

THE GOLD RUSH GAME

In 1839, a pioneer trader named John Sutter became owner of some land in California. He spent many years and a large sum of money building a fort, mills, shops, and ranches. He hired James Marshall, a carpenter, to help him build a sawmill on the American River near present-day Sacramento. While working on the project, Marshall accidentally found gold.



News of the discovery spread rapidly. Although few people lived in California at the time, those who did became very excited. When word reached nearby San Francisco, all but seven of the 900 people in the city headed for the area around Sutter's Mill. People in other parts of California also left their homes and families, quit their jobs, and closed their businesses to hurry off to the gold fields.

When people in the eastern United States heard what was happening in California, thousands left immediately for the West Coast. Some took a ship to Central America, walked across the Isthmus of Panama, and sailed north to the West Coast. But most "forty-niners," as the goldseekers were called, decided to cross the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. It was the fastest way to reach the "diggings." But it was also the most dangerous route to follow. A forty-niner's covered wagon might break down, or he might be attacked by Indians, or be trapped by heavy snows in the Rocky Mountains. Yet these and other dangers did not stop 100,000 Americans from racing to California. This "gold rush" of 1849 was one of the most exciting events in American history. Within a year's time, the population of San Francisco went from under 1,000 to more than 25,000. Other towns experienced similar population explosions. Though most miners never found gold, many stayed in California and became shopkeepers, farmers, and ranchers. California became a state in 1850.

Game Rules

The class will be divided into groups of three or four people. Players will sit around a map which shows four routes to the gold fields of California. Each group will have one die that players will roll to determine who goes first. The person with the highest number will take their turn, then the other players around to the left.

Notice that the four routes on the map connect four cities along the East Coast with the area of Sutter's Mill in California. The player who goes first will leave for California from **Boston, Massachusetts**. The person who goes second will leave from **New York City, New York**, the third player from **Richmond, Virginia**, and player four from **Savannah, Georgia**.

Each group member will be given a marker to move along their route to California. Markers will be placed inside of the circles along the East Coast. The game begins when Player 1, at Boston, rolls the die and moves their marker the number of spaces shown. If Player 1 stops on a space with a number inside, a description will be read from the Incidents and Events list on the following pages.

The Incidents and Events list describes things which could happen to forty-niners on their way to California. Some of these things might happen to you, including being attacked by Indians, stranded in a snowstorm, or chased by a grizzly bear. When a numbered space is landed on along a route, read the description for that number. You may be told to move forward, move backward, or you may lose a turn. If you land on another number when moving forward or backward, do not refer to the Incidents and Events list.

The winners of THE GOLD RUSH GAME will be the first people in each group to reach the diggings near Sacramento, shown by a circle on the map. In order to enter this circle and win the game, a player must roll on the die the exact number of spaces needed to stop inside of the circle.

Incidents and Events

1. Stopped to tour the Revolutionary War battlefield at Saratoga, New York. Lose 1 turn.
2. Rode boat on the Erie Canal to Buffalo, New York. Forward 1 space.
3. Picked up extra supplies in Buffalo. Forward 2 spaces.
4. Stopped to view Niagara Falls. Lose 1 turn.
5. Picked up additional supplies in Detroit, Michigan. Forward 1 space.
6. Became homesick. Returned to Boston to visit sweetheart. Start over again.
7. Picked up more supplies in Chicago, Illinois. Forward 1 space.
8. Having problems catching a flatboat across the Mississippi River. Lose 1 turn.
9. Bad Midwestern thunderstorm causes flooding. Move back 1 space.
10. Covered wagon wheel falls off crossing stream. Must make repairs. Lose 1 turn.
11. Picked up more supplies in Fargo, North Dakota. Forward 1 space.
12. Lucky to get out of the way of buffalo stampede. Move back 2 spaces.
13. Stopped to help put out prairie fire. Lose 1 turn.
14. Mountain man shows you a short cut. Forward 1 space.
15. Ran out of supplies. Return to Fargo, North Dakota (space 11).
16. Attacked by Cheyenne Indians. Lucky not to have lost scalp. Move back 2 spaces.
17. Stopped to watch "Old Faithful," a geyser in the Rocky Mountains. Lose 1 turn.
18. Looking for a pass through the Rocky Mountains. Go back 1 space.
19. Avalanche blocks pass through Rocky Mountains. Must find a different trail. Backward 2 spaces.
20. Stop for supplies at Fort Walla Walla. Forward 1 space.
21. Oregon fur traders point out a short cut. Forward 1 space.
22. One of your horses dies. Go back to Fort Walla Walla (space 20) and buy another one.
23. You found yellow stones in a stream and stopped to look for more. The yellow stones turn out to be "fool's gold." Lose 1 turn.
24. Take a ride on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Forward 1 space.
25. Stop to buy a covered wagon. Lose 1 turn.
26. Bought supplies in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Move ahead 2 spaces.
27. Heavy rainstorm turns dirt roads to mud. Go back to Pittsburgh (space 26) and wait for dry weather.
28. Get on the National Road at Cincinnati. Make good time along the turnpike. Move ahead 2 spaces.
29. Cross the Ohio River over a new bridge. Forward 1 space.
30. Broke arm in fall from covered wagon. Stop to see a doctor. Lose 1 turn.
31. Spring flood washes out bridge over Mississippi River. Look for another place to cross. Lose 1 turn.
32. Tornado hits Ozark Plateau region. Move back 2 spaces.
33. Picked up extra supplies at Independence, Missouri. Forward 1 space.
34. Bit by rattlesnake. Back to Independence (space 33) for medical treatment.
35. Accidentally became involved in a fight in Kansas between southern slaveowners and northern free men. Move back 1 space.
36. Became confused with directions and took wrong trail. Backward 2 spaces.
37. Frontier trapper guides you through land of unfriendly Indians. Move safely ahead 2 spaces to Fort Laramie.
38. Prairie fire slows you down. Lose 1 turn.
39. Indians are on the warpath. You become scared and stay at Fort Laramie. Lose 1 turn.
40. Rocky Mountain blizzard blocks route. Move back 1 space.
41. Chased by a grizzly bear. Quickly move back 2 spaces.
42. Arrived safely in Salt Lake City. Pick up supplies and move forward 1 space.
43. Stopped to visit Mormon friends near the Great Salt Lake. Lose 1 turn.
44. Long period of dry weather forces you to look for water. Move back 1 space.
45. Found two stray mules which help you carry your supplies. Forward 1 space.
46. Food supply runs low. Stop to hunt animals for meat. Lose 1 turn.
47. Helped a slave escape to freedom along the Underground Railroad. Move back 1 space.

48. Picked up supplies in Roanoke, Virginia. Forward 2 spaces.
49. Follow the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap in the Appalachian Mountains. Move ahead 1 space.
50. Wagon wheel breaks in half. Too bad. Go back to Roanoke (space 48) and buy a new one.
51. Picked up more supplies. Forward 1 space.
52. Stuck in mud for 17 hours after heavy April rainstorm. Lose 1 turn.
53. Arrive at Memphis, Tennessee. Take a riverboat across the Mississippi. Forward 1 space.
54. Caught in Mississippi River flood waters. Float backward 1 space.
55. Stayed with a pioneer family in the Ozark Plateau region. Lose 1 turn.
56. Three runaway slaves help carry your supplies in exchange for food. Move forward 1 space.
57. Oklahoma tornado kills 4 people traveling with you. Stop to bury them. Lose 1 turn.
58. Great Plains duststorm forces you to turn around. Move backward 2 spaces.
59. Went into a saloon in Dodge City, Kansas, and got into an argument with a gunslinger. Ran out of town to keep from being shot. Move back 2 spaces.
60. Held up by outlaws who steal your supplies. Go back to Dodge City (space 59) for more food and tools.
61. Hired friendly Indian to guide you through unknown territory. Forward 1 space.
62. Smoke signals seen on nearby hilltops. Move back 1 space to avoid attack from Apache Indians.
63. Arrived in Pueblo, Colorado. Pick up supplies and move ahead 1 space.
64. High peaks of Rocky Mountains slow you down. Lose 1 turn.
65. Stop to see the beautiful Grand Canyon of Arizona. Lose 1 turn.
66. Attacked and clawed by mountain lion. Go back to Pueblo (space 63) and see a doctor.
67. Flash flood washes wagon downstream in wrong direction. Backward 1 space.
68. Running short of fresh water. Go back 2 spaces to nearest water hole.
69. Stopped to help missionaries cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Lose 1 turn.
70. Hurricane moving north from Gulf of Mexico. Get out of the way by moving back to Savannah.
71. Entering an area of swamps and quicksand. Slow down. Lose 1 turn.
72. Lost two fingers when bitten by alligator. Stop to rest. Lose 1 turn.
73. Picked up supplies in Mobile, Alabama. Forward 1 space.
74. Helped plantation owner search the countryside for a runaway slave. Move back 1 space.
75. Decided to hurry as fast as possible toward New Orleans to catch boat to California around South America. Fell out of speeding covered wagon after hitting bump. Limp into hills looking for horses and wagon. Lose 1 turn.
76. Arrive in New Orleans, Louisiana. Get a fresh team of horses. Move ahead 2 spaces.
77. Sunny, dry weather makes travel fast through plains area. Move ahead 1 space.
78. Get out of way of tornado in eastern Texas. Move back 1 space.
79. Hire two slaves to help carry supplies. Move forward 1 space.
80. Horse trips over tumble weed and breaks leg. Go back to New Orleans (space 76) and buy a new horse.
81. Picked up food and tools in San Antonio, Texas. Forward 2 spaces.
82. Stopped to see the Alamo, where Texans died fighting for freedom from Mexico. Lose 1 turn.
83. Duststorm forces you to return to San Antonio (space 81).
84. Stopped to rest in El Paso, Texas. Lose 1 turn.
85. Masked men take all your supplies. Return to El Paso (space 84).
86. Attacked by Mexican soldiers after crossing Rio Grande. Quickly move back 2 spaces.
87. Arrived in Tucson, Arizona. Watered and fed horses. Move forward 2 spaces.
88. Back wheels of covered wagon fall off. Return to Tucson (space 87).
89. Friendly Indians show you a short cut. Forward 1 space.
90. Bridge ahead washed out. Look for a shallow place to cross Colorado River. Lose 1 turn.
91. Entered Death Valley, California. Slowed down by hot, dry weather as temperature reaches 115 degrees. Go back 1 space and look for water.
92. Earthquake knocks over covered wagon. Make repairs. Lose 1 turn.



