

Ave Caesar

by Wolfgang Riedesser

Ausgebremst Adaptation by Daniel U. Thibault <D.U.Thibault@Bigfoot.com>

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- 1 Game board
- 6 Chariots
- 6 Coins
- 6 Sets of 24 race cards

Find Rome's Best Chariot Driver!

Who will be crowned "Greatest Charioteer of Rome"? Three to six players compete in a race around the famous Circus Maximus. The winner of a race is the first driver to complete 3 laps of the course and cross the finish line to collect his laurels (points). This is done by judicious play of the race cards. Ultimately, the player with the most points after several races (we suggest 4) is winner of the tournament.

Preparation

Select a race-course; for 3-4 players, we suggest side A, white course, clockwise for the first race. For 5-6 players, side B, yellow course, clockwise. Every race takes 3 laps, with every player stopping in the *Imperial Alley* once.

Setting Up

Each player gets a chariot, a coin and the set of cards of one colour. The racing cards have barely enough points for players to complete 3 laps of the course.

Starting Positions

Players cut their deck of cards. The one with the highest card puts his chariot on the starting position labelled 1 (In the case of a tie for first place, the tied players cut again). The others proceed clockwise. Each player shuffles all of his cards, including the one cut.

To All Chariot Drivers

Taking the shortest route on the track uses the least movement points. The cards total 84 movement points, so 3 or 4 players have only 4 points to spare, 5 and 6 players have 6 points to spare¹ (assuming the race courses were chosen as indicated under Preparation), so stay close to the shortest possible route. Don't waste movement points!

The Race Begins

Each player draws 3 cards from his deck. The first player starts by playing a race card and moving his chariot forwards the number of spaces shown on the card. Players follow in clockwise order. After playing a card, players replenish their hands to 3 cards.

The Movement Rules

1. The chariots must be moved forwards, never backwards or sideways. They can change lanes at every dashed line by moving diagonally forwards to the next lane.
2. Each player must play a race card and move on his turn even if it is to his disadvantage. A chariot must move exactly the number of spaces shown on the card. If a chariot cannot do so, the player doesn't play a card, and misses his turn.
3. Each space can be occupied by only one chariot.
4. The leading chariot(s)² **may not play a 6**, except at the start of the race. If the leader cannot move (i.e. his hand is all sixes), then he misses turns until someone overtakes him. *Exception: if the leader cannot be passed (e.g. a narrow lane) and has only sixes in his hand, he may play a 6.*
5. A chariot may not jump another. The only way to overtake is in another lane.
6. A chariot may never cross a wall.

¹ The A side circuits are 26-space laps, and the Imperial Alley adds 1, for a 79-space race; the B side circuits are 25-space laps with a +2 Imperial Alley, for a 77-space race. To both races we must add 1 space to actually cross the finish line.

² Typically the innermost chariot when several are neck-and-neck in a curve — in a straight stretch, consider the upcoming curve. It may be that several chariots are all "leaders".

The Imperial Alley

Every chariot has to stop in the Imperial Alley once in a race, on the first or second laps.

The player shouts "Ave Caesar!", and throws his tribute (coin) to Caesar. (The Imperial Alley is the narrow track between Caesar and the wall; see the illustration at the bottom of page 5). *If a player is blocked from going into the Imperial Alley on his second lap, and still has his coin, he must wait (miss turns) until the alley becomes free.*

Non-Player Chariots³

The race should have a full starting line-up. For example, if three are playing using the four-chariot race track, the fourth chariot will be a non-player chariot. These get their cards and coins just like the players, except that they do not draw a hand of cards, playing the first card from their decks instead. Their decks should be laid out between the last and first players.

Non-player chariots move first (and occupy the first starting spaces). They move to their best advantage, even if this is to the disadvantage of a player. In case of dispute, the majority of the players decides (the trailing player gets to break any deadlocks). Non-players that run out of cards are removed from play. If a non-player cannot use the card he drew, put the card back under his deck without moving his chariot. The same happens if a leading non-player draws a 6. Non-players will try to stop in the Imperial Alley on their first lap.

End of the Race

The first chariot past the finish line, after completing 3 laps and visiting the Imperial Alley once, is the winner. Score as follows:

1st	6 points - congratulations!
2nd	4 points
3rd	3 points
4th	2 points
5th	1 point
6th	honour, and hope for the next race

If a chariot runs out of movement cards before reaching the finish line, it gets 0 points. Non-player chariots do not receive points, but they still occupy a slot.

The Next Race

We recommend these courses for the remaining races:

Race	3-4 players	5-6 players
1	Side A, white course, clockwise	Side B, yellow course, clockwise
2	Side A, blue course, clockwise	Side B, red course, clockwise
3	Side A, white course, anticlockwise	Side B, yellow course, anticlockwise
4	Side A, blue course, anticlockwise	Side B, red course, anticlockwise

The player who lost the last race gets the first position in the next race, the others follow clockwise. The overall winner is the player gaining the most points after 4 races.

Variants

- **Starting positions:** The winner of the last race may occupy position 1, the one who was second gets position 2 and so on. Adjust the seating order around the table, so everybody takes his turn clockwise.
- **Missed turns:** If a player may not move, he misses a turn and puts a card at the bottom of his deck, drawing a replacement.
- **Crash and burn:** If a player is in the lead with only sixes in his hand, his chariot crashes and blocks the square it is in for the rest of the game. This may mean that no-one can win; in this case, no points are awarded for this race.
- **Dishonour:** If a player is blocked from entering the Imperial Alley, he must still move. At the end of the race, players who failed to give Caesar his tribute are executed, and score no points.
- **Ausgebremst scoring:** The scores for race rank are 9 / 6 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1 instead.

³ This rule is adapted from Ausbegremst (ASS, 1993).

Ausgebremst Adaptation

Three important changes in the Ausgebremst Adaptation reduce the luck factor and allow for more tactics by the players. An experienced player has more of an advantage over a beginner than in the basic game.

1. Each player has the option of bypassing the Imperial Alley if he thinks he can finish, or stopping in the Imperial Alley to collect one or two extra movement cards (put aside during set up), which can then be used to finish the race.
2. Each player, before each race, chooses among 3 possible card combinations in his colour.
3. The last major change is that, before each race, players sort their cards into 3 face down card piles. From these piles players draw their two (instead of three) cards.

Imperial Deck

One or two cards are taken out of the deck and put aside to form that player's "Imperial Deck". Those cards can be recovered only if the player stops to pay Caesar's tribute (which is now optional). The specific cards put aside depend on which track is used:

Track	Length		Reserve ⁴
A	78	3	3
B	75	4+3	2

Slow (Normal) Race Card Deck

This is the standard 24 card deck of the following composition:

4 x "6" 4 x "5" 4 x "4" 4 x "3" 4 x "2" 4 x "1"

Average Race Card Deck

This is a 20 card deck of the following composition:

5 x "6" 4 x "5" 4 x "4" 4 x "3" 3 x "2" (the "1" cards are treated as "6")

Fast Race Card Deck

This is an 18 card deck of the following composition:

7 x "6" 4 x "5" 3 x "4" 2 x "3" 2 x "2" (the "1" cards are treated as "6")

The Three Piles

Before play, the chosen deck (once the requisite cards have been removed to form the Imperial deck) is split in three face down piles, each of which may contain cards of only one or two numerical values. During play, each player holds only **two** cards in his hand and draws from one of the three piles without checking the piles' contents (i.e. he must remember how he split his cards). Each pile is shuffled separately before play begins.

For example, a player may decide to use a fast deck and that the first pile will have all 2 cards; the second pile all the 3 and 4 cards; and the third pile all the 5 and 6 cards (including the 1 cards).

When stopping in the Imperial Alley, the first Imperial deck card is used to replenish the just-played card, whilst the second Imperial deck card (if any) is placed on top of one of the three piles.

Non-Players

Non-player chariots do not stop in the Imperial Alley and are played otherwise exactly as in the basic game (i.e. they do not prepare three piles nor put aside an Imperial deck but still draw their cards one at a time from a 24 card deck of 84 movement points).

Variants Used

The **Starting positions** and **Ausgebremst scoring** variants should be used.

Summary

Each player picks which deck he'll use (Fast, Average or Slow) and puts aside the extra cards (if any). The players' choices are revealed simultaneously. Next, each player puts aside a "4" card or a "4" and a "3" (depending on the track used); these cards are placed under the player's coin. Finally, each player sorts his remaining cards into three piles as described above, shuffling each pile separately. Each player then begins play by drawing **two** cards.

⁴ Number of spare movement points left if the player does *not* stop in the Imperial Alley.