

LIFEBOATS

by Ronald Wattering

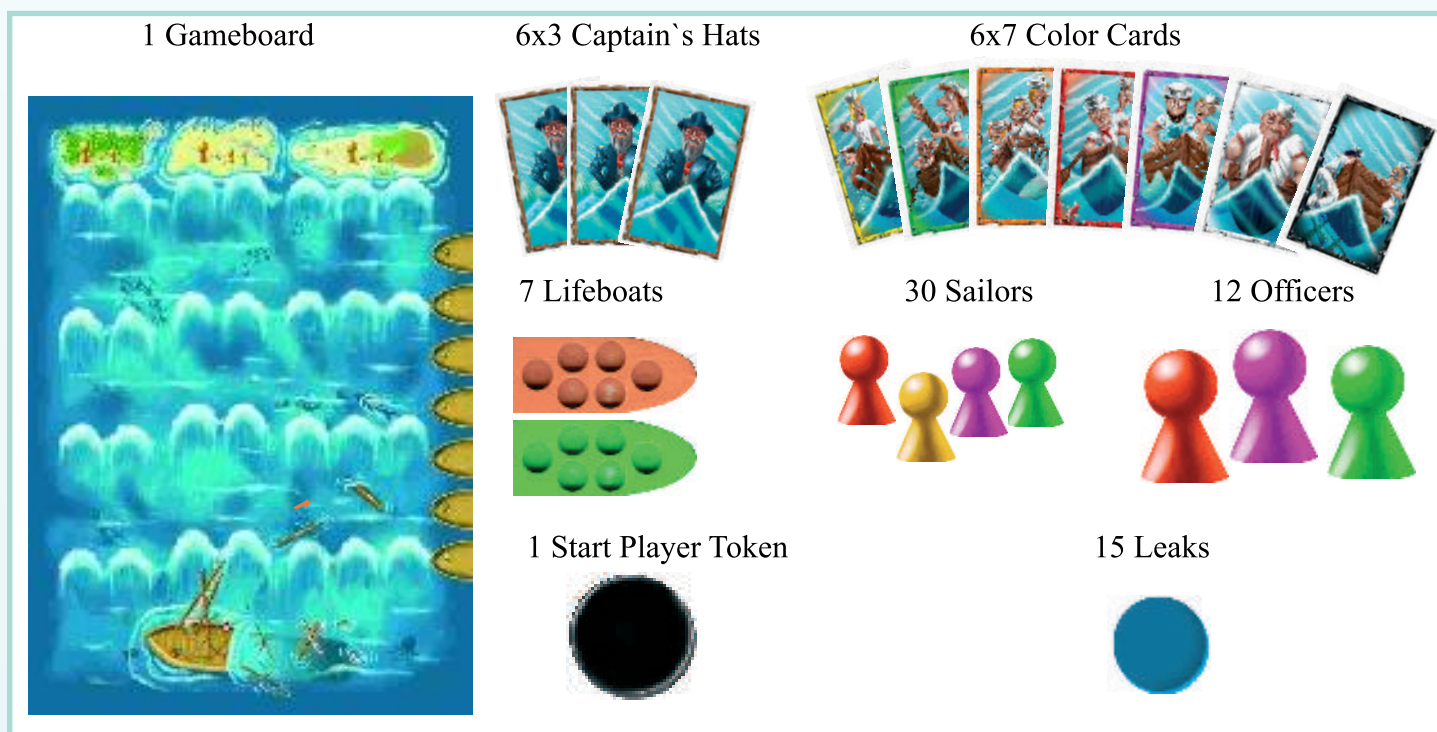
A ship catastrophe for three to six players aged 12 and up

Santa Timea is sinking!

Santa Timea has set sail, venturing far out into unknown sea – too far! In misty weather, the ship collided with a reef, and after a long and despairing struggle the situation became hopeless, and the ship had to be abandoned. Groaning and moaning, the grand ship sinks to the seabed where it will find its last resting-place.

Fortunately, all the sailors made it to the old lifeboats. However, water is pouring through the rotten planks, and safety is found on islands seen on the horizon in the lifting fog. Will they manage to reach one of the islands in their leaking lifeboats or will the merciless sea claim the brave adventurers?

Game Material



Object of the Game

Players try to rescue their officers and sailors in the rotten boats to one of the islands. Obviously, some of the leaking lifeboats will not reach the islands, so the boats have to be properly chosen – and changed in time, if possible.

All incidents in this game – like, which boat proceeds, which leaks, and who eventually drowns – are to be negotiated and democratically voted for (using the color cards). Convincing others and negotiating bargains is as essential as overruling the agreed move in the right moment by playing one of the rare Captain's Hats.

Players gain victory points for every pawn of their color that has landed on an island. The points vary by which island is landed on and the rank of the crew member (officer or sailor) that is saved. The one who has most victory points at the end wins the game.

Game Preparation

The *board* is placed in the middle of the table. Every player chooses a color and takes the *lifeboat*, the *two officers* (bigger pawns) and the *five sailors* (smaller pawns) of their chosen color. If there are five or six players, each player only gets four sailors. All players also take a deck of 10 cards: 7 Lifeboat-Cards (one of each color), and three Captain's Hat-Cards.

The *leaks* (the blue cylinders) and the *black boat* are placed next to the board.

The *Start Player* is randomly determined. He receives the *Start Player Token* (the black wooden disc).

Game Start

"Look out, a reef!" were the last words of the lookout, before the ship collided. The majestic Santa Timea's hull stove in and water entered: the ship started sinking. "Everybody to the lifeboats!" the Captain shouted from aft, "Each man for himself!" Hastily, the lifeboats are lowered onto the water and the survivors, who are not always cooperative, strive to reach the islands appearing at the horizon.

Beginning with the Start Player, all players in clockwise order place their boat on the board. They may choose any start field (the ones next to the sinking ship). There may only be one boat per field.

Thereafter the Start Player places the black boat on one of the remaining empty start fields.

Subsequently, the Start Player begins to position one of his crew members (officer or sailor) in any empty seat (hole) in any lifeboat – he may choose his own boat, a boat belonging to another player, or the black one. The players proceed clockwise until all pawns are seated in a lifeboat.

Game Turn

Each *game turn* consists of *three phases*:

Phase 1: One lifeboat receives a leak.

Phase 2: One lifeboat moves.

Phase 3: Seamen change boats.

After phase three, a new game turn follows. The game ends when the last lifeboat has either reached one of the islands – or sank.

Short Instruction

Game Preparation

- Players get
 - 1 lifeboat
 - 2 officers
 - 4 or 5 sailors
 - 1 deck of cards
- Start Player is determined

Game Start

- Clockwise every player places his boat on a start field
- Start Player places the black boat
- Clockwise the players position any of their pawns in any lifeboat (one pawn at a time)

Phase 1: One lifeboat receives a leak

The lifeboats are old and rotten. On their way to the islands they can't avoid damaging themselves on the reefs. If the number of leaks increases, some (unpopular) seaman has to give way to the incoming water...

All players vote for the lifeboat that gets a new leak (if it already has some, it receives an additional one).

Ballot:

Fate is very democratic in this game. If something has to be decided, it is voted on. Every player chooses a color card of the lifeboat he wants to vote for and places it face-down in front of him. Then, all players reveal their choice simultaneously, and the game turn will be resolved according to the majority of votes. In case of a tie, the Start Player decides amongst the colors that tied for majority.

The players are free to influence the choice of the others by threatening them, giving tactical hints that nobody asked for, or by offering them deals. But agreements are not binding, and when turning the voting cards round, they may turn out to have been cock-and-bull stories. But a played card may under no circumstances be taken back and be replaced by another one.

Instead of a color card, a Captain's Hat Card may be played, which will usually overrule the majority result (see Captain's Hat section of the rules for details).

Color Cards are taken back after being played, but Captain's Hat Cards may only be played once and will be taken out of the game after being played.

If negotiation time gets out of hand, players may agree on a time limit (which may be measured with an hourglass).

The leak (blue cylinder) is placed in the boat that received the most votes (see Example 1). If the ballot is a tie, the *Start Player* decides which of the boats that tied for *the most* votes will receive the leak.

Example 1: **Player 1:**



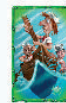
Player 2:



Player 3:



Player 4:



The vote is for which boat to get a leak. Before selecting a ballot-card and putting it face down on the table, all players may discuss, bargain and argue with each other. **Player 2** tells everyone to choose the green boat. **Player 1** (Start Player) argues to put a leak into the black boat and tries to win **Player 4** over by offering to support his plans next turn. Because **Player 3** is anxious about early alliances, he takes a diplomatic path and picks his ballot-card at random. **Player 4** promises to support the intention of **Player 1** by choosing the black boat, too. After the cards are revealed, it appears that **Player 1** played a black card (as promised), **Player 2** a green card (as expected), **Player 3** a red card (at random or not?) and **Player 4** a green card (did he forget his promise to **Player 1**?). So there is a clear majority for the green boat and a leak is placed in it.

Phase 1

(One lifeboat receives a leak)

- All players vote for a lifeboat to get a leak

Ballot

- Players vote by using their card deck

- Majority result is resolved

- Start player decides tied results

- Before every ballot the players may deal amongst themselves to get their favored result

- Special rules apply for Captain's Hat cards (see page 7)

- Color Cards are taken back after the ballot

If the selected boat still has an open seat, the leak is placed there. This seat is filled with water and no sailor or officer may be placed there for the rest of the game.

But if in the selected boat all seats are taken (by pawns and/or leaks), someone must be thrown out of the boat. This calls for another vote – and players can bargain/cajole, etc. as described in Phase 1 with *two additions*:

First, only those players who have at least one seaman (sailor or officer) seated in the selected lifeboat may vote.

Second, *each officer gets two votes and each sailor gets one vote.*

If there is a *tie*, the Start Player decides which color is ejected among the colors that received the *most votes* (even if the Start Player has no pawn in the boat). In this ballot the Captain's Hat-Card may also be played (See The Captain's Hat).

If the player that loses a seaman has officers and sailors in the lifeboat, he has to remove a sailor first. Officers will only be removed if the player has no remaining sailors in that lifeboat.

After the seaman that has to leave the lifeboat is voted, his pawn is removed and replaced by a leak (See Example 2).

- The leak is placed in an open seat of the boat

- If all seats are taken in this boat, all players with pawns in the selected boat vote to throw a pawn overboard

- Only players that have pawns in this particular boat may vote

- officer: 2 votes
- sailor: 1 vote

- If there is a tie, the Start Player decides which seaman is thrown overboard from amongst the colors that tied for majority

- A sailor always leaves before an officer of the same color

- The voted seaman is replaced by a leak

Example 2:

Player 2:



1 green officer
+ 2 green sailors
= 4 votes
against yellow

Player 3:

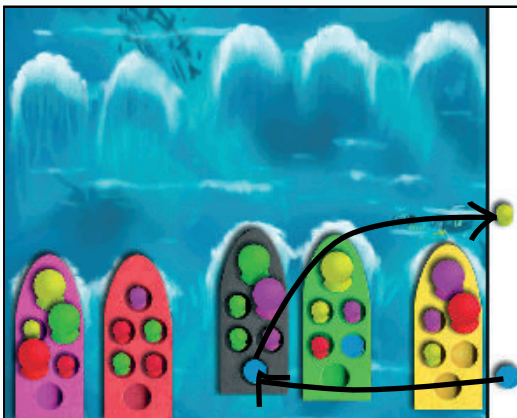


1 purple officer
+ 1 purple sailor
= 3 votes
against green

Player 4:



1 yellow sailor
= 1 vote
against green



Let's assume the black boat was voted to get a leak. Because all seats are taken in this boat, there is a vote to see which color seaman has to leave. **Player 1** is not allowed to join the ballot, because none of his pawns are in this boat. After the played ballot-cards are revealed there are 4 votes for yellow and 4 votes that want a green seaman to be ejected. In the case of a tie the Start Player decides which colors is chosen among the most voted colors. Thus, **Player 1** decides between green and yellow (although he did not take part in this ballot). **Player 1** throws the yellow sailor overboard and fills the empty seat with a leak.

A lifeboat sinks:

If there are too many leaks in a lifeboat, the seamen are not able to scoop out the incoming water fast enough – the lifeboat sinks.

If a lifeboat contains more leaks than pawns *at the end of any game phase* (irrespective of the pawns being officers or sailors), the boat sinks, all hands are lost; remove the boat and all the seamen and leaks it contained from the gameboard.

Phase 2: One lifeboat moves

While the seamen are struggling with the incoming water, the horizon reveals the islands that can save them all. But only the best oarsmen can handle their boats in these choppy waters.

The players vote for a boat to be moved one row towards the islands (See Ballot in Phase 1).

The lifeboat that won the ballot is moved straight ahead (it is not possible to change the course during the whole game), one row closer towards the islands (See Example 3). If there is a tie, again the Start Player decides which of the tied boats is moved forward.

As soon as a lifeboat reaches an island, the seamen are placed on that island and the boat is placed on the first empty landing stage at the right border of the gameboard, so that *the sequence of the arriving boats* becomes apparent (this plays a role for the final score at the end of the game (See Scoring)).

A lifeboat sinks

- If a boat contains more leaks than pawns at the end of a game phase, it sinks and is removed from the board

Phase 2

(One lifeboat moves)

- A lifeboat is voted to move one row forward

- If there is a tie, the Start Player decides which of the tied boats moves

- If a boat reaches an island, the pawns are placed on that island and the boat is positioned on the first empty landing stage

Example 3:

Player 1:



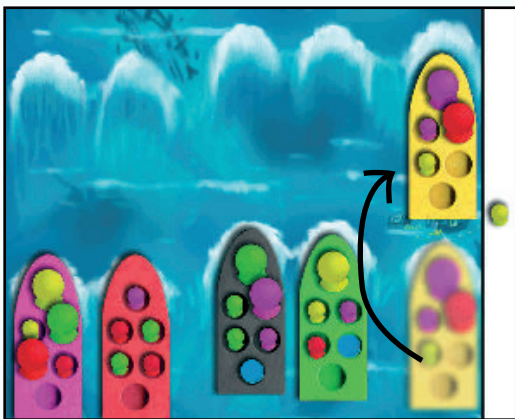
Player 2:



Player 3:



Player 4:



Player 1 and **Player 3** vote the yellow lifeboat and **Player 2** and **Player 4** want the purple boat to get closer the islands. Because the outcome is a tie, the Start Player decides between the most voted colors. **Player 1** (Start Player) decides to move the yellow boat one row forward.

Game Phase 3: The seamen change boats

For some seamen it is getting too dangerous in their lifeboat: while the water line increases, the number of allies falls off and the distance to the islands does not decrease fast enough. In this position it is advisable to get out of the boat and to try one's luck in another lifeboat.

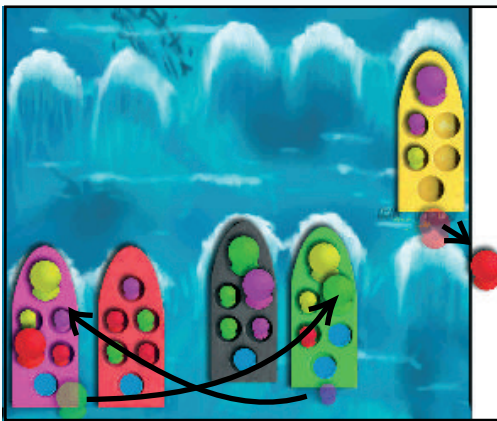
Beginning with the Start Player, and continuing in a clockwise direction, each player removes one of his pawns (officer or sailor) from any boat and sets it behind that boat. *Note that only one seaman may move out of each boat.* If a player has only seamen that cannot leave, they need to keep their seats and stay in the boat (See Example 4).



Example 4:

The Start Player (**Player 1**) begins debarking by moving his red officer from the yellow boat behind the stern of that boat. **Player 2** places his officer from the purple boat behind it and **Player 3** does the same with his sailor in the green boat. Because only one seaman may debark from each boat and **Player 4** has no crew members in the remaining boats (the black one and the red one), he is not allowed to move any of his seamen this turn.

After each player (who is able to) has placed one of his pawns behind a lifeboat, now in reverse order, beginning with the player that last removed a pawn and working back to the Start Player, each player must put the pawn they removed back into a different boat! You may place any number of pawns into the same boat, as long as a pawn does not return to the same boat it left. If there are no seats available in any of the other boats, then the seaman is removed from the game (See Example 5).



Example 5:

Now the players start boarding in reversed order – beginning with the last player. Since **Player 4** did not position any of his seamen at the stern of a lifeboat, he may not move any of his pawns. **Player 3** relocates his sailor from the green boat into the purple boat. Next, **Player 2** moves his officer from the stern of the purple boat to the green boat. At last, it is the Start Player's (**Player 1**) turn, but unfortunately the following problem arises for him: All lifeboats, but the yellow one, are completely occupied. Since he may not move back to the boat he came from, there is no boat that will take him in. Hence his red officer is removed from the game board.

After all Players (who were able to) reboard a boat, check if there are boats that contain more leaks than seamen. Those boats will sink (See Phase 1 - A lifeboat sinks).

Phase 3

(The seamen change boats)

- Every Player (beginning with the Start Player) removes one of his pawns from a boat and places it behind that boat

- Only one seaman may leave from each individual boat

- It may happen that a player has no seaman who can leave a boat

- The pawns get back on the lifeboats in reverse order

- No seaman may get back in the boat he came from

- If a seaman can not get in a boat different from the one he came from, he is removed from the game

- If after boarding there are boats with more leaks than pawns, these boats sink

Start Player Rotation

At the end of Phase 3, the Start Player Token is passed to the next Player in a clockwise direction. So, if in the next Game turn there are ties, the new Start Player will decide which boat gets a leak, which seaman has to leave a crowded lifeboat for a leak, and which boat moves towards the islands.

Start Player Rotation

- Start Player Rotation: The Start Player Token is passed to the next player in a clockwise direction

The Captain's Hat

...even if the Santa Timea rests on the ocean's bed already, it is still the Captain who commands!

The Captain's Hat

During any vote each player may play the Captain's Hat-Card instead of choosing a colored Ballot-Card. If only one player chose the Captain's Hat, he outvotes all others and decides the outcome of the ballot himself (See Example 6).

- The Player who plays the Captain's Hat decides the outcome of the ballot

Example 6:

Player 2:



Player 3:



Player 4:



The black boat was voted to get a leak, and since there were no empty seats, a vote must be taken to see which seaman gets ejected. **Player 4** selects the Captain's Hat-Card from his card deck. Because he is the only one who plays this card he may decide the outcome of this ballot irrespective of what the other players voted. He chooses the color purple and therefore **Player 3** must remove his sailor from the boat. Afterwards the Captain's Hat-Card is not taken back by **Player 4**, but remains on the table face up.

The Captain's Hat has three restrictions:

If a Captain's Hat-Card is played it is *not* taken back after the vote. So each player only has three attempts to wear the Captain's Hat, because everyone has three Captain's Hat-Cards.

- Every Captain's Hat-Card may be played once only

If there are more than one Captain's Hat-Card in a vote, these cards cancel each other out and the usual rules for a vote are used (See Example 7).

- More than one Captain's Hat-Cards in one ballot cancel each other out

If *all* players play a Captain's Hat-Card in the same vote, the Start Player decides the outcome.

- If all players play a Captain's Hat-Card in one ballot, the Start Player decides the outcome

Example 7: **Player 1:**



Player 2:



Player 3:



Player 4:



For voting which boat gets a leak, **Player 1** and **Player 2** select the Captain's Hat-Card. Since both played that card, its effect is canceled. Because there is one vote for the green boat and one vote for the red one, the Start Player (**Player 1**) chooses one of those boats (and *only* of those boats) to get a leak. **Player 1** picks the green boat and therefore it gets a leak in one of its available seats. The Captain's Hat-Cards are not taken back by **Player 1** and **Player 2**, although they were effectless.

The Scoring / Game Over

When all lifeboats either are sunk or arrived at an island, the game is over. The players sum up their victory points taking into account the number and the rank of their seamen on the different islands:

Left Island:	6 points per sailor 8 points per officer
Middle Island:	4 points per sailor 6 points per officer
Right Island:	5 points per sailor 7 points per officer

The player with the highest total wins. If there is a tie, the tied player whose lifeboat first arrived on an island wins. If the boats of all of these players are sunk, all of them win.

VARIANT: One variant that you will probably want to use can be found in the German version of the game is called the stick rule. This rule calls for a stick to be passed around the game board and gives the holding player the right to end all negotiation at any moment. This is of course a powerful tool as it allows each player to end any conversation that may result in them being placed in a bad position. This rule is a must as it tends to keep the flow of the game moving and builds in a little bit of strategy that is a nice addition to the overall experience.



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The Scoring

- When all boats either are sunk or arrived at an island, the game is over

- The victory points are totaled using the table listed on the left

- The player with the highest total wins

- If there is a tie, the player whose boat arrived at an island at first wins