

November's Newbie Guide

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Who should I play? How should I set up my country?

“Who to play? How about one of the hefty-jumbos?” Too much war and micromanagement.

“How about a svelte European country then?” Wars and, in the case of Prussia, whipsaw events.

“Alright, one of the petite European countries?” Still wars and more game-changing events. Wars and big events are the things veterans adore, but we new players are better off leaving those alone until we’ve a few annexations and revolts under our belt.

“OK, who then?” May I modestly suggest a South American country?

“A banana republic?” Yep, I think I have one that’s just your size.

Brazil may suit you to a tee. First, its women are among the most beautiful in the world. Second, you can make a lot of dough by sitting on the beach and watching the babes. Sounds like it’s right up your alley.

The following will guide you as you transform a third-tier nation into great power. There’s immense satisfaction in taking the 49th ranked nation to 2nd. Playing in this way you can begin to master the game and start asking the questions that no modest guide can answer.

Victory points. Your job is to amass victory points. VPs are a combination of prestige, military might, and industrial strength. Brazil has no industry, a very small army (but strong compared to its neighbors), no navy, and no prestige.

You cannot hope to end the game 1st in industrial might or military strength, but you can end with the highest prestige. Finishing the game with high prestige won’t necessarily win the game—result in the highest score (although it might)—but it will ensure your status as a great power.

Ok, we’ve firmly fixed our goal--finish as a great power--and our strategy: amass oodles of prestige by dazzling the world with our spectacular culture. First, move the tax sliders to about 48% for all classes.

Set tariffs to the maximum allowed.

Set education to the maximum allowed.

Set naval and army spending to 0.

Leave defense spending where it is.

Increase crime spending slightly, until it's just over 50%.

Open the trading screen and set machine parts to buy 10. Turn off auto trade.

Research the cultural tech.

Unpause the game.

Money from all of Brazil's RGOs should start rolling in immediately. A small amount initially, but positive cash flow. Go head to the beach.

"Great. I'm building opera houses and art museums while Peru is improving its artillery and getting mustard gas. Are you sure about this, Aristotle?"

What? You don't like modern art?

The fact that your less enlightened neighbors are researching military techs is a good thing! The amount of prestige you get from cultural research depends on how soon you get them compared to when everyone else gets them. Besides, whatever small advantages your neighbors may gain will be offset by the officers you will have with each army—a decisive edge early in the game.

Another thing to realize is that the great powers don't have the luxury of researching cultural techs. THEIR neighbors are seriously dangerous so they don't dare fall behind militarily. Sometimes isolation has its benefits.

The inventions triggered by you cultural research won't occur until the 40's. That's OK because when they do, they will propel you into great power status and you'll get all the advantages that status confers. In the meantime we'll be plotting and scheming.

As soon as your income is around 20 or so a day, begin increasing defense spending slightly. Eventually you want it at 70-80% of maximum.

The amount spent affects manpower growth and Leader Point generation. We need the leaders to provide the edge against technically superior forces. While Brazil's economy is modest, it's strong compared to its neighbors. They can't afford to spend too much on defense. You'll rarely see neighboring armies lead by competent generals.

Good! To the rest of the world we're beach bums but we'll be busy scheming and plotting.

But before we get to that, remember to pause the game whenever a technology is researched. Study your options. Whenever the cultural option provides an increase in prestige take it. Otherwise take the commerce tech. You can occasionally take an industrial tech but never ever research army or navy techs. We'll trade for them later.

Let's start scheming. One of our endemic problems is a lack of people. We need people to fill the military and the factories we'll build. While our enlightened government will attract immigrants, it won't be anything like the USA's. We'll have to liberate provinces from our neighbors.

Unfortunately we aren't strong enough (yet) to pick a victim and take what we want with impunity...sad but true. The rest of the world tends to frown on this behavior as well.

Not only that, but our world-weary neighbors understand this and tend to form alliances and combinations to thwart our plans. And—who know?—maybe some of them are eyeing our provinces in the same manner.

The question we next need to ask is "What can hurt us most? Where's the danger?" The danger is if our neighbors form combinations that prove too powerful to handle. What should we do? Make friends with all of them!

Immediately start using diplomatic points to improve relations with one of your neighbors. Concentrate on one nation at a time. You want to be allied with one of your neighbors at all times. Several is better.

Peru, who is your biggest long-term threat, is best. Once you've secured an alliance, you can breath easier. It's probable that several of your neighbors will ask you for an alliance.

Note: whenever any country asks you for a military alliance, make sure you understand the consequences. For example, Columbia might make an offer that says they are at war with Honduras. Before accepting, check both countries to make sure Honduras doesn't have its independence guaranteed by a great power, or have 50 other nations allied with it. You might find yourself in deep trouble.

Great! We're well underway. Our divas are filling the air with Le nozze di Figaro and soon the world will beat a path to our opera house door. Life is good!

Constantly monitor your neighbors for vulnerabilities. If Peru has no allies, pounce! If Peru is allied to Chile, investigate it. You might be surprised to find it's invalid against Brazil. If so, pounce! The best time to strike is when your victim is already involved in a war. If Peru is at war with Chile and their war weariness is 30%--pounce!

Ideally you want to be allied with everyone in South America and bide your time until you're ready. But you can't always control events. You'll find yourself allied with both sides and you'll have to choose. Or one of your allies may suddenly grow great. Your job is to neutralize everyone and eventually impose your will. It's tricky, and different each game, but fun!

What helps is to have the largest standing army possible while maintaining a robust economy. So, while we wait until the 40's for when the prestige-creating inventions trigger, add divisions to your standing army.

It's better to increase your standing army than increase your mobilization pool. A large standing army makes your neighbors think twice before attacking, and it also enables you to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

A final word about this pouncing business. Before attacking a neighbor, have well defined war aims. In general you want POP-rich provinces and/or iron producing ones. We'll get to the importance of iron in a minute. Be aware that if your bloodlust rises and you're determined to annex Argentina, bad things might happen. Like Great Britain deciding to crush you for being a threat to the peace and a blight on humanity. So is one more god-forsaken stretch of Patagonia worth that?

We've made it to the 1840's! We've money in the bank. Low crime. 10 or so army divisions. Several good generals.

Start buying the things you'll need to promote POPs to clerks and craftsmen: paper, clothes, regular furniture, luxury furniture, and precious metal. Sometimes it's hard to procure them so start well in advance of when you need them.

Remember to keep defense spending as high as practical. Defense spending not only affects manpower and leadership, it affects prestige point growth. If you have to cut somewhere, cut crime prevention.

Inventions triggered by all that cultural research begin firing. Our prestige mounts and—voila!—we're a GRAT POWER. Super!

We gain more diplomats and negotiations go smoother. We can influence events much better than our neighbors now.

We can buy the all important machine parts from the world market, while our prestige-challenged neighbors still can't—nanny nanny boo boo. With the factories we can now build, we'll far surpass our neighbors in industrial might.

Machine parts enable us to build factories. Factories enable us to change our research priorities somewhat, and put in place the final piece of our world power strategy.

Continue to grab prestige-growing technologies (other prestige-growing inventions fire later) but begin taking industrial ones more frequently. Get free market ASAP. The free market tech enables us to build a wide variety of factories, especially steel mills.

If you don't have free market when you first get machine parts, you might build a glass factory but it's better to wait until you can build steel mills. We want steel, steel, and still more steel. Steel is the best factory for us. It's profitable early, middle, and late game. We can use the steel later for all sorts of exotic things, like steamers and automobiles.

Steel requires coal and iron. We produce some iron and iron is rather plentiful in the whole of South America. Locate all the iron producing provinces belonging to your neighbors. You want them. Although we don't produce coal, it's cheap and always plentiful. Don't worry that we have to import it.

Lumber on the other hand is often in short supply (especially if there's great wars out in the world), so you'll eventually want to build a few of those too. But stay primarily with steel. You may end the game with 10-15 steel mills.

Initially Brazil has some clerks and craftsmen standing around ogling the babes. When you build your first factories, find out where these bums are hanging out and build there. Usually it's Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais.

Eventually you'll have to promote POPs to fill the factories. This is important: when you promote POPs, promote the biggest ones to clerks. This not only makes your factories more efficient, but it increases the rate at which you get research points.

Once clerks become about 12-15% or so of the total population, you'll begin running a surplus of RPs. OK, here's how research works. You can't research a tech unless you have 0 or more RPs. When you start researching a tech, any RPs you have (up to a maximum of 9 RPs) are applied to it; the more RPs, the faster the research.

Once you begin accumulating RPs your research speeds up, and not only that, you can trade surplus RPs for all the army and navy techs you ignored. You get your cake and eat it too! Sweet.

Once you have 10 research points, pick a nation that has good relations with you and trade for a military tech. This is another reason to maintain good relations with at least some nations. Don't expect to trade techs with poor relations.

If you trade a tech with less than 10 RPs, you get a negative RP total which kills progress on your current project. Not good, so wait until you have 10.

So now the truth can be revealed: while all our neighbors thought we were worth worthless beach bums, we were actually maintaining a breathless pace in the tech race.

Alright, where do we stand now? While we are somewhat behind our neighbors in military technology, we have better generals, and we're beginning to industrialize while they're still using horse and buggy. Not bad.

So we continue apace. Creating divisions, and maybe an occasional ship. Building factories and promoting POPs. Next we turn to railroads.

Grab the experimental railroad tech in good time. That is, there's no need for it until we have a few factories built and sufficient money in the bank to finance the adventure. Caution! The game is long—a marathon, not a sprint. Take industrialization slow. Promoting POPs is expensive. Building factories is expensive. Building railroads is too. It's better to go to war with money in the bank than deep in debt. Go slow.

Railroads increase province efficiency, both for factories and RGOs. It also increases army mobility. Railroads are altogether a good thing. Eventually we'll have at least a level one road in each and every province.

We proceed by building railroads where there are factories and only there. While railroads increase RGO output, they're much too expensive to build in RGO only provinces until industrialization is well under way.

Slowly add roads to all your factory provinces. Watch the money pour in. Build more factories (as long as you have spare POPs) then more railroads. Watch the money pour in even faster. Slowly increase the road levels. Some time in the 80's all of Brazil should be paved and all spare POPs accounted for.

Around 1900 all techs will have been researched. Take stock. Do you want to coast to the end? If you're ranked 4-5, you'll make it. You will certainly have the muscle, technology, and money to impose your will on your neighbors. Why not go out and see the rest of the world?

If you've followed along this far, you've finished a GC as a great power and may be thinking, "Great, now how do I win?"

The smart-ass answer is, "Impose your will on the rest of the world."

The long answer is beyond the scope of a thread for new players, but it's easy enough to sketch the outlines.

First, some background. Playing a parochial South American strategy just might win, but it's unlikely. But why?

Because prestige—even off the scale amounts of it—is just one face of the victory point pyramid.

All South American countries, and most other civilized minor nations, face the same limitations: lack of people and resources. In order to address the other two faces of the VP pyramid—industrial strength, and military might—you must increase your population and resource pools. Luckily, Victoria, because it simulates the dynamics of the period well, provides incentives and rewards for acting like a bully in the uncivilized world.

Some more background. Victoria draws a hard distinction between civilized and uncivilized nations. Civilized nations include the great powers, second-tier powers like Spain and Sweden, as well as the third-tier powers like Brazil. Uncivilized nations include all colonial areas and most African and Asian countries, such as Ethiopia and Korea. This hard distinction has a profound affect on game play.

In a nutshell then, you must tread lightly and say "please" and "thank you" when dealing with (most) civilized countries, but are free to drop the pretense and belch, fart, and act like the jerk you are in the whole of the uncivilized world.

This brings us to BADBOY points. Badboy is an abstract measurement of, well, how bad you've been. If it gets too high, nasty things begin to happen. The great powers may declare war simply to punish you. Do you want to see that 40 ship

fleet you've carefully built all these years to crumble before the 280 ship British navy?

You'll also discover that the civilized world will no longer form alliances or trade with a pariah like you. So much for all the research points you've amassed.

So how high is high? Don't really know. There's plenty of posts on the topic. My sense, after 6 GCs with 1.03, is that 50 is high, and over 100 means you go it alone. 10-15 is acceptable.

Badboy points go down over time. So you can act like a jerk then wait for things to cool off, then act like a jerk again, etc. (To see your badboy score, press F12 and type "badboy.") And by the way, sometimes it's worthwhile to forget about badboy and go for it. If you can annex Great Britain, who cares about badboy?

You get 2 BB points for each province annexed from a civilized nation. So it may not be the smartest move to annex Brazil. Not only that, you can't annex a civilized nation that has four or more provinces. This means that if you are determined to have the whole of Brazil because of the surpassing beauty of Brazilian women, you'll have to do it in two steps. Reduce Brazil to 4 provinces in the first war then take the remnant in a second.

It's better to look for the rewards Victoria provides in the uncivilized world.

Colonies are great. Getting a colony only takes money and time—no BB points. Once you claim a colony, the output from its RGOs goes into your coffers and is included in your industrial score.

You can convert its POPs to soldiers and recruit native divisions. While not the same quality as regulars, they're worth their weight in gold for a third-tier nation like Brazil or Peru. And not only that, the manpower you gain by converting native POPs goes into your national pool and can be used to resupply regular divisions.

Choice African targets are Yebuti in East Africa and Ifni in the west. Both consist of a single province and can be claimed after building only one colonial building. Yebuti provides access to the uncivilized Ethiopia and Egypt, both should be strategic targets.

What about uncivilized nations? First, uncivilized nations, unlike civilized ones, can be annexed in one fell swoop, regardless of the number of provinces. But don't do that! Annexing an entire uncivilized nation generates .5 BB per province, not nearly as bad as civilized but easy enough to avoid. Uncivilized provinces can be annexed for 0—that's right, 0—BB. Let that sink in.

Ethiopia, for example consists of 9 provinces. If you annexed the whole country at one throw, you'd get 4.5 BB. Not too bad, but if you take all but one province in a first war (8 provinces=0 BB), then the last province in a later war, you're entire BB would be .5. Now let that sink in.

Once you take uncivilized provinces, their POPs and RGOs become yours in the same way as colonial provinces. With enough colonies and uncivilized nations, your manpower can be practically unlimited. A 150 division Peruvian army becomes feasible.

So you see that while you've played a parochial South American strategy, the other "civilized" nations having been running riot over colonies and uncivilized countries.

A final note about prestige. Claiming colonies generates prestige, which is a good thing. Winning wars against uncivilized nations also generate prestige—but not too much. It costs prestige to declare war against an uncivilized nation, usually more than what you can gain from a successful war. So keep that in mind.