

Samsara

Designed by: Anne-Marie Grönroos, Jaakko Kemppainen, and Noora Korppi in
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For 3-5 players

Samsara is a card game about reincarnation and the laws of karma. The players try to reach the ultimate good (Nirvana) or the ultimate evil (Nakara). Each game round represents one life cycle, where players try to gather positive or negative karma points, avoiding the other. After each life cycle the players are reborn as another life form, depending on the amount of karma they have collected.

Preparations

You need a pawn or a counter for each player.

Take the God Action, Nirvana and Nakara cards aside from the other cards.

Separate the basic cards (brown frame), cardinal cards (purple frame) and incarnation cards (green frame) into separate decks. Shuffle each deck.

Get the incarnation deck and place the cards randomly in the form of a spiral. If you do not have table space for a spiral, you can do linear, or whatever you want. Place the Nirvana and Nakara cards on the left and right end of the karma track. Good deeds (positive points) bring the players towards Nirvana and evil deeds (negative points) towards Nakara.



Illustration 1: The incarnation path. Pawns are NOT in the starting position.

Place player pawns on the centermost incarnation card (11th card from either end). The incarnation card effect is not used during the first life cycle.

Deal 3 basic deed cards for each player.
Deal 2 cardinal cards for each player.

Winning and ending conditions

The game ends when the first player reaches either Nirvana or Nakara. If several players reach the end after the same life cycle, they are all winners.

Game round

A game round represent one incarnation in the cycle of life, or Samsara. The cards in a player's hand are the actions in the player's current life, thus more cards mean a longer life. Each life cycle consists of four phases:

- Dealing cards
- Trading
- Actions
- Calculating karma and rebirth

Dealing cards

In normal situation each player gains 3 cards from the basic deck and 2 cards from the cardinal deck. Some incarnation cards may affect the amount of cards for the player whose pawn is on the card.

Trading

The players can offer cards from their hand to be exchanged with other players. During this phase the players can trade cards freely as much as they want. When no player wants to trade cards anymore, the trading phase is over.

Actions

The player sitting on the left side of the player who started the previous life cycle starts the actions phase.

You must play exactly one card from your hand each turn. After you either run out of cards or lose the rest of your life cycle by some other means, you have to wait for the other players to complete the life cycle.

NOTE: Whenever you play a card, you have to tell what the card represents, and what happens in the game world. For example, if you play "Good Deed +1" card, you can say: "I help a granny across a road." If another player plays a "Reversal" card on this one, the player could say: "so you try, but you accidentally push the granny under a car."

Deed cards are played in front of the player unless stated otherwise on the card or the incarnation effect.

Reaction cards are played on top of the other players' action cards immediately when the target card is played, regardless of whose turn it is. Reaction cards can be played on other players' reaction cards, but not directly on top of your own cards.

You can use your turn to discard a reaction card without a target card, in which case the reaction card has no effect.

NOTE: Remember to check the incarnation card you are on, since it may affect the cards you can play.

Calculating karma and rebirth

When all players have died, either because of natural causes (all cards in hand played) or prematurely, it is time for the karma calculation. During this phase all players calculate the karma points they got.

Point can be gained from:

- Deed cards in front of the player
- Global effect cards, like Tuska, Powerhug or Nuclear winter
- Assistance card on another player's deed card

Remember to calculate all reaction card effects on the deeds.

When each player knows their score, they can reincarnate as a new life form. Each life form represents 5 points of karma, so players divide their score by 5 and round the result down. The final result is the amount of incarnation cards they advance. Negative score leads the player towards Nakara, while positive

score makes the player move towards Nirvana. You do not have to enter Nirvana or Nakara by exact amount of reincarnations.

After the rebirth, continue to the next life cycle and the card dealing phase.