restriction as to what may be considered "any time." For instance, it would certainly be illegal to build a house between the time your opponent rolls the dice and the time he actually moves the number of spaces shown on the dice. If this were not illegal, a player would hold off on buying houses from the Bank until he was certain that the number on the dice would put his opponent on his color group.

The interpretation which is generally accepted is that

a player may build before or after any player's turn, but may not build while any turn is in progress. Therefore, it should be a player's right to ask another player to "hold the dice" whenever he wants to build houses, but once that player rolls the dice, all players must wait until he has completed his turn before building. All players should agree to be courteous and to "hold the dice" when any player requests it.

11. This rule is rarely violated, but it is missed on occasion, and then it can have disastrous effects. The rule states that once you have built a hotel on a property, you may build no more houses or hotels on that property. Building three hotels or seven houses on one property in a color group is just as illegal as building a hotel on a Railroad or three houses on a utility. Every now and then, someone tries to sneak a second hotel onto Boardwalk. Don't let him! Boardwalk is expensive enough with one hotel!

12. There are only 32 houses and 12 hotels to be used for building. No more buildings may be added if the Bank runs out. If the Bank exhausts its supply of houses, or if players want more houses than the Bank has to sell, then a "housing shortage" exists. During a housing shortage, the Bank auctions off all of the available houses one by one. Look at the following example:

ZACHARY: I'm going to buy those last four houses.

WENDY: What do you mean by "last houses"?

ZACHARY: After I buy those houses, the Bank won't have any left.

WENDY: Oh, that's no problem. My brother has lots of Monopoly sets. I'll get a handful of houses from one of his.

ZACHARY: No, you can't do that! The rules say that you are allowed to have only 32 houses in a game. If there are any more or less in the set, you should either make up the difference or save the extra houses in case some get lost.

WENDY: I see. Only 32 houses are allowed. Suppose I

wanted to buy the last four houses too. Then what would we do?

ZACHARY: Then the Bank would auction the houses off one by one, selling each house to the highest bidder. Do you want to buy those houses too?

WENDY: I don't have to. Count the houses that we've already got on the board, and you'll see that we've already used up 32 houses. That means that those four houses are extra and you can't buy them.

13. Another rule concerning building is extremely important and should not be overlooked. All houses are bought for the price stated on the title deed card, but if the owner chooses to sell those houses back to the Bank, they must be sold for *half the price paid for them*. If a player buys a house on Boardwalk for \$200, and during the next turn decides to sell that same house back to the Bank, he gets only \$100. Hotels may be sold all at once for half price, or they may be sold house by house (one hotel = five houses), with each house being sold for half price. A large part of the strategy of the game concerns determining when to build, and the pitfalls of being forced to sell houses for only 50% of their purchase price.

14. No color groups may ever change owners, whether by sale, trade, or bankruptcy, while houses or hotels remain built on them. All improvements must first be sold back to the Bank before any type of transfer may take place. For example, suppose Lenny owns the Orange group with hotels on each property, and Immy owns the Green group with two houses on each property. If Lenny wants to trade his Orange group for Immy's Green group, he will have to sell all of his hotels back to the Bank for half price, and Immy will have to do the same with her houses. If Lenny were to bankrupt Immy, he would get her Green properties, but the houses would have to be sold back to the Bank first. No color group may ever change hands if buildings remain standing.

Now that we have reviewed the rules which are most commonly overlooked, we come to a more general question: how can you be sure that everything you do is legal? The easiest way to be a law-abiding citizen is to make sure that any arrangements you make do not violate any of the official Monopoly rules. Now that you know the important ones, you should have no trouble doing that. But what do you do when the rules say nothing at all about what you are trying to do? The way to be sure that you are well within the limits of the rules is to be sure that all of your agreements (*a*) are agreements to exercise rights given to all players in the official rules, and (*b*) are agreements which in no way restrict a player's ability to exercise those rights given in the rules.

A simple example of such a legal agreement is that of trading one property to another player in exchange for a second property. Many players think that rules about trades appear in the official Parker Brothers rules. Surprise! Nowhere do the rules say that it is legal for two players to trade properties. But more importantly, the rules certainly do not prohibit trading. Many who play Monopoly trade properties—that's most of the fun in the game! But how can you be sure that a trade is really an agreement to exercise rights that are legally given to each player?

If you want, you can view a simple trade as a contractual agreement between two players. If Linda and Betsy want to trade Mediterranean Avenue and Oriental Avenue, you could say that Linda agrees to pay Betsy the same price for Oriental Avenue that Betsy pays Linda for Mediterranean Avenue. This trade is really a simple agreement to connect two sales, and the rules clearly give all players the right to sell their properties.

How could a trade violate the rules? Suppose Amy sold Boardwalk to Toby with the agreement that he would never roll again whenever he got doubles. This would be an illegal trade because it directly violates a rule (a player must roll again when he rolls doubles, except when he rolls three consecutive doubles or uses doubles to get out of Jail). Or suppose Amy sold

Boardwalk to Toby with the agreement that he would never build houses on the Dark Blue group. This would be an illegal trade because it would restrict Toby's right to build houses whenever he wanted, a right clearly specified in the rules.

All of the strategies presented in this book will be accompanied by a brief description of the ways in which the rules sustain them. Realize, however, that once you begin to do more than just sell property, the game of Monopoly will be a lot more exciting and a little more complicated. Make all trades which use the devices in this book with the utmost care, being sure not to contradict any rules. If you are careful, you will be able to enjoy the full benefits and satisfaction which imaginative trading can bring.

Congratulations. You are no longer easy prey for a player who *knows* the Monopoly rules. You might not be able to quote them off the top of your head, and you are probably still unclear as to all of their implications, but you now know the important rules and you have seen the way they can influence the game. Each chapter will repeat the relevant rules as they are used and will give as detailed an explanation as is necessary for you to fully understand all of the advanced concepts. For now, you have been introduced to many of the tools of an expert Monopoly player. It won't be long before you will be able to wield those tools effectively and qualify for the distinction of being a true Monopoly expert.

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

- I. The Bank can never "go broke."
- II. A player who lands on Go collects only \$200.
- III. Mortgage rules.
- IV. "House rules."
- V. Failing to ask for rent—two following players, not one.

- VI. Three doubles.
- VII. Rights of criminals.
- VIII. Leaving Jail.
- IX. Even building.
- X. Building "at any time."
- XI. Building more than a hotel.
- XII. Housing shortages.
- XIII. Selling houses for half price.
- XIV. You must sell houses before you trade.
- XV. A legal agreement.