

CIRCUS MAXIMUS

Rules of play. Version 1.5.0. Tronsoft Games.

Two games share one circuit. The chariot race is eight teams over 3 laps of an oval 84 spaces round and 8 lanes wide. The gladiatorial bout is two men on a five-band reach gauge. A season of races ties them together with a stable, a purse and a betting book.

1. The circuit

The circuit has two straights of 26 spaces and two turns of 16, with a turning post — a *meta* — at each end of the spina. Speed is measured in *lengths a turn*. A space on a straight costs one length. A space round a turn costs more the further out you are.

Lane	Safe speed at the meta	Cost of a curve space	Lengths in a lap
0 (rail)	6	1.00	84.0
1	6.3	1.06	85.8
2	6.5	1.11	87.7
3	6.8	1.17	89.5
4	7	1.23	91.3
5	7.3	1.29	93.1
6	7.5	1.34	95.0
7 (outside)	7.8	1.40	96.8

This table is the whole argument of the race. The rail is the shortest way round and the slowest through the turn; the outside holds speed and pays for it in ground. Neither is free, and the traffic decides which is worth having today.

2. The racing tablet

Every turn, all eight drivers write a tablet in secret. Four things go on it.

Speed

Written to the quarter length, inside the band your horses allow: up by the team's acceleration, down by its braking, from the speed you are already doing. Tucked in one or two spaces behind another car you are out of the wind and may hold 0.5 of a length more than the band.

Line

One of the eight lanes. The car drifts one lane every 3 impulses toward the line you asked for, and cannot pass through a car standing in the way.

The whip

Buys speed above the band now. It tells later: fatigue lowers your effective top speed as the race goes on, and a team with a deep wind keeps more of it.

A tactic against the man beside you

Ram him, whip his driver, or cut across and force him a lane wide. A tactic resolves on the first impulse the two cars are actually beside each other. It cannot be written against a man who is not within a lane and a space or two.

3. Several people at one table

From one driver up to all eight may be people. Each seat takes the tablet in turn, writes it and seals it; the panel is cleared between seats, and carries nothing but the name of the man it is going to. The turn resolves only when every seat has written, and no tablet is seen until they are all turned over together. Teams that are not seats are driven by the machine.

The bout seats two the same way: the first card is sealed, the card passes, and both are turned together. Each man picks up his own weapons first, and because every armature has a minimum reach as well as a maximum, that choice is most of the bout.

4. Resolution

The tablets are revealed together and resolved over 12 impulses. Nobody reacts to anybody: everything written was written before any of it was known. During the impulses cars accumulate movement, drift toward their chosen line, and meet each other.

A car under way always clears at least one space in a turn, even where a curve space in an outer lane costs more than its whole turn of movement.

5. The control check

Entering the first space of a turn, a car makes **one** control check against the safe speed for the lane it is actually in — not the lane it was heading for. At or under the safe speed the check cannot fail. Above it, the chance of failure rises with the excess and falls with the driver's handling; a lash across the face makes it half as likely again to fail.

A failed check either runs the car wide, costing two lanes and a length and a half of speed, or loses the car altogether.

6. Contact, wrecks and the sand

Coming up behind a slower car at a small closing speed is a lean: you hold up, he is checked, and nobody is hurt. Above two and a half lengths of closing speed it is a crash, and both cars take damage scaled by the difference.

A wrecked driver is tied to his reins and dragged behind his own horses. Each turn he may try to cut them; guile decides how often he manages it, and every turn dragged is a turn he may not survive. Once he is on the sand, any car that runs him over will probably kill him.

Wreckage lies on the circuit for 2 turns before the sparsores drag it clear. Driving into it costs hull and speed.

7. The team

Horse	Speed	Wind	Turn	Cost	
Hispanus	3	2	0	9	Fast off the gate, spends himself early.
Afer	2	3	0	8	The African stock the factions bought by the score.
Thessalus	1	4	0	7	Slow, deep-winded, still running on the last lap.
Cappadox	2	2	2	10	Turns inside anything on the circuit.

Car	Speed	Hull	Cost	
Light car	+0.6	2	8	Wicker and hide. Quick, and it comes apart like kindling.
Standard car	0	4	10	What the factions run when they are not showing off.
Heavy car	-0.6	6	12	Braced axle, oak floor. Survives what it starts.

The driver carries 12 points across four skills, none below 1 or above 5: handling holds the line at the meta, nerve rams and takes a ramming, the whip finds a last length, and guile cuts the reins and finds the gap. Scythes on the hubs cost speed and make a ram bite far harder while jarring your own axle far less.

8. The bout

Two men, one card each turn: ground, and a blow. The gauge has five bands.

Band	Name	
0	Corps à corps	Boss to boss; no room for an arm.
1	Inside the guard	Sword ground. A spear is a stick here.
2	Sword length	A long blade or a short spear.
3	Spear length	Point work. Blades cannot answer.
4	Apart	Out of reach. Only the net crosses this.

The ground moves **one band a turn at most**. If one man comes on while the other gives ground, the quicker man decides, with an edge to the one coming forward. Keep giving ground and the barrier arrives at your back; they circle as well as travel, so ground comes back slowly.

Reach

Every armature has a **minimum** reach as well as a maximum. This is the whole bout: a trident is nothing inside the guard, and two blades reach nothing at spear length. Band 4 is crossed only by the net.

Armature	Bands	Attack	Defence	Speed	Armour	Arms
Murmillo	0–2	6	6	4	3	Gladius and scutum
Secutor	0–2	6	6	5	3	Gladius, smooth helm, scutum
Thraex	0–2	6	5	5	3	Sica and parmula
Hoplomachus	2–3	7	6	5	2	Hasta and parmula
Retiarius	2–3	7	5	7	1	Trident, net, no shield
Dimachaerus	0–1	6	4	6	2	Two blades, no shield
Provocator	0–2	5	7	4	3	Gladius, scutum, breastplate

A man who has a reach at the distance they were at and loses it as the other comes inside gets one blow on the way in; a set spear gets a better one. Two blades strike twice inside sword length. A curved sica reaches round the edge of a shield, and a man behind a scutum is very hard to hit from outside his own reach — which is why the retiarius carries a net as well as a trident.

If four turns pass with no blow struck at all, the lanistae come in with the whip and the hot iron and move the men one band toward a distance where somebody can reach.

The appeal

At 12 wounds a man goes down and raises a finger. He must reach a bar of **14** on a twenty-sided roll plus the favour he has earned — from the blows he landed and the length of the bout — shifted by the editor's temper, which is a dial on the controls. Failing it, the thumb goes to the throat.

9. The season

A race pays its purse by place, and the season table scores 10, 6, 4, 2, 1 down the field. Between days you may buy horses, buy a car, fit scythes, mend the damage and rest the horses, all out of the same purse. The book will take a bet on any of the eight teams at its own price, and it takes a cut. A driver killed under the wheels is replaced by whoever the yard can hire.

10. Saving

The game writes the season and the race in progress into browser storage under one key, `tronsoft_circus_maximus_save`. Resuming restores the field, the generator and the race, which then continues exactly as it would have. A season can be replayed by adding `#seed=` and a number to the address.