

Iron to Gold

Metallurgie reviewed by Pevans

Metallurgie is one of those clever little card games that German designers seem to excel in. The theme of this one is alchemy: converting base iron to gold (via copper and silver). Though, actually, players score points for each of the metals.

What they do is lay cards on the table in an interlocking pattern. Iron cards (only) extend the pattern. Copper cards go on top of the iron; silver on top of copper and gold on silver. Players are trying to make a connected group of one metal. Make it big enough and it scores. The player who completed the group removes some cards from it, keeping one as their score. Removing cards has two effects. First, it makes it harder for the next player to score for the same metal. Second, it reveals the metal underneath, which may allow the player to score again. Or give a different opportunity to the following player.

So this is a game of spotting patterns. Players are not only looking to play cards to complete a group, but also to remove cards to show a group. And, of course, trying to make sure they don't leave anything for the next player. Initial play thus tends to be cautious, but eventually someone will score. This changes what's on the table and may well provoke further scoring. Then there'll be more cautious play again.

The game ends – randomly – towards the end of the deck and the player who has scored the most cards wins. The game has some clever tactical nuances and a healthy dollop of luck and requires some thinking. I quite enjoy it, but players need to be able to see the patterns. (Unlike our esteemed editor – though it's good to find something I can beat Brian at after he's just thrashed me twice!)

Metallurgie was designed by Maik Hennebach and published (in Germany) by Argentum Verlag. It is a card game for 2-4 players, aged 10+, and takes around 45 minutes to play. It is available in specialist games shops in the UK at around £6.

Pevans rates it 7/10 on his very subjective scale.

*This review first appeared in **Games International** 19 (January 2005).*

© Copyright Paul Evans 2004. All trademarks acknowledged.