



# FIRST ASCENT

COMPLETE GUIDEBOOK

# FIRST ASCENT

DESIGNED & ILLUSTRATED BY KATE OTTE

2–5 players · 20 minutes per player · Ages 14+

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We recommend using the **Guide Mode Rules** (page 18) if you are new to board games or want to play with simpler set up and rules.

*You stand at the base of an unexplored mountain, here to establish your legacy by forging a new route.*

*You will plot your line across the most striking features of the rock to ensure your route is renowned throughout the world. As you climb, you will master skills, hone your technique, and become more efficient on challenging terrain.*

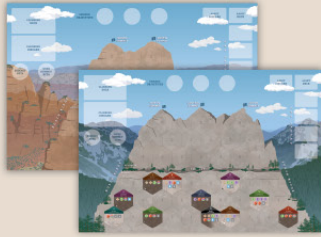
*Do you have what it takes to establish the greatest First Ascent?*



# COMPONENTS

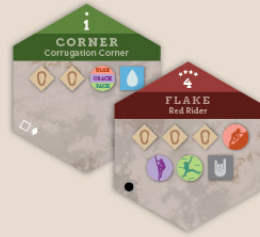
## GAME BOARD

2-3 player Desert side  
4-5 player Forest side



## 32 PITCHES

Climb the mountain by acquiring the Assets listed on each Pitch



## ASSET DECK

40 Gear Cards + 84 Skill Cards  
Use to climb Pitches



## 70 CLIMBING CARDS

Draw a Climbing Card after climbing a Pitch



## PORTALEDGE

A bank for gaining Assets from a Climbing Card or when resting



## 8 OBJECTIVE TOKENS

Double-sided; 16 objectives  
All players can work towards  
3 randomly selected Objectives



## 12 TECHNIQUE TOKENS

Obtain from Climbing Cards; use these instead of a card to match Technique Symbols



## 12 SUMMIT BETA TOKENS

Obtain from Climbing Cards; these provide one-time benefits



## 45 SKILL & GEAR TOKENS

Indicate Permanent Assets or alter a Pitch



## 24 POINT TOKENS

Keep track of points earned from matching Technique Symbols



## 1 RISK DIE

Roll when you are short 1 Asset but still want to climb the Pitch, or to resolve Climbing Cards



## FIRST PLAYER MARKER

Rotate who starts each round



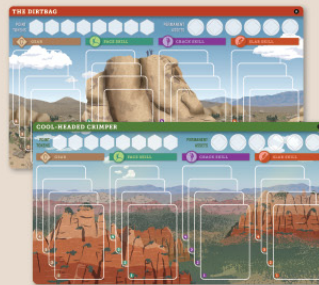
## 6 CHARACTER MATS

Double-sided  
12 characters  
Track Water & Psych



## 6 ASSET BOARDS

Double-sided  
Unique to each character  
Track points and build Permanent Assets



## 12 PERSONAL OBJECTIVE CARDS

Unique to each player



## 5 REFERENCE CARDS

Learn the actions of each phase



## 6 CLIMBERS

Indicate which Pitch you are currently on



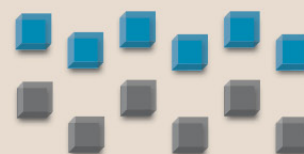
## 48 ROPES

8 ropes of each color  
Indicate which Pitches you have climbed



## 12 CUBES

6 Water + 6 Psych  
Track Water and Psych levels on your Character Mat



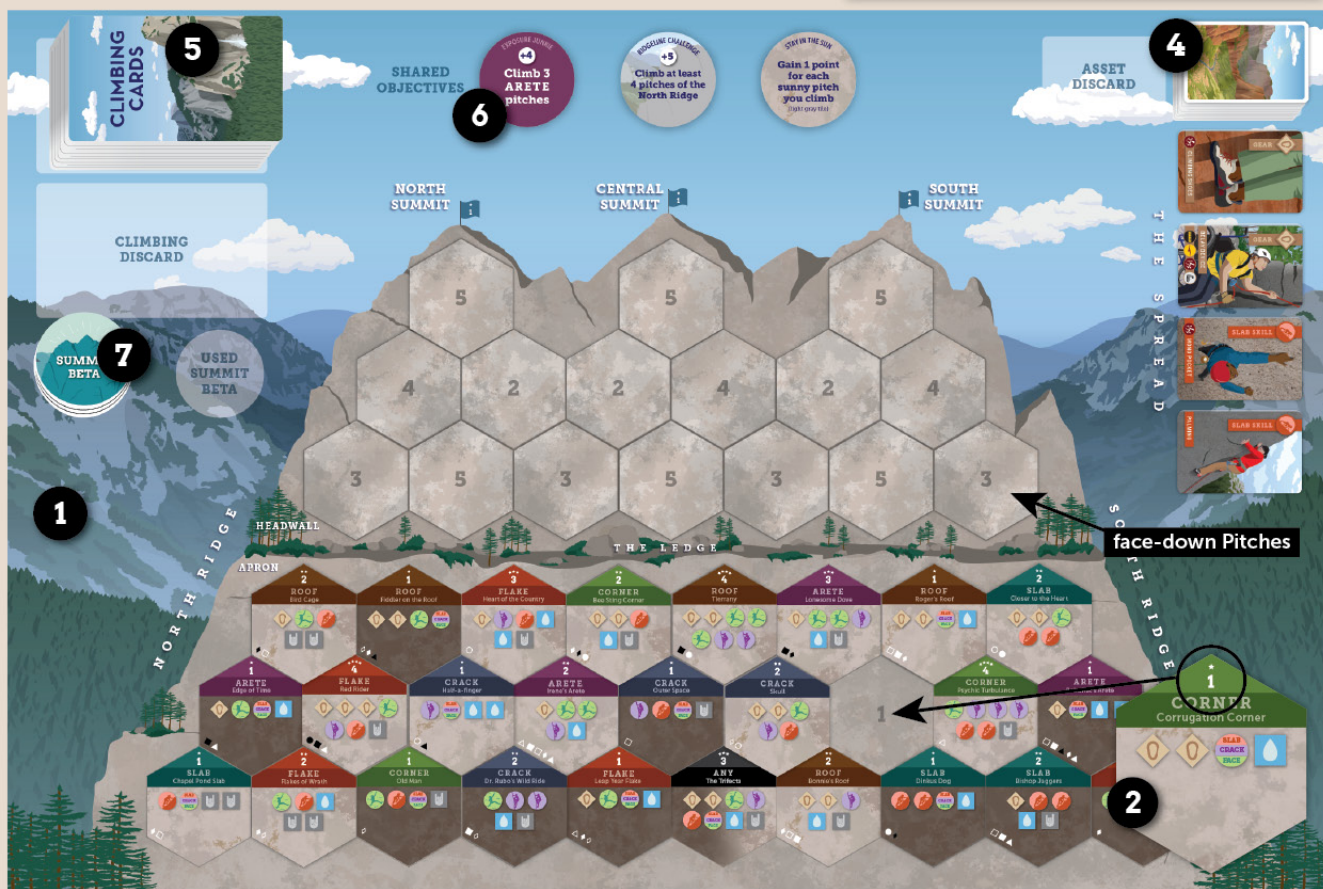
## SCORE PAD

Tally points at the end of the game



# SET UP: MAIN BOARD

- Determine which side of the Board to play with:  
**2-3 players:** Desert side  
**4-5 players:** Forest side
- Place each Pitch on the Board in an empty location with the corresponding number. Place all Pitches below The Ledge face up; place all the Pitches above The Ledge face down. (**Note:** after setting up the Desert side, you will have 1 extra Pitch—put it back into the box)
- Separate 7 Gear, 7 Slab Skill, 7 Crack Skill, and 7 Face Skill Cards from the Asset Deck. Place these in individual stacks face down on The Portaledge, below the corresponding Asset symbol.
- Shuffle the remaining Asset Cards and lay 4 Cards face up on The Spread. Put the rest of the Deck face down on the Board.
- Shuffle the Climbing Cards and place them face down on the Board.
- Choose three Objective Tokens at random and place them at the top of the Board.
- Shuffle the Summit Beta Tokens and place them face down on the Board.
- Place all the Skill, Gear, Technique, and Point Tokens with the Risk Die in piles near the Board.





# OVERVIEW

## GAMEPLAY OVERVIEW

All players are rock climbers competing to establish the best route up the mountain and become the most skilled climber! This will be measured by how many points each player gains throughout the game—the player with the most points wins.

Points are gained in 4 ways:

**Climbing Pitches** (page 7)

**Completing Objectives** (page 12)

**Matching Technique Symbols** (page 10)

**Reaching a Summit** (page 9)

The game is played in rounds. There are 3 phases in each round: **The Climb Phase, The Follow Phase,** and **The Rerack Phase.** Use the Reference Cards to follow the steps in each phase, and check out the rule reminders on the back:

**CLIMB PHASE**  
Move your Climber & Rope  
If you are **resting**, lay down your Climber & skip the next steps  
Lay down Asset Cards  
Decrease Water & Psych  
Draw & resolve a Climbing Card

**FOLLOW PHASE**  
Claim points for Techniques  
Turn in cards for Permanent Assets if applicable  
Turn over Cards on your Board

**RERACK PHASE**  
Climbers: Draw 3 Asset Cards draw Cards from the Spread or Deck  
Resters: Gain 5 Assets: draw Cards from The Portaledge  
Pass First Player Token to your right

- Climbing Pitches
- Matching Technique symbols
- Completing Shared Objectives
- Completing 1 Personal Objective
- Reaching a summit

## GAME END

The end of the game is triggered when a player uses all of their Ropes and has climbed their eighth Pitch. When this happens, finish the Climbing Phase and complete the Follow Phase.

## BOARD & CLIMBING BASICS

The board is made up of individual hex tiles, called Pitches. Each Pitch has a certain combination of Assets a player needs in order to climb it:

<b>Gear</b>	<b>Face Climbing Skills</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>Crack Climbing Skills</b>
<b>Psych</b>	<b>Slab Climbing Skills</b>

Skill Cards and Gear Cards are in the Asset Deck and will be drawn into your hand throughout the game. Water and Psych are depleted from your Character Mat throughout the game. Players can choose to rest in the Climb Phase to rebuild Water and Psych.

When you have the Assets shown on the Pitch, you can advance onto the Pitch and earn the number of points listed.

This Pitch will add 4 points to your score at the end of the game

There are 6 types of Pitches: **Crack, Slab, Arete, Corner, Roof, and Flake.** The type of Pitch relates to Shared Objectives (page 12)

To climb this Pitch, you need 3 Gear Cards, 1 Slab Skill Card, 1 Crack Skill Card, 1 Face Skill Card, and 1 Psych

These symbols correspond to Personal Objectives (page 12)

# CLIMB PHASE


**Phase overview:** The first player executes all 3 steps, then play proceeds clockwise. Once each player has completed a turn, start the Follow Phase.

## STEP 1: CHOOSE TO CLIMB OR REST

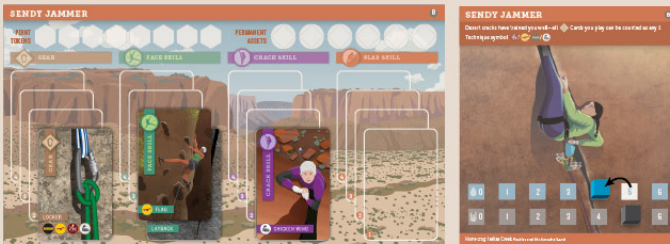
**When you climb:** Move your Climber and 1 Rope to the Pitch you are climbing. Your first Pitch must be on the bottom row. (See *movement rules page 9*)

**When you rest:** Lay your Climber down and announce you are resting; skip the next steps of the Climb Phase. Play passes clockwise to the next player. Resting skips your turn in the Climb and Follow Phases but allows you to gain more Assets in the Rerack Phase.

## STEP 2: USE ASSETS

Look at the symbols on the Pitch you've moved onto to see which Assets you need to use to climb it. Lay the Asset Cards from your hand onto your Asset Board face up, placing each Card type in the corresponding column. If a Pitch has , any of the 3 Skill types (Slab, Crack, or Face) can be used. If the Pitch requires Water or Psych, move the cubes on your Character Mat accordingly.

**Example:** To climb this Pitch, you need 1 Gear, 2 Face Skills, 1 Crack Skill, and 1 Water. Lay the Cards onto your Asset Board. On your Character Mat, move your Water down 1.



Once Cards are laid down on your Asset Board, they cannot be used to climb another Pitch. These Cards remain on your Asset Board to build Permanent Assets. (see *page 10*)

## STEP 3: DRAW A CLIMBING CARD

Next, draw a Climbing Card and read it out loud. Resolve it by choosing one of the options, then discard it. (See *Card explanations next page*) Then say "off belay!" and play passes clockwise to the next player.

### Missing an Asset but don't want to Rest?

Even if you don't have all the Assets you need, you might still be able to climb instead of resting:




### Trade in Cards

If you have 3 Cards in your hand of the same type (e.g. 3 Crack Skill Cards), you can discard those Cards and choose any Card from The Portaledge.

### Risk It

If you lack one of the Assets required for climbing a Pitch, you may choose to "risk it." Risking it allows you to climb the Pitch even though you are missing an Asset—but there may be consequences!

When you risk it:

1. Lay down the other Asset Cards and deplete Water/Psych as needed. Announce which Asset you are risking it for. ("I'm risking it for the Face Skill")
2. Roll the Risk die, which has 3 possible outcomes:
  -  No consequence.
  -  Give 2 Cards to another player.
  -  You lose 1 Psych and 1 Card and give them to another player.

**As long as you can pay what is on the die, you successfully climb the Pitch!** Cards must be discarded from your hand; if you don't have any, lose them from your Asset Board.

**If you cannot pay what is on the die, you must retreat from the Pitch and end your turn.**

Remove the Rope on the Pitch you attempted and move your Climber back to the Pitch you climbed in the previous Climb Phase. Retrieve the Cards you laid down from your Asset Board and move Water/Psych back to where they were before climbing. Play immediately passes to the next player. In the Rerack Phase, only draw 1 Card instead of 3.

# CLIMBING CARDS

## CLIMBING CARD EXPLANATIONS

If you draw a Climbing Card and can only fulfill one of the two options on the Card, you *must* choose the one you can fulfill. If you cannot fulfill either option, only draw 1 Card in the Rerack Phase.

**Gain Asset Cards:** Choose a Card from The Portaledge and add it to your hand. When all players (or all *other* players) gain a Card from The Portaledge, go in clockwise order starting from the current player.

**Discard or lose Cards:** You must lose the Card from your hand and put it in the "Asset Discard" spot on the Board. If you don't have the Card in your hand, lose it from your Asset Board.

**Add Tokens to Pitches:** Select the corresponding Token and place it on any Pitch. That Asset is now required for all subsequent players who climb that Pitch.

**Gain Technique Tokens:** Select the corresponding Technique Token and put it near your Asset Board. This token can be used in place of a Card to match Technique symbols in the Follow Phase. (see page 10)

**Put a Card from your hand or another player's Asset Board and add it to your Asset Board:** Put the Card face up onto your Asset Board. It can help you build Permanent Assets and/or match Technique symbols.

**Roll the Risk Die:** See Risk Die symbol explanations on page 7. If you roll and cannot pay what is shown on the die, only draw 1 Card in the Rerack Phase.

**Example:** You roll the Risk Die and get the 🎲 result, but have no Psych left. Keep your Climber and Rope on the Pitch; in the Rerack Phase, draw 1 Card instead of 3 Cards.

**Draw Summit Beta Token:** Draw a Token from the Summit Beta stack, read it, and keep it face down near you until you are ready to use it. You may use at any time on your turn.

**Tip:** If the result of a Climbing Card makes you draw fewer or no Cards in the Rerack Phase, keep the Climbing Card in your hand, as a reminder. Then discard it on your turn in the Rerack Phase.

## What is The Portaledge?

The Portaledge is a "bank" for each Card type.

Draw Cards from The Portaledge when:

- A Climbing Card directs you to gain an Asset Card
- Trading in 3 Cards of a kind from your hand for a Card of your choice
- You rest and are gaining Assets in the Rerack Phase

If a stack on The Portaledge runs out, refill it with 7 more, using Cards from the discard pile.



## SUMMIT BETA TOKENS

These one-time use tokens are gained from Climbing Cards and always provide a benefit. After using it, put the token on the "Used Summit Beta" spot on the Board.

### Summit Beta Token clarifications:

**Jesus Piece:** You may still claim the "reward" on the Climbing Card you draw, but you do not need to "pay" for it. **Example:** If the Card says "Gain 1 Face Skill Card, lose 1 Psych," gain the Face Skill Card but do not lose Psych.

**Spider Stick:** After climbing a Pitch with a 1 or 2 at the top, add a 2-Point Token to your Asset Board.





# ADVANCING UP THE MOUNTAIN

## MOVEMENT RULES

As you advance to new Pitches, move your Climber to mark your progress. Place a new Rope on the Pitch you are climbing onto, and leave a Rope behind on the Pitch you climbed previously.



You can move from your current Pitch onto any Pitch touching it—you can move sideways, up, or down from any Pitch (including summits).

You cannot climb the same Pitch twice, or a Pitch that another Climber is on, unless it is a summit Pitch. Summits can be shared by any number of Climbers. If you climb a summit Pitch, you'll receive a point at the end of the game!

## SECOND AND THIRD ASCENTS

You can climb a Pitch that was climbed by another player in a previous round, but you will use fewer Assets and will receive fewer points. The required Assets and point value go down by one for each player that climbs the same Pitch:

- First climber:** You need all the Assets, earn all points
- Second climber:** Must use 1 less Asset, earn 1 less point
- Third climber:** Must use 2 less Assets, earn 2 less points

Pitches cannot be worth negative points; if 2 players have climbed a 2-point Pitch, it is worth 0 points for all subsequent climbers. When climbing a Pitch after someone else, stack your Rope on top of the previous player's Rope to keep track of the order.

## THE LEDGE & THE HEADWALL

The mountain is divided by The Ledge. The bottom half is The Apron; the top half is The Headwall.

When the Climbing Phase ends with one or more players in the third row, flip over all the Pitches on The Headwall before starting the Follow Phase. Once the Pitches on the Headwall are revealed, they are able to be climbed!

**The Ledge connects all Pitches in the third and fourth row:** If you are on a Pitch in the third or fourth row, you can climb any Pitch in the third or fourth row on your next turn.

**You may cross The Ledge multiple times:** You may move from the third row to the fourth, then down to the third row and then up to the fourth row again.

### Example of acceptable movement:

(Numbers indicate the order in which Pitches were climbed)



## Multiple ascents example



### First climber (red)

- Uses 1 Gear, 2 Face Skills, 1 Crack Skill, and 1 Water
- Earns 2 points for this Pitch



Assets used

### Second climber (blue)

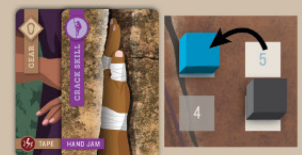
- Chooses to not use Water
- Earns 1 point for this Pitch instead of 2



Assets used

### Third climber (yellow)

- Chooses to not use Face Skill Cards
- Earns 0 points for this Pitch



Assets used

# FOLLOW PHASE

**Phase overview:** This is a "clean-up" phase to organize your Asset Board and claim rewards you have earned in the previous Climb Phase. This phase is performed simultaneously by all players. When everyone has completed these 3 steps, move into the Rerack Phase.

## STEP 1: CHECK FOR MATCHING TECHNIQUE SYMBOLS

Some Asset Cards have one or multiple Technique symbols in the bottom left corner:



Balance



Precision



Pain Tolerance

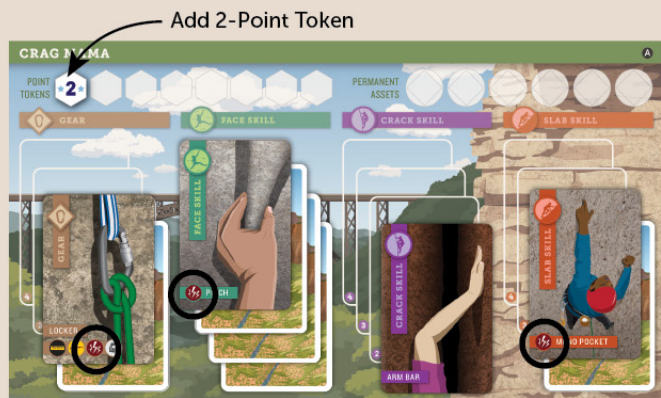


Power

**When you have 3 Cards on your Asset Board with the same Technique symbol, you earn 2 Points.**

In the first step of the Follow Phase, look at each of the face up Cards on your Asset Board to see if you have 3 matching symbols. If you do, add a 2-Point Token to your Asset Board.

You can match more than one set of Techniques per turn, but a Card with multiple symbols can only count towards one set.



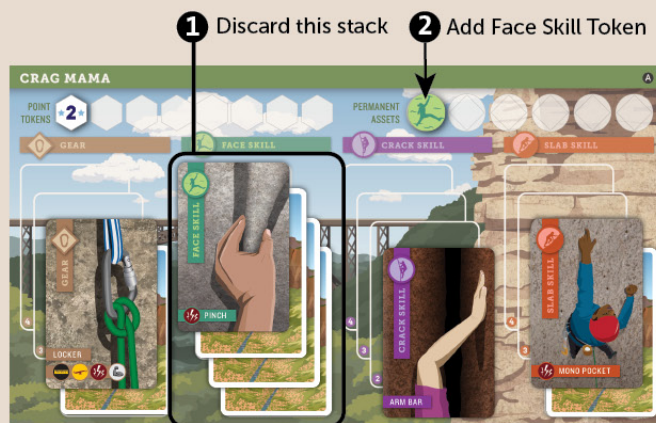
**Example:** This player has 3 Cards with Pain Tolerance symbols, so they earn 2 points.

**Technique Tokens**, which can be gained from Climbing Cards, are one-time use Tokens that can be used instead of a Card when you match Technique symbols. Example: if you have 2 Cards with Balance symbols and 1 Balance Token, discard the Balance Token and add a 2-Point Token to your Asset Board.



## STEP 2: TURN IN CARDS FOR PERMANENT ASSETS

Next, all players check to see if they have earned a Permanent Asset: **When you have 4 Cards of the same Asset type on your Asset Board, you earn a Permanent Asset.** You may discard those 4 Cards and add the corresponding Skill or Gear Token to your Asset Board.



**Example:** Discard 4 Face Skill Cards from your Asset Board and add a Face Skill Token your board. See next page for how to use Permanent Assets.

## STEP 3: FLIP OVER CARDS

All players flip over the face up Cards on their Asset Boards so all the Cards are face down. This helps keep track of which Cards were played in a previous round.



## HOW TO USE PERMANENT ASSETS

Permanent Assets are used in the Climbing Phase—they may be used instead of Cards to fulfill the requirements of a Pitch. If you use a Permanent Asset when you climb a Pitch, point to and announce which one you are using.

**Example:** If a Pitch requires two Slab Skills, a player can use their Permanent Slab Skill Token to fulfill one of them, and must use a Slab Skill Card for the other one.



- Permanent Assets never expire or leave your Asset Board; you may continue using them for the rest of the game. Once added to your Board, they cannot be changed or removed.
- You may place more than 4 Cards in a column. After discarding 4 Cards for a Permanent Asset, the extra Card(s) stay on your Board and continue to build towards the next Permanent Asset.
- You are not required to trade in Cards for a Permanent Asset—Cards may stay on your Board if desired.
- You are not required to use Permanent Assets when climbing—you may continue laying down Cards for that Asset if you choose to. (*This may be advantageous for certain Objectives or gaining points from matching Technique symbols*)
- You can only gain as many Permanent Assets as there are spaces on your Asset Board. You may earn more than one of the same Asset.
- Permanent Assets may only be used to climb a Pitch; they cannot be used to resolve Climbing Cards.

## RERACK PHASE

**Phase overview:** In clockwise turn order, each player gains new Assets for the next round.

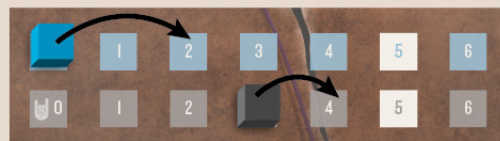
### STEP 1: DRAW CARDS

Players who climbed in the Climb Phase draw 3 Cards from The Spread and/or Asset Deck. There is no hand limit.

After each player draws, refill any empty spaces on The Spread. If 4 of a kind are on The Spread, remove the last Card added and replace it with a new Card from the deck.

Players who rested in the Climb Phase choose 5 Assets to gain: Asset Cards, Water, or Psych. Draw Asset Cards from The Portledge instead of The Spread or Deck. You may choose to gain 5 of one Asset or mix and match.

**Example:** This player gained 2 Water, 1 Psych, and 2 Asset Cards from The Portledge in the Rerack Phase after resting in the Climb Phase.



### STEP 2: CHANGE THE FIRST PLAYER

Pass the First Player Marker counterclockwise—the last player in the previous round becomes the first player for the new round. After the First Player Marker has been passed, the Rerack Phase is complete and the next Climb Phase can begin!

**Remember:** Gameplay is always clockwise; passing the First Player Marker changes who starts the next round, but does not change the direction of play.



# OBJECTIVES

Objectives provide another way to gain points at the end of the game. There are Shared Objectives, which all players can attempt, and Personal Objectives, which are unique to each player.

## SHARED OBJECTIVES

Shared Objectives, which are at the top of the board, can be achieved by multiple players. At the end of the game, you will announce which Shared Objectives you achieved and earn the points at the top of the Objective Token.

### Explanations of Shared Objectives

#### Climb 3 Crack, Slab, Arete, Corner, Roof, or Flake:

Climb 3 Pitches with that type of climb listed at the top. (*Flake is shown here*)

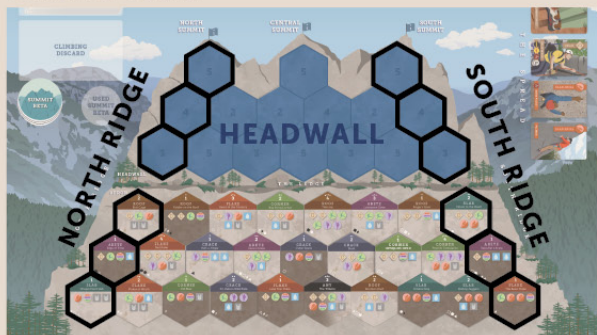


#### Gain 1 point for each shaded/sunny Pitch you climb:

The background color of the Pitch determines if it is sunny or shaded



**Climb the North Ridge/South Ridge:** Climb at least 4 Pitches along the North Ridge or South Ridge. The Summits count.



**Gain 1 point for each Pitch on The Headwall you climb:** Every Pitch above The Ledge is worth 1 extra point.

**Climb no 1 Point Pitches:** The starting value of every Pitch you climb must be 2 Points or higher. If you are not the first person to climb a 2 Point Pitch, you are still eligible for this Objective.

#### Climb horizontally across 4 Pitches in a row:

Climb 4 Pitches that are next to each other in a single row. They do not need to be climbed sequentially.

#### Earn 2 Permanent Face Skills + 2 Permanent Slab Skills:

The Young Prodigy and Bionic Woman can only gain 4 Permanent Assets. In order to achieve this objective, they need to choose *not* to trade in Cards for Permanent Crack Skills or Permanent Gear.

#### Earn 2 Permanent Crack Skills + 2 Permanent Gear:

The Free Soloist does not use Gear, so they are unable to complete this Objective. As noted above, the Bionic Woman and Young Prodigy will need to gain Permanent Assets selectively to achieve this Objective.

## The Trifecta's role in Objectives

The Trifecta is printed on the board and located in the first row. When you climb The Trifecta, you can choose whether it counts as a sunny or shaded tile, and one type of Pitch (Arete, Slab, Roof, Crack, Flake, or Corner). The Trifecta does not count towards Personal Objectives.



## PERSONAL OBJECTIVES

Each player draws 2 Personal Objective Cards at the beginning of the game, but can only earn points for achieving one of them.

Every Personal Objective Card has a symbol; each Pitch that counts towards that Objective is marked with the same symbol. The number of points the Objective is worth is in the bottom right corner.



# ENDING THE GAME

The end of the game is triggered when one player uses all of their Ropes and climbs their eighth Pitch. Finish the Climbing Phase and the Follow Phase, then tally the points!

<b>FIRST ASCENT</b>	JAIME	TAMAR	CECE	MIGUEL	
Pitches	20	19	24	18	
Objectives <i>Shared + Personal</i>	4	8	7	0	
Point tokens	2	4	6	8	
Summit bonus <i>+1</i>	0	1	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>	

## SCORING

Calculate the points in each category and add them up to determine the winner.

**Pitches:** Add up the number of points you've accrued from Pitches. If you climbed a Pitch after another player, subtract the appropriate number of points from that Pitch.

**Objectives:** Add up the number of points you gained for Shared and Personal Objectives.

**Remember:** *You may only score 1 Personal Objective.*

**Point tokens:** Add your Point Tokens together.

**Summit bonus:** +1 point if you reached a summit.

## TIE BREAKERS


If there is a tie, the player with the most Permanent Assets wins! If there is still a tie, winners share the glory.

**Clean up tip:** *To make setup for your next game faster, stack 7 of each Card type on The Portaledge, and keep those Cards separate from the rest of the Asset Deck when you put them back in the box.*



# GAMEPLAY EXAMPLE: THE FIRST ROUND

## Climb Phase

1. Green is the first player and moves onto The Beast Flake. They lay down 1 Face Skill Card, 2 Slab Skill Cards, and 1 Crack Skill Card (for the  symbol) onto their Asset Board.
2. Green draws a Climbing Card. They choose the first option: they will lose 1 Water from their Character Mat and gain 1 Crack Skill Card from The Portledge. They discard the Climbing Card and it is now Purple's turn.
3. Purple moves onto Bonnie's Roof. They lay down 2 Gear Cards, 1 Crack Skill Card, and move their Water and Psych Cubes down 1 each.
4. Purple draws a Climbing Card and chooses the first option: lose 1 Psych and gain 1 Power Technique Token. They discard the Climbing Card and put a Power Technique Token near their Asset Board.

## Follow Phase

5. Green and Purple simultaneously assess their boards for matching Technique symbols: Green doesn't have 3 of the same Technique symbol, so they receive no extra points. Purple has 2 Power symbols on Cards and 1 Power Token, so they have matched 3 Technique symbols. Purple discards the Power Token and puts a 2-Point Token onto their Asset Board.
6. Green and Purple simultaneously assess their boards for Permanent Assets: neither one of them have 4 Cards in each column, so they move onto the next step.
7. Green and Purple simultaneously flip over all Cards on their Asset Board.

## Rerack Phase

8. Green draws 2 Cards from The Spread and 1 Card from the Asset Deck to add to their hand. Then they refill The Spread.
9. Purple draws 3 Cards from The Spread.
10. Green passes the First Player Marker to Purple.

1. Green's Asset Board for 'FLAKE' with 1 Face Skill Card, 2 Slab Skill Cards, and 1 Crack Skill Card.

2. Green's Climbing Card 'Surprise off-width' with two options: 'Do you thrash through it: Lose 1 Water and gain 1 Crack Card' or 'Do you pull on Gear to get past it: Lose 1 Crack Card and gain 1 Gear Card'.

3. Purple's Asset Board for 'ROOF' with 2 Gear Cards, 1 Crack Skill Card, and 1 Water/Psych cube.

4. Purple's Climbing Card 'Desperate throw' with two options: 'Commit to the awful sloper: Lose 1 Psych and gain 1 Power Token' or 'Go back to the good holds and look for a different way up: Lose 1 Crack Card and gain 1 Water'.

5. Purple's Asset Board for 'BUFF BOULDER' with 2 Power symbols on Cards and 1 Power Token.

6. Purple's Asset Board for 'BUFF BOULDER' with 3 Power symbols (2 Cards, 1 Token) and a 2-Point Token.

7. Purple's Asset Board for 'BUFF BOULDER' with 3 Power symbols (2 Cards, 1 Token) and a 2-Point Token.

8. Purple's Asset Board for 'BUFF BOULDER' with 3 Power symbols (2 Cards, 1 Token) and a 2-Point Token.

9. Purple's Asset Board for 'BUFF BOULDER' with 3 Power symbols (2 Cards, 1 Token) and a 2-Point Token.

10. Purple's Asset Board for 'BUFF BOULDER' with 3 Power symbols (2 Cards, 1 Token) and a 2-Point Token.

# CHARACTERS

All Character Mats have an **A** or **B** icon in the top right corner. The abilities of A-side characters are simpler; we recommend playing with an A-side character if you are new to First Ascent or playing in Guide Mode.

## A-side



### Bionic Woman

On each Pitch, you may substitute 1 Skill Card with a different Skill Card.

- Gear Cards cannot be used to substitute for a Skill; Skill Cards can't substitute for Gear.
- Cannot use Permanent Skill Tokens for the substitution; you must use Cards.
- Cannot use this ability to resolve Climbing Cards.

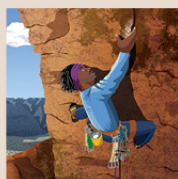


### The Overstoker

On each Pitch, you may substitute 1 for 1 of the other required Assets.



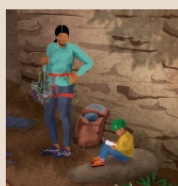
- Cannot use this ability to resolve Climbing Cards.



### Rope Gun

You must use 1 less on each Pitch you climb.

- No effect if the Pitch does not require Water.



### Crag Mama

You have a mother's intuition—you may use one less Skill on all Pitches below The Ledge.

- The Crag Mama's ability disappears when she climbs on The Headwall.



### The Dirtbag

On each Pitch, you may substitute a Card for 1 of the other required Assets .

- You cannot use a Permanent Gear Token for this substitution; you must use Cards.
- Cannot use this ability to resolve Climbing Cards.

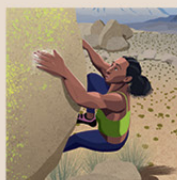


### Bold Brit

You must use only 1 Card on each Pitch that requires Gear.

- You cannot use a Permanent Gear token for this ability; you must use Cards.

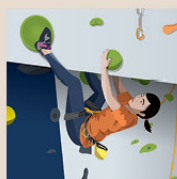
## B-side



### Buff Boulderer

Use 1 less Asset to climb any 4-Point Pitch, and use 2 less Assets to climb any 5-Point Pitch.

- This ability refers to the original value of the Pitch: if you are the second player to climb a 4 Point Pitch, choose 2 Assets to not use.



### Young Prodigy

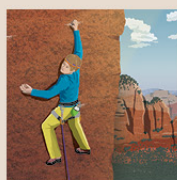
You need only 3 Cards to earn a Permanent Skill Token, but 5 Cards to earn a Permanent Gear Token.



### Free Soloist

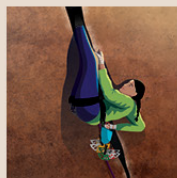
For each that is required for a Pitch, substitute with any Skill .

- Trade in Gear Cards or use them to resolve Climbing Cards; you can't climb with them or earn Permanent Gear Tokens.
- Gain 6 Assets when resting instead of 5.



### Cool-headed Crimper

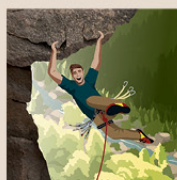
After climbing each Pitch, draw 2 Climbing Cards and choose 1 to resolve. Discard the other.



### Sandy Jammer

All Gear Cards you play can be counted as any one Technique symbol .

- You only need 2 Cards with matching Technique symbols and any 1 Gear Card to gain 2 points in the Follow Phase.

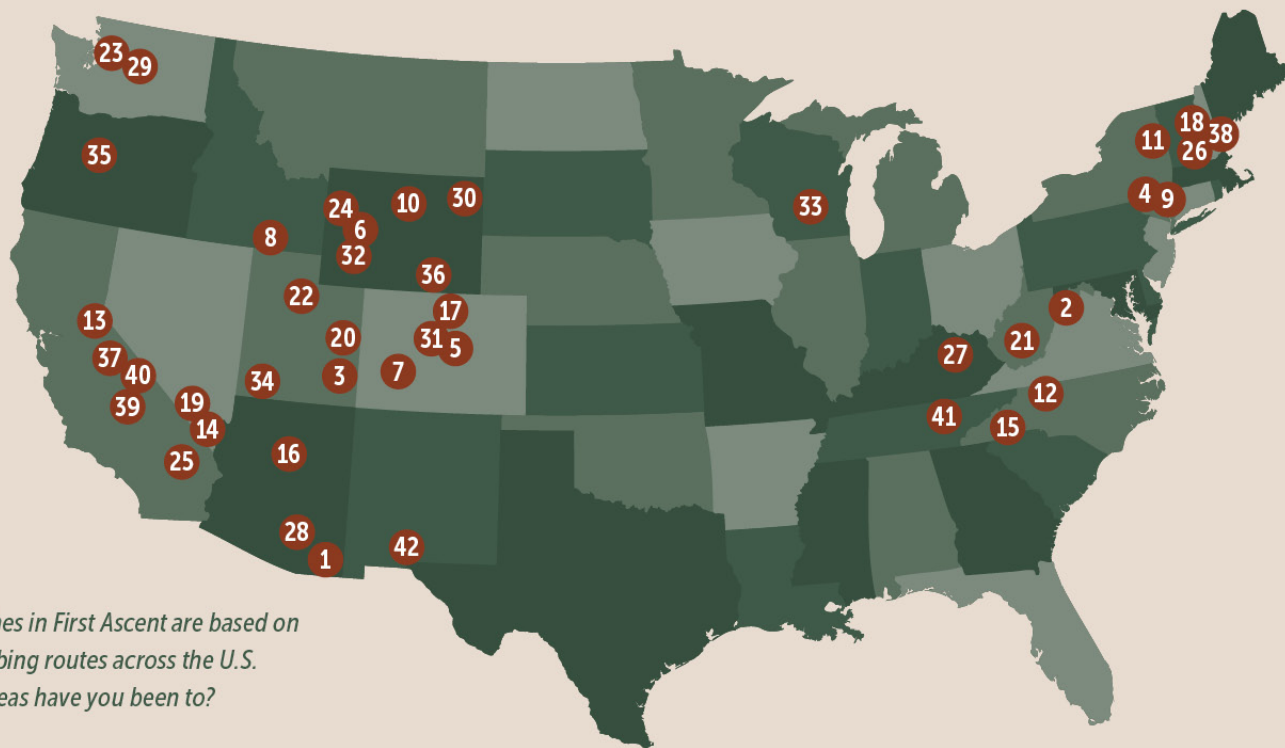


### Phil

You must roll the Risk Die on every Pitch you climb

- Start with 2 Summit Beta Tokens.
- Gain 6 Assets when resting instead of 5.

# CLIMBING AREA MAP



The Pitches in First Ascent are based on real climbing routes across the U.S.  
Which areas have you been to?

- |                                    |                                  |   |                              |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Abacadaver</b> 1                | Cochise Stronghold, AZ           | <b>Half-a-finger</b> 22                   | Little Cottonwood Canyon, UT |
| <b>Bee Sting Corner</b> 2          | Seneca Rocks, WV                 | <b>Heart of the Country</b> 23            | Index, WA                    |
| <b>Belly Full of Bad Berries</b> 3 | Indian Creek, UT                 | <b>Irene's Arete</b> 24                   | Grand Tetons, WY             |
| <b>Bird Cage</b> 4                 | Shawangunks, NY                  | <b>Leap Year Flake</b> 25                 | Joshua Tree, CA              |
| <b>Bishop Jagers</b> 5             | Cathedral Spires, CO             | <b>Lonesome Dove</b> 26                   | Rumney, NH                   |
| <b>Black Elk</b> 6                 | Cirque of the Towers, WY         | <b>No Place Like Home</b> 27              | Red River Gorge, KY          |
| <b>Black Snake</b> 7               | Black Canyon of the Gunnison, CO | <b>Old Man</b> 28                         | Mount Lemmon, AZ             |
| <b>Bloody Fingers</b> 8            | City of Rocks, ID                | <b>Outer Space</b> 29                     | Leavenworth, WA              |
| <b>Bonnie's Roof</b> 9             | Shawangunks, NY                  | <b>Psychic Turbulance</b> 30              | Devils Tower, WY             |
| <b>Bulldog Arete</b> 10            | Ten Sleep Canyon, WY             | <b>Rebuffat's Arete</b> 31                | Eldorado Canyon, CO          |
| <b>Chapel Pond Slab</b> 11         | Adirondacks, NY                  | <b>Red Rider</b> 32                       | Wild Iris, WY                |
| <b>Closer to the Heart</b> 12      | Stone Mountain, NC               | <b>Roger's Roof</b> 33                    | Devil's Lake, WI             |
| <b>Corrugation Corner</b> 13       | Lover's Leap, CA                 | <b>Scarlet Begonias</b> 34                | Zion, UT                     |
| <b>Desert Gold</b> 14              | Red Rock Canyon, NV              | <b>Screaming Yellow Zonkers</b> 35        | Smith Rock, OR               |
| <b>Dinkus Dog</b> 15               | Looking Glass, NC                | <b>Skull</b> 36                           | Vedauwoo, WY                 |
| <b>Dr. Rubo's Wild Ride</b> 16     | Sedona, AZ                       | <b>Teflon Corner</b> 37                   | (Freerider) Yosemite, CA     |
| <b>Edge of Time</b> 17             | Estes Park Valley, CO            | <b>The Beast Flake</b> 38                 | Cathedral Ledge, NH          |
| <b>Fickle Finger of Fate</b> 18    | (Moby Grape) Cannon Cliff, NH    | <b>The Don Juan Wall</b> 39               | The Needles, CA              |
| <b>Fiddler on the Roof</b> 19      | Red Rock Canyon, NV              | <b>The S.A.T. (Slab Aptitude Test)</b> 40 | Pine Creek Canyon, CA        |
| <b>Flakes of Wrath</b> 20          | Moab, UT                         | <b>Tieranny</b> 41                        | Obed & Clear Creek, TN       |
| <b>Flight of the Gumby</b> 21      | New River Gorge, WV              | <b>Tooth or Consequences</b> 42           | Organ Mountains, NM          |



# GLOSSARY

**anchor:** a safety system used to attach the climber and rope to the rock.

**arete:** a ridge or outward-facing corner.

**backclean:** when a climber removes a previously placed piece of gear below them, after placing gear higher on the route.

**belay:** a system climbers use to create friction to catch or stop a falling climber. This system includes a rope, belay device, an anchor or bolt, and a belayer.

**beta:** information and tips about a climb. This can be specific movements and techniques to employ while climbing, information about finding and staying on-route, or what gear to use.

**bivy:** short for bivouac; a temporary camp without tents.

**bolt:** A metal threaded rod and expansion sleeve drilled into the rock. Lead climbers clip the rope into hangers on the bolts using quickdraws.

**bomber and bomb-proof:** informal terms used by climbers to mean that a gear placement is solid and strong.

**booty:** an informal term for found gear. It is most frequently used to refer to gear left by a climber because it was stuck in the rock, and another climber was able to loosen, retrieve, and keep it.

**chossy:** poor quality rock that is prone to breaking.

**crux:** the most difficult move or sequence of moves on a climb.

**crag:** a climbing area.

**dyno:** (short for dynamic) an explosive jumping move to reach a far hold.

**first ascent:** the first time a route has been climbed.

**jam:** wedging hands, feet, fingers, and legs into a crack in order to ascend it.

**jawn:** a Philadelphia-area word for "thing." It's not a climbing-specific term.

**Jesus piece:** a first piece of protection placed above a belay anchor. The Jesus piece reduces the amount of force applied to the anchor if the leader falls.

**leader, partners, and followers:** In climbing, there are two roles: the leader and the follower. The leader is the first person to climb and takes on the risk of falling. They place protection as they climb, taking the rope to the top of the route while their partner below belays them. Their partner then becomes the follower (belayed by the climber above), and removes the protection as they climb.

**lichen:** a simple plant that grows on rocks, and can very easily take over less popular climbing routes.

**off-width:** a crack that is too wide to jam with a hand or fist, but not wide enough to fit your whole body. This size of crack is known for being particularly difficult, technique-dependent, and strenuous.

**pitch:** a pitch is the distance that can be climbed in one rope length. When a leader gets to the top of a pitch, they set up an anchor and belay station and belay the follower up to that station. Then they reorganize their climbing racks before climbing the next pitch—this step is known as "reracking." This is why we've named the phases in First Ascent the Climb, Follow and Rerack Phases!

**placement, protection, pieces, and gear:** all of these terms refer to climbing equipment used to protect a climber in case of a fall. Protection like cams and nuts are wedged into cracks, and provide an anchor/connection point for the climber to attach their rope. Protection like bolts are already drilled into the wall, and the climber clips their rope to them with quickdraws as they go.

**portaledge:** a sleeping platform, often with a tent canopy, that is hung from an anchor on the rock. It allows climbers to spend multiple days and nights on a long climb without returning to the ground.

**rack:** the assortment of gear that a leader takes up with them when they climb.

**run-out:** when a climb lacks protection for an extended (and less than comfortable) length. A run-out climb means that climber may fall quite far before they are caught, so it can be scary!

**sport climbing:** a route that has bolts drilled into the rock for protection. Because the protection is already in place, sport climbing is more about movement and technique, rather than making sure it can be protected safely (which is the case in traditional climbing).

**take:** a command a climber shouts to their belayer to indicate that the belayer should "take in" slack and tighten the rope.

**traditional climbing:** a route that does not have bolts. The lead climber needs to place gear, such as cams and nuts, to protect themselves and their follower in case of a fall.

**traverse:** to climb sideways without moving upwards very much.

**whipper:** an especially long fall taken by the leader.

# GUIDE MODE: SET UP

Use Guide Mode set up and rules if you are new to board games or want a simpler game!

- Determine which side of the Board to play with:  
**2-3 players:** Desert side  
**4-5 players:** Forest side
- Place each Pitch on the Board in an empty location with the corresponding number. Place all Pitches below The Ledge face up; place all Pitches above The Ledge face down. (*Note: After setting up the Desert side, you will have 1 extra Pitch—put it back into the box.*)
- Remove Cards with a teal band from the Climbing Card Deck. Put those Cards back in the box. Shuffle the remaining Climbing Cards and place them face down on the board.
- Choose three of the following Objective Tokens and place them at the top of the board:



Climb 3 Crack/Slab Pitches



Climb 3 Arete/Corner Pitches



Climb 3 Flake/Roof Pitches



Gain 1 point for each shaded/sunny Pitch



Climb the North/South Ridge

- Look through the Summit Beta Tokens and remove the 3 Tokens with a teal border. Shuffle the remaining Summit Beta Tokens and place them face down on the Board.
- Separate 7 Gear, 7 Slab Skill, 7 Crack Skill, and 7 Face Skill Cards from the Asset Deck. Place these in individual stacks face down on The Portaledge, below the corresponding Asset symbol.
- Shuffle the remaining Asset Cards and deal 7 cards to each player. Then lay 4 Cards face up on The Spread.
- Place all the Skill and Gear Tokens and the Risk Die near the Board.
- Each player selects a Character Mat—choose one with an **A** in the top right corner.
- Each player selects the Climber and 7 Ropes that matches their character color. (*Note: Each player will have 1 extra Rope; put them back in the box.*)
- Each player puts their Water and Psych Cubes on the white numbered boxes on their Character Mat.



**Note:** there will be some extra components still in the box. You don't need them for Guide Mode.

# GUIDE MODE: GAME OVERVIEW

## GAMEPLAY

All players are rock climbers competing to establish the best route up the mountain and become the most skilled climber! This will be measured by how many points each player gains throughout the game—the player with the most points wins!

Points are gained in 3 ways:

**Climbing Pitches** (page 20)

**Completing Shared Objectives** (page 21)

**Reaching a summit** (page 21)

## STARTING THE GAME

Start by having each player introduce their character's special ability. The player who has recreated outside most recently is the first player and starts the game.

The game is played in rounds. Each player executes 1 turn per round, starting with the first player and rotating clockwise. On each player's turn, they can either **climb** or **rest**. (See the next page for how to execute your turn)

The end of the game is triggered when one player has used all of their rope and climbed their seventh Pitch. Finish the round, then tally the points and declare a winner.

**You can also learn the rules by watching our How to Play Video!**

 [www.PlayFirstAscent.com](http://www.PlayFirstAscent.com)

## BOARD & CLIMBING BASICS

The board is made up of individual hex tiles, called Pitches. Each Pitch has a certain combination of Assets a player needs in order to climb it:



**Gear**



**Face Climbing Skills**



**Water**



**Crack Climbing Skills**



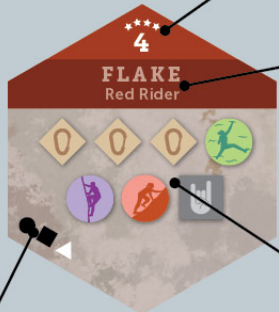
**Psych**



**Slab Climbing Skills**

Skills and Gear are Cards in the Asset Deck and will be drawn into your hand throughout the game. Water and Psych are depleted from your Character Mat throughout the game, and can be built back up again by choosing to rest on your turn.

When you have the Assets shown on the Pitch, you can advance onto it and earn the number of points listed on it.



Climbing this Pitch adds 4 points to your score at the end of the game

There are 6 types of Pitches: **Crack, Slab, Arete, Corner, Roof and Flake**. The type of Pitch relates to some Shared Objectives (see page 22)

To climb this Pitch, you need:  
3 Gear Cards  
1 Face Skill Card  
1 Slab Skill Card  
1 Crack Skill Card  
1 Psych

Ignore these symbols in Guide Mode



# GUIDE MODE: YOUR TURN

On your turn, choose to **Climb** or **Rest**:

## HOW TO CLIMB

**1. Climb the Pitch:** Move your Climber and one Rope to the Pitch you are climbing. Your first Pitch must be on the bottom row.

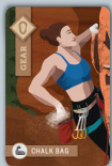
Look at the symbols on the Pitch you've moved onto to see which Assets you need to use to climb it. Lay down the Asset Cards from your hand, announcing each Asset on the Pitch as you lay Cards down. If a Pitch has **SLAB**, **CRACK**, or **FACE**, any of the 3 Skill types (Slab, Crack, or Face) can be used. If the Pitch requires Psych or Water, move the Cubes on your Character Mat down accordingly.

Once you have confirmed you have all the Assets needed to climb the Pitch, move all the Cards you laid down into the Asset discard pile.



### Example:

To climb this Pitch, you'll need 1 Gear Card, 2 Face Skill Cards, 1 Crack Skill Card, and 1 Water. Lay down the Cards in front of you. Move your Water down 1 on your Character Mat.



**2. Draw a Climbing Card:** Read the Climbing Card out loud; resolve it by choosing one of the options, then discard it. (See page 22 for Card explanations)

If you can only fulfill one of the two choices on the Card, you *must* choose the one you can fulfill. If you cannot fulfill either option on the Card, only draw 1 card at the end of your turn.

**3. Draw Asset Cards:** End your turn by drawing 3 Asset Cards from The Spread and/or Deck. After you draw your Cards, refill any empty spaces on The Spread. Then say "off belay!" and play passes to the next player.

## HOW TO REST

If you can't or don't want to climb, you can rest on your turn instead. Say "I'm resting" at the start of your turn and choose 5 Assets to gain: Asset Cards, Water, and/or Psych.

Draw Asset Cards from The Portaledge instead of The Spread or Deck. You may choose to gain 5 of one Asset or mix and match. There is no hand limit. Play immediately passes to the next player.



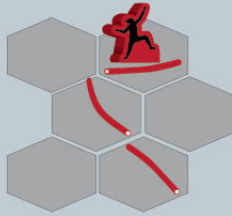
**Example:** This player gained 2 Water, 1 Psych, and 2 Asset Cards from The Portaledge when they rested.



# GUIDE MODE: ADVANCING UP THE MOUNTAIN

## MOVEMENT RULES

As you advance to new Pitches, move your Climber to mark your progress. Place a new Rope on the Pitch you are climbing onto, and leave a Rope behind on the Pitch you climbed previously.



You can move from your current Pitch onto any Pitch touching it—you can move sideways, up, or down from any Pitch (including summits).

You cannot climb the same Pitch twice, or a Pitch that another Climber is on, unless it is a summit Pitch. Summits can be shared by any number of Climbers. If you climb a summit Pitch, you'll receive a point at the end of the game!

## SECOND AND THIRD ASCENTS

You can climb a Pitch that was climbed by another player in a previous round, but you will use fewer Assets and will receive fewer points. The required Assets and point value go down by one for each player that climbs the same Pitch:

- First climber:** You need all the Assets, earn all points
- Second climber:** Must use 1 less Asset, earn 1 less point
- Third climber:** Must use 2 less Assets, earn 2 less points

Pitches cannot be worth negative points; if 2 players have climbed a 2-point Pitch, it is worth 0 points for all subsequent climbers. When climbing a Pitch after someone else, stack your Rope on top of the previous player's Rope to keep track of the order.

## THE LEDGE & THE HEADWALL

The mountain is divided by The Ledge. The bottom half is The Apron; the top half is The Headwall.

When the round ends with one or more players in the third row, flip over all the Pitches on The Headwall before starting the next round. Once the Pitches on the Headwall are revealed, they are able to be climbed!

**The Ledge connects all Pitches in the third and fourth row:** If you are on a Pitch in the third or fourth row, you can climb any Pitch in the third or fourth row on your next turn.

**You may cross The Ledge multiple times:** You may move from the third row to the fourth, then down to the third row and then up to the fourth row again.

### Example of acceptable movement:

(Numbers indicate the order in which Pitches were climbed)

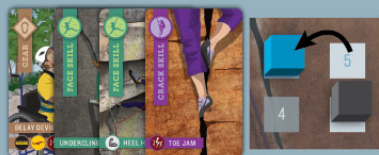


## Multiple ascents example



### First climber (red)

- Uses 1 Gear, 2 Face Skills, 1 Crack Skill, and 1 Water
- Earns 2 points for this Pitch



Assets used

### Second climber (blue)

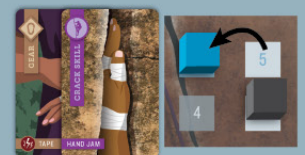
- Chooses to not use Water
- Earns 1 point for this Pitch instead of 2



Assets used

### Third climber (yellow)

- Chooses to not use Face Skill Cards
- Earns 0 points for this Pitch



Assets used

# GUIDE MODE: CLIMBING CARDS & OBJECTIVES

## CLIMBING CARD EXPLANATIONS

**Gain Asset Cards:** Choose a Card from The Portaledge and add it to your hand. When all players (or all *other* players) gain a Card from The Portaledge, go in clockwise order starting from the current player.

**Add Tokens to Pitches:** Select the corresponding Token and place it on any Pitch. That Asset is now required for all subsequent players who climb that Pitch.

**Discarding or losing Cards:** Lose that Card from your hand and put it in the "Asset Discard" spot on the Board.

**Draw a Summit Beta Token:** Draw a Token from the Summit Beta stack, read it, and keep it face down near you until you are ready to use it. These one-time use Tokens always offer a benefit, and can be used at any time during your turn. After using it, put the Token on the "Used Summit Beta" spot on the board.

### Rolling the Risk Die:

- ✓ Gain the reward shown.
- 🗉 Give 2 Cards in your hand to another player.
- 🗑️ You lose 1 Psych and 1 Card from your hand and give the Psych and Card to another player.

If you roll the Die and cannot pay what is shown on it, only draw 1 Card at the end of your turn.

## USING THE PORTALEDGE & THE SPREAD

- If 4 of a kind are on The Spread (like 4 Gear Cards), remove the last Card added and replace it with a new Card from the deck.
- On your turn, if you have 3 Cards of the same type (like 3 Gear Cards), you can put those Cards in the discard pile and choose 1 Card from The Portaledge.
- The Portaledge is a "bank" for each Card type. If a stack on The Portaledge runs out, refill it with 7 more, using Cards from the discard pile. Only draw Cards from The Portaledge when you rest, when a Climbing Card directs you to gain an Asset Card, or when you trade in 3 Cards for a Card of your choice.

## SHARED OBJECTIVES

Shared Objectives, which are at the top of the board, can be achieved by any player and/or by multiple players. At the end of the game, you will announce which Shared Objectives you achieved and earn the points at the top of the Objective Token.

### Explanations of Shared Objectives

#### Climb 3 Crack, Slab, Arete, Corner, Roof, or Flake:

Climb 3 Pitches with that type of climb listed at the top. (*Flake is shown here*)

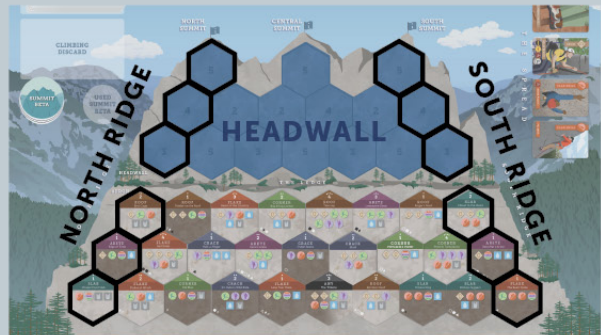


#### Gain 1 point for each shaded/sunny Pitch you climb:

The background color of the Pitch determines if it is sunny or shaded



**Climb the North Ridge/South Ridge:** Climb at least 4 Pitches along the North Ridge or South Ridge. The Summits count.



# GUIDE MODE: ENDING THE GAME

## ENDING THE GAME

The end of the game is triggered when one player has used all of their Rope and climbed their seventh Pitch. Once the end game has been triggered, finish the round and then tally everyone's points! *(If you use the score sheet, ignore the "Point Tokens" category)*

**Pitches:** Add up the number of points you've accrued from Pitches. If you climbed a Pitch after another player, subtract the appropriate number of points from that Pitch. *(See page 21 for more details)*

**Objectives:** If you achieved any Shared Objectives, add the number of points at the top of the Objective Tokens to your score.

**Summit bonus:** Gain 1 point if you reached a summit.

## TIE BREAKERS

If there is a tie, whoever climbed the most Pitches wins! If there is still a tie, winners share the glory.



# CREDITS

## THANK YOU

We are incredibly thankful for our playtesters, ambassadors, and Kickstarter backers who helped us bring this project to life. We couldn't have done it without your support!

### Ambassadors

Mike Aja, Demetrius Angelo, Gavin Boggs, Justin Chapman, Matthew Chen, Abbi Chittenden, Corey Day, Kelly Fink, Josh Giblin, Matt Gowie, Jamie Groller, Nick Henscheid, Taylor Herndon, Gloria Jimenez, Bob Johnson, Phil Lieberman, Alexander Mann, Zach Newhard, Myung-Jin Oh, Matt Parsell, Adam Pudliner, Brian Stevenson, and Ghost Yost

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## MEET THE TEAM

**Kate Otte** is the game designer, graphic designer, and artist behind First Ascent. This is her first board game; her background in information design, branding, wayfinding strategy, illustration, and storytelling enabled her to bring her vision to life.

Kate is also a contributor to The Climbing Zine and a leadership member of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Alpine Club. First Ascent was inspired by game nights with fellow AAC volunteers!

**Garrett Gibbons** is the producer and marketing strategist for First Ascent. His relationships with playtesters, convention-goers, fellow creators, reviewers, previewers, and climbing gyms has helped transform First Ascent from a fun idea into an actual product.

Outside of First Ascent, Garrett is a research scientist and crack climbing enthusiast. His local climbing crag is the Gunks, and he also loves climbing in Squamish, Vedauwoo, and Red Rock.

[www.PlayFirstAscent.com](http://www.PlayFirstAscent.com)

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**"The best climber in the world is  
the one who's having the most fun."**

*Alex Lowe*