



# THE BIG IDEA™

## Semideluxe Edition

**Background:** You're all venture capitalists, trying to make money off the IPOs of new one-shot companies who make stuff like "Disposable Cats" and "Perforated Pants." Since it's a game, you also get to make up the new products. It's part of what we in the game design business like to call "Fun."

This is the "semideluxe" edition of **The Big Idea**, with updated rules and nearly 200 cards. Look for the 64-card expansion pack, "Big Idea: More Cards," in late 2004!

**Setup:** Give each player five **chips** of the same color (but not white) and \$10 in **cash**. The Bank takes the 30 white chips and the rest of the cash. Chips represent millions of dollars of investment capital, other people's money. Dollar bills represent, well, just dollars. But at least they're yours.

Shuffle the two **decks**. The **BIG** deck contains a mix of interesting adjectives, and the **IDEA** deck contains a mix of interesting nouns. Each player draws a hand of 3 cards from each deck. If either deck runs out, reshuffle the discards.

Randomly choose who will be the leader for the first round, and give that player the die. Each player will be the leader just once, unless there are only three players, in which case you will go around twice.

**Turns:** Turns take place in four phases. They are the **Seed**, **Venture**, **Mezzanine**, and **Offering** phases, also known as Invention, Secret, Open, and IPO phases, since Seed, Venture, Mezzanine, and Offering make no sense unless you're a real venture capitalist.

**Step 1, Seed:** Each player invents a new product by playing some cards face down. You can use **any assortment** and **any number** of cards, but often you will use one BIG card and one IDEA card. If you can't make anything you like, you can play a bunch of cards just to get them out of your hand. Who knows? You might even invent something by mistake!

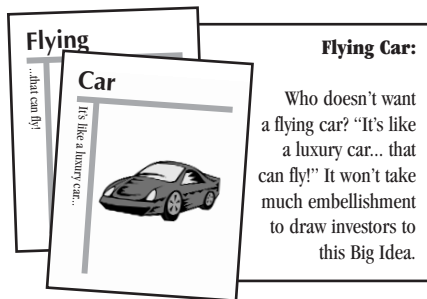
Once everyone has made a product, it's time to sell them. Starting with the leader, players reveal and colorfully describe their new inventions. You can read the text on the cards, use the text as a starting point for your pitch, or ignore the text altogether. If you're stuck for a sales angle, try starting with "how many times has this happened to you?"

After revealing your new invention, you may either invest in your product, by placing one of your investment chips on

it, or you may immediately throw the cards away. (Actually, if you're not planning on investing, you don't really have to pitch your product, either. But people might actually like it...)

**Step 2, Venture:** Secretly, players must now decide which **other** new product they want to invest in. In this step, you may only invest in products that are **new this round**, and you can't invest in your own. When everyone is ready, on the count of three, everyone puts a chip on their chosen product (or they can hold it back, if they wish to invest in nothing).

**Good Idea Bonus:** At the end of Step 2, the player who made the **most popular product**, if there is one, gets a \$1 bonus from the bank. "Most popular" means the new product with the most investors at the end of Step 2. If there is a tie for most popular product, there is no bonus.



**Step 3, Mezzanine:** In this phase, players can make a third investment. This time you will take turns, starting with the leader. You may invest in any product on the table, new or old. (Some old inventions may be left over from previous rounds.) However, because you have more information, investing now costs **money**. You must pay **one dollar** to the owner of each share, i.e., each chip that is already on the product. For example, if Blue has two shares in Flying Car, you must now pay \$2 to Blue when you invest in it.

You do not pay any money to foreign investors (described in Step 4). As with all other phases, investment in this phase is optional.

**Step 4, Offering:** At this point, the manufacturers of these new products will offer their companies for sale in an IPO (Initial Public Offering). If it's successful, your investment pays off, the cards disappear from the table, and you get

**Players:** 3 to 6  
**Playing Time:** 30 Minutes  
**Included:** Two 96-card decks; rules.  
**You Also Need:** five colored chips for each player, 30 more white chips, money in 1s, 5s, and 10s, and one 6-sided die.

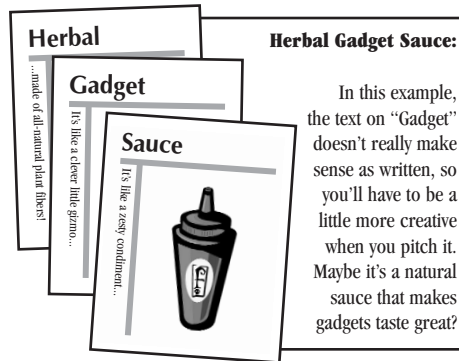
your chips back along with some cash. If the IPO fails, the product sticks around, and your investment is tied up.

In any order he chooses (we suggest doing the small stacks first), the leader must **roll the die** for each product on the table. Compare the roll to the total number of chips on that product. If the roll is **equal to or lower than** the number of chips, the IPO succeeds; otherwise it fails.

**Success:** If you roll **equal to or lower than** the number of shares, the IPO succeeds. Each investor receives **\$1 times the die roll** for each share he owns. For example, if the roll is a 3, a player with 2 shares in the product earns \$6; a player with 1 share earns \$3. Pay the shareholders, return their chips, and discard the product cards.

**Failure:** If you roll **higher than** the number of chips on the product, the IPO fails. The product remains on the table, the chips are not returned to their owners, and **one white chip**, a "Foreign Investor" is **added to the stack from the Bank**.

Foreign investors do not pay to invest, they are not paid by new investors, and they do not collect money from the bank; they simply exist as a means to add investors to a product until it sells. (In fact, they might not even exist...)



**Ending the Turn and the Game:** Once all the products have been rolled for, the turn is over. The die and the role of leader passes to the left, and a new turn begins. Players can discard as many cards as they like, and then must draw from both decks until their hands have three cards from each. Then, begin again with Step 1.

A complete game consists of 1 turn for each player, or 2 turns for each if there are only 3 players. At the end of the last round, the player with the most money wins.

**Note:** It is possible to tie up all five of your investment chips. Though it usually doesn't last, this situation can be financially damaging. Take care not to put all your money in unpopular products, if you can help it!

**Strategy:** Unlike in the real world, everyone's pile of money is usually getting bigger, because we think it's more fun that way. Nevertheless, final scores can be very close, so it's important to fight for every dollar you can get.

It's especially smart to invent a popular product when you will act early in the Mezzanine phase, or to get lucky and invest in the most popular one on the table, because if your product is popular and you can get your second chip into the product earlier, you will earn more money from those players who come in after you.

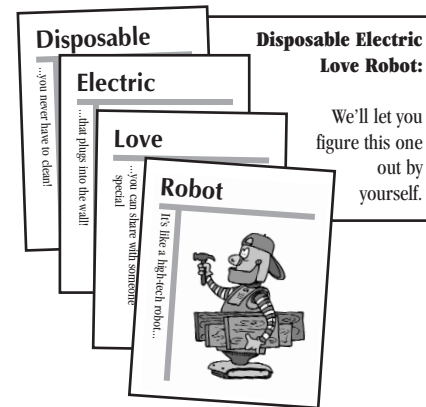
**Value of Shares:** The more shares that are on a single product, the more money each share is likely to make. This is because higher rolls will make those shares pay off.

To get a rough idea of what your shares are worth, you can calculate their **expected value**. It's the average value of a share if it were to pay out thousands of times. If you own the only share in a 1-share product, the product will pay \$1 on a roll of 1, and nothing on any other roll. Since it has a 1/6 chance of paying \$1, we say it has an expected value of \$1/6 (or 16.6 cents). A 6-Share product is guaranteed to pay off, and will pay (on average) \$3.5 per share. However, in reality it could still be as low as \$1 or as high as \$6.

Changing the number of shares in a product changes the expected value of every share in it, which means that investing in a product increases the value of other players' shares, as well as your own! It's especially valuable to invest in products with many foreign investors, since it costs you nothing and doesn't increase the expected return for other players.

When investing, pay attention to the number of shares of the product you already have. The more shares you have, the cheaper your buy-in will be, and the better the money you stand to make. It's generally not a wise investment to pay money for a share when it doesn't at least make you **tyed** for the biggest shareholder in the product.

One strategy that works fairly well is actually to make an **unpopular** product, but continue investing in your own stack turn after turn. When this pays, all the money will go to you; however, this strategy can easily tie up all your chips!



**Credits:** **The Big Idea** was designed by James Ernest, with help from Jeff Vogel, Carol Monahan, Mariann Krizsan, and Dave Howell. This edition contains cards by James Ernest, Mike Selinker, Dave Howell, Eric Yarnell, Richard Forster, Robyn Reed, Chris Floyd, W. Daniel Cooksey, and others. Art is clip art from JupiterImages Inc., www.clipart.com.