Guide to using The Solo System:

by Chad Mestdagh

The purpose of this guide is not to act as a rulebook. Think of this guide as more of an "add on" to the original set of rules. This guide is meant to give you a little more guidance if you looked at the original set of rules and could not figure out how to use the Solo System.

Why Make a Guide?

The Solo System is quite different than a normal game. It is intended to be open ended. What that means is that there really isn't any "correct" way to use it. In the original rule set, I gave an outline as to the way that the system was intended ... but you really don't have to follow that way if you don't want to. You are instead encouraged to be creative in your use of it.

If what I just said made you uncomfortable, don't worry. I am going to walk you through using the system in this guide. I am going to assume that you have read the original rule set, so I do expect you to be familiar with the cards in this guide.

Playing Two Handed

The closest analogy to the Solo System is playing a game two handed. You may not know what that means so I am going to describe that now. Playing a game two handed means playing a game both sides at the same time. This has been done for centuries now starting with the game Chess. How this works is that a player makes a move on a chess board, and then switches sides and plays his opponents turn, and then switches sides and plays his turn. This keeps going until the game is won by one side.

I might be stating the obvious here but playing chess normally would involve you playing your turn and then your opponent playing his turn.

So what is the major difference between those two concepts? When you are just playing both sides (i.e. two handed), you are typically trying to play each turn as best as you can. But you are also not really concerned about winning or losing. And you really aren't going to surprise yourself. Playing this way can leave you somewhat detached from the results of your actions. When you are playing an opponent, typically you are interested in winning. And your opponent will likely not do what you think he or she is going to do. He is quite capable of surprising you. He also may have a different style than you do. It is quite possible for your opponent to outwit you.

The Solo System

So how does the Solo System compare with all of this? Well, probably right about the middle, to be honest. In a two handed game, you are playing against yourself. You do not have an opponent. Your goal is to explore the mechanics of the game. In a two player game, you have an opponent. Your goal is to win. With the Solo System, you have an artificial opponent. Your goal is to win <u>and</u> to explore the mechanics of the game.

The Solo System is an artificial opponent. Or it could be several opponents if you really want it to be. An normal opponent makes moves that oppose you. This artificial opponent does the same thing (if you want it to). The thing that makes it artificial is that in order for him to exist, you have to make judgment calls about what it is going to do.

That last part is the trickiest part of the Solo System ... so I will say it again. You have to make judgment calls about how it behaves. How do you do that? Well, let's examine how a normal opponent works and apply it to your artificial opponent.

Your Opponent

When a player plays a game, they are typically going to have things that influence how they do things. Usually, their personality is going to play a part in influencing their decisions. And they typically have a strategy in mind as they start to play the game (but not always). And almost always, they are going to look at the current situation and try to evaluate what good options they have and which of them they are going to do.

To use the Solo System, you are going to draw cards to provide these influences. The system suggests that you draw a strategy at the start of the game, a personality at the start of each turn, and various other cards to suggest tactics at whatever time you choose if you need direction. Each of these card draws are meant to influence how your opponent is going to play at any given moment.

It has to be noted at this point that each of these influences are optional and really depend on the game that you are playing. They are a guide, not a hard rule. Remember at the beginning of this guide that I said that the system is meant to be open ended? Here is one of the places that it comes into play. These card draws are meant to simulate what might be swirling around in your opponents head as you play against it. These things will influence what action it takes, but there is still not a guarantee that it will take the action that you think it will take.

Why are they optional? Because the system is trying to make a useful opponent for as many games as possible. And the simple truth is that no two games are going to be alike. Most games are going to require different things from different players. In order for the Solo System to work, it has to be flexible.

Interpreting Your Opponents Influences

I am going to go off topic for a bit and talk about the game Poker. In Poker, you are dealt a hand of cards and your opponents are dealt the same. Once dealt that hand of cards, you make bets to see whose hand is worth more. By itself, Poker is a statistically random game. (I sense a few eye rolls, but just hear me out for a second).

The game part of Poker changes substantially when you start adding personalities and other influences. When you play poker, your actual hand of cards is not the only thing that is going to influence how much you bet. You are also going to look at your opponents and see if you can tell what they have in their hand. They may have facial gestures that can give away if they have a good hand. Or you might know things about your opponent's personality and be able to figure out that they have a low risk tolerance. You might make a large bet and see if that scares them into folding (giving up). The point is that you are looking at your opponent and trying to interpret their actions. A person is said to have a good poker face if they are able to hide their influences.

The Solo System is actually the opposite of this. In a game of poker, you start off by looking at your opponent and figure out their influences. From this you try to interpret what they have in their hand. In the Solo System, you already know what your opponents influences are and you are trying to interpret what they are going to do based on those influences.

So how do you go about doing this? Your opponent has a personality. They may even have a strategy. It is now your opponents turn. How do you figure out what they are going to do? This is the critical part of the Solo System: ask questions.

Questions

Every game is different and is trying to do different things. So there isn't any specific system of question asking that is going to work with every game. But you can still have a strategy of what kind of questions to ask when figuring out what what your opponent is going to do. The following method is meant to be a guide when you don't know what to do. If you do know what you want to ask, or at least can figure it out on your own, then just skip the following guide.

First start off with what the Solo System was doing on the previous turn.

1) Has the opponent accomplished what it was trying to do?

2) Has your opponents personality changed? Would this effect what the opponent was doing? (You can ask the Probability deck if you don't know. Use "Unsure" as your question.)

3) Has the situation in the game changed enough that your opponent should reconsider what it was trying to accomplish?

4) Has a new opportunity opened up that your opponent should consider?

Next, start looking at your opponents personality. The following questions are presented with specific personalities, but feel free to interchange them with your opponents current personality.

1) What is the most scholarly move that your opponent could make right now? What is the riskiest move?

2) If your opponent has a lot of actions available to it at the moment, which would be most fitting of it's specialized strategy? (specialist). Which would be most fitting of an opponent looking to expand? (expansionist).

3) If you are not sure of the above question, you can use a random generating system such as the 10 dots or the cube color (denoting the color of a specific card or the icon of an action on the board), and then ask the probability deck if that is what your opponent chooses to do this turn.

4) How much resources would a builder allocate to an action? (Use the auction system as well as the probability deck if you don't know.) How much resources would a Copycat allocate?

5) If your opponent is aggressive, which card or special power would they buy using the cash that they have at the moment? Or would an Opportunist actually choose to buy a card now, or wait until they have more cash to buy something better? (Keep in mind what your opponents long term strategy is.)

6) Would a capitalist be open to bartering with you in a trading deal? Does the Scholar really want the wood that you have offered to trade with? (Use the probability deck to answer the question.)

7) What direction would a defender choose to expand its empire? What direction would match what the specialist was trying to accomplish? (The specialist is kind of tricky to interpret, but it is intended to be a personality that really tries to stick to its original plan without a lot of deviation. You could also interpret it as a personality that wants to use some quirky special mechanic that is specific to the game that you are playing.)

The next thing to consider when asking questions is the game itself. Often the source of these questions can come directly from the rules if you are looking for direction.

1) The rules describe three different ways that the game can end. Which ending is your opponent trying to accomplish? If you think that your opponent is more likely to choose one of the options as opposed to the other two, then do this: *Flip a tactics card and look at the square movement section on the upper right part of the card. If the arrow points right or left, your opponent chooses the most likely option. Otherwise it chooses the top or bottom leftover option as written in the rules.*

2) If your opponent has three or so strategies that you can see at the moment. One will get a few victory point right away, but get a lot of victory points later. One will help it get a lot of resources but not much points. And the third option is a balance between the two. *Again, you could use the strategy mentioned in the previous question, or you could flip a personality and make a choice based on what that personality might choose.*

3) The game board has sections relating to keeping track of resources, turn order, a geographical map, and

a couple other pieces of information. *Flip over a tactical card and look at the map in the bottom area. Approximate the darkened area on the map with the actual game board that you are playing. Pretend that this is the area that your opponent is going to try to focus on (i.e. improve its position). You can check this with your opponents long term goals or personality with the probability deck if you like.*

4) The game has special scoring opportunities that happen each game that are different each time you play (example: Tzolk'in, Spirits of the Rice Paddy, Kanban, Kingdom Builder). *Flip over a strategy card and see if it matches 2 or more of those special scoring opportunities. If it does, make that the dominant strategy that your opponent chooses during the game. You could also do this mid game if you are looking for a direction for your opponent wants to aim for.*

5) Look at the game rules. Specifically, look at the players turn section. Does it look like there is one part of the player turn that your opponents overall strategy or current personality would focus on? *Ask the probability (unsure) if you do not know. Or randomly choose one section and ask the probability deck if there is something that matches.*

Personalities

In this section, I will discuss the various personalities that can be found in the personality deck and then give an idea about what their play style is. Hopefully, I will also give you ideas about what kind of questions to ask with that personality. Note that these are my interpretation of the personalities. You can choose to interpret them differently.

Aggressive - Napoleon Bonaparte. French Military and Political Leader - An aggressive personality does not necessarily mean militant. It does imply that it will use all means necessary to achieve what it wants to achieve. It will likely spend a large amount of its resources to do this. It will use all special abilities that it has at its disposal to achieve its goals. It likes direct confrontation. It is not afraid to push its weight around. It will make an attempt to grab highly contested areas. In a worker placement game, it will likely try to get the most contested area. In an area control game, it will likely try to sit in the middle of the board and dare you to come to it. In a card drafting game, it will try to draft cards with attack powers.

Opportunist - Stanley Baldwin. British Prime Minister between World War I and World War II - An opportunist is a personality that will always look at all of its options. It lives in a world of constant change and strives to be flexible. It aims for small victories and hopes that the accumulation of these small victories are enough to achieve victory. It does not focus on extensive plans, but isn't opposed to forming one. It will look at its long term goals as being soft. In a worker placement game, it will aim to take the action that gives it an immediate benefit. In an area control game, it will look at its surroundings and focus on making small easy gains. In a card drafting game, it is more likely to choose cheap small gains or the overlooked card that could be powerful.

Expansionist - Elizabeth I. Queen of Britain. - An expansionist personality intends to build an empire. That might mean expanding its borders, but it might also mean improving its structures or population. Mostly, it just wants to look bigger or well remembered. It tends to look at its big picture goals and figures out how to get there. It has a hard time turning down a few victory points that will make it look better. It would probably choose to be flashy and grandiose if it could. In a worker placement game, it will try to be first player or do something that makes a big show of how important it is. In an area control game, it will grab as many areas as it can reasonably grab. In a card drafting game, it will choose the flashiest card or power that it can.

Capitalist - John D. Rockefeller. American industrialist and philanthropist. - A capitalist personality is about two things: wealth and economy. It wants money (or whatever highly valued commodity is in your game) and it wants the machine that makes it wealthy to run smoothly. It will be thrifty in its spending habits, but will spend big money if it can make bigger gains. If the focus of your game is not about building wealth, it will focus on victory point gaining strategies instead. It will be hesitant to use its resources if it cannot see the gain in doing so. It will choose to make its structures more powerful if it can make a gain from them. In a worker placement game, it will choose to use actions that either build its wealth or build its economy that build it more wealth. In an area control game, it will focus on areas that have economic advantage and defend those areas to the best of its abilities. In a card drafting game, it will focus on cards that will build its wealth or economy.

Builder - Leonardo da Vinci. Known for diverse fields of the arts and sciences. Has been called the father of architecture. - A builder personality wants to accumulate resources and build up. This might mean building a building, but it could also mean building speed, momentum, or size. The builder likes to accumulate. It wants options and resources more than anything else. The builder prefers to build up as opposed to building out. If the builder is focusing on a track or an area of the board, he will aim not only to have the most, but also to have as much as possible. In a worker placement game, it will pick the option that accumulates the most raw resources or uses those resources to build something that might make more resources. In an area control game, it will have a preference for areas that make resources and will more likely want to control or dominate those areas. In a card drafting game, it will choose cards that allow for more resources or more options.

Defender - Joan of Arc. Defender of France in the Hundred Years War. - A defender personality is interested in protectionism. This trait could be interpreted in multiple ways. In an economic game, it would be about ensuring a lead in areas where the AI already excels at or where opponents are weak. In a military game,

this would be about cold war tactics such as increasing troop deployment or buying equipment. In a racing game, it would be about maintaining the lane that the AI is in. In a worker placement area, it will place workers in areas where its opponents are weak. In an area control game, it will want to do well in areas where it is already doing well. In a card drafting game, it will choose cards that help with control of the situation.

Specialist - William Shakespeare. Famous English playwright. - The specialist personality is focused. It does what it is good at. If it has an advantage in something, it will use that advantage in the most logical way possible. If it has a goal, it will pursue that goal with utmost zeal. If it has special powers in any way, it will use those special powers as often as possible. It aims to be different and if it does not have a specific direction, then it want to do what its opponents are not doing. In a worker placement game, it will choose actions that compliment its goals or its special focus. In area control games, it will try to capture areas that no one else is putting particular effort into unless there is a particular area that it needs to be in. In card drafting games, it will choose cards that compliment what it is good at.

Scholar - Albert Einstein. German-born theoretical physicist. - A scholar personality is about well thought out plans and long term goals. It will maintain a special focus on what it needs to do to accomplish the victory conditions. It likes science and technology. It is very interested in victory points. If a current plan is being executed, it will most likely pursue that plan. It is not easily distracted and only evaluates new information if it seems relevant to what it was doing. In a worker placement game, it will choose actions that likely take several steps to do or that focus on engine building. In an area control game, it will aim for the area that will most likely give it points at the end of the game. In a card drafting game, it will choose engine building cards or victory point cards if its goals do not sync with any of the cards available.

Risk Taker - Amelia Earhart. First woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. - A risk taker personality is interested in the unattainable. Why do something in three turns if you could possibly do it in two. A risk taker has no problem competing for resources if there is a chance to get more than an opponent. It will happily leave things up to fate if given half a chance. It will race ahead in a rickety vessel and deal with the vessel falling apart later. It loves big gains, even if those big gains may come with a price. In a worker placement game, it will choose an option with the biggest payout rather than the thing that it probably needs. In a area control game, it will aim for conflict and do moves 'just to see what happens'. In a card drafting game, it will aim for powers that focus on chance or that will have a big payout and not pay attention to what it leaves behind.

Copycat - T.S. Elliot. Poet and Literary critic. Known plagiarist. - A copycat personality wants to do what you do. It also wants what you have. It covets. If it can, it will take the actions that you take. If it cannot, it will do what it can from preventing you from pursuing your goals. The copycat personality is very fond of blocking tactics. If you need two actions to perform something of significance, the copycat will most likely block you from taking the second action if it could, even if it does not actually need to take that action. It will do what it can to get in your way and may even blatantly attack you if that is an option. In a worker placement game, it will take disruptive actions that block your actions if possible. In an area control game, it will play tit for tat tactics and has no problem if everything ends up in a tie. In a card drafting game, it will recruit the same type of cards that it thinks you are going for.

Examples

Note: In the following examples, I will use the following abreviations:

- P - Yes: Consulted the Probability deck with a probable question, yes response.

- U - No: Consulted the Probability deck with an unsure question, no response.

- PN - Yes: Consulted the Probability deck with a probably not question, Yes response.

- TM - W: Consulted the Tactics orthogonal movement deck, West response.

- TB - UC: Consulted the Tactics deck, looked at the game board area on the bottom. Upper center area response.

- TB - LR: Consulted the Tactics deck, looked at the game board. Lower right response.

NP: New personality

SAL: Same as last personality

Solo System example #1 - Carcassonne - Base game and River expansion - *Tile placement, Area Control*

Carcassonne is not a typical Euro as it doesn't have strategies that match those found in the strategy deck. So you will need to have a different method of determining your opponents strategic goals. I will use the easy method listed in previously in the Questions section of these rules: Look at the game rules. Specifically, I will look at the scoring methods. Scoring in Carcasonne can be boiled down to

1) roads
2) cities
3) farms,
4) cloisters

A fifth way of scoring (kind of) is trying to spoil your opponents placed tiles. I will randomly choose two of these that my opponent will focus on during the game using the 10 dot system.

My opponent will have a weak preference for cloisters and a strong preference for blocking my tiles and making it hard to complete them.

I start. I get a road tile and first river. I choose not to play on it.

Opponents Turn. NP - Builder. Draws a straight river tile. No benefit for the opponent to play a farm this early. I don't bother consulting the probability deck.

I draw a start city start segment. I stick a meeple on the city.

Oppon. NP - Opportunist. Draws a town and road segment. Has an opportunity to make it slightly harder for my city to grow. Does he do it? - P - Yes. Does he place a meeple? - U - No.

My turn. I draw a road that goes over the river. I choose not to place.

Oppon. SAL. Draws a cloister. Does he place? - P - Yes.

My turn. I draw a straight River tile. I choose not to place.

Opponents turn. SAL. Draws a curvy river with a city tile that has 2 corners exposed. Does he place a

meeple on the city? - U - No. How does he orientate the city? - TM - S. The city faces south.

My turn. I place a curvy empty river tile.

Opponents turn. SAL. He places a curvy empty river tile. No real opportunities yet.

My turn. I place the final river tile.

Oppon. SAL. He draws a city tile exposed on three sides. He is an opportunist and can now place around the board where ever he wants. He has a couple good places. One slightly stronger than the other. He could also not place a meeple. I will use the tactics orthogonal movement deck and indicate the right side to place a meeple on the more open ended city spot, make the left side to not place a meeple, and make the most likely good meeple placement to be chosen if a north/south is drawn. - TM - left. No meeple placed. Instead he grows my city and makes it more difficult to complete (The open city now faces a road tile).

(This is actually a pretty smart move and I hadn't thought of it. Stupid AI.)

My turn. I draw a city with a shield and 3 sides with room to grow. I place it in the spot that the AI should have taken along with a meeple on top of it.

Opponents turn. NP - Defender. He draws the 4 sided open city tile. There are two areas where he can place it. And both kind of screw me over. He is more likely to place it on my newly placed city. Does he do that? - P - Yes. Note that on this turn, the opponents personality didn't have any relevance to the gameplay. That is completely fine.

OK. That is a good stopping point for this example.

Example #2 - Heroclix: Superman and Batman VS. Dr. Doom and Loki Tactical miniatures game. Simple ruleset.

Creating strategy: I don't have enough experience to say this for sure but my intuition is that this is a very tactical game. So the general strategy is going to be simply to get as close as possible and do ranged attacks to your opponents. Dr. Doom and Loki are fairly good at ranged attacks and keeping their distance and appear to be slightly stronger than Batman and Superman, so I will give those to the AI.

Solo System Note: Overall goals and strategy do not need to be randomly generated for each game if you choose. If you think a certain strategy would be fun to play against, then by all means choose that strategy instead of randomly generating the strategy.

Turn 1: AI goes first. NP - Agressive. Not much for the AI to do except move to the middle area where the battle might take place. Does he move to the middle of the board? - U - Yes. Loki moves 10 spaces and looks for a place to hide with stealth. Does Dr. Doom adopt a "Come get me" attitude? - P - Yes. What area of the board does he aim for in relation to Loki? - Tactics movement hexagon - Straight ahead (used "Forward" to indicate what direction in general he was aiming for. Dr. Doom places himself right next to Loki due to his limited movement relative to Loki.

My turn: Knowing that both opponents have Probability control is very tough. Especially when you cannot actually target one of the opponents (Loki) and that same opponent has a chance of mind controlling your characters to attack each other. He does have to be next to your character to do this though. So staying out of Loki's range seems to be an effective choice until he chooses to come out of hiding. Looking at the board, I am not sure how that is possible. I choose to move closer, but stay well out of range.

Turn 2: AI: SAL. Does Loki attempt to move closer, but maintain his stealth? - U - No. He recovers his action. Does Dr. Doom do the same? - P - Yes.

My turn: I do the same.

Turn 3: AI: SAL. Loki is guaranteed to move to closer range as there is no disadvantage. Does Dr. Doom do the same? Ordinarily I would say probably not. But the AI personality of aggressive makes me unsure of this. - U - No. He maintains his distance, daring me to come at him.

My turn. I maneuver closer to Dr. Doom with both my characters and stay away from Loki as much as possible. I also stay within cover to prevent Loki from using stealth and mind control against me. Outwit makes it to difficult for anyone to do anything other than a basic attack. (I think. The rules seem fuzzy to me on this one).

Turn 4: AI: - NP - Scholar. Loki can do a ranged attack against Batman, but he would have to push for that. Would he do it? - U - Yes. However, even with a Probability Control reroll, Loki fails to hit. Dr. Doom could try to hit Superman, but instead chooses to seek cover in trees nearby.

My turn: I choose to play it safe and discard my used action tokens.

And the game continues on.

Example #3 - Tank on Tank. Simple hex and counter game. Multiple units.

For my next example, I wanted to try a simple hex and counter game with multiple units to give an idea on how to work with multiple units. I only have so much time to write these so I choose a simple war game that could be played quick.

Gameplay notes - I am playing Americans and I am playing defense. The Germans are trying to break through my defense and make it to the other side. If I can prevent them from getting there for 9 turns, then I win. There are two roads that they can get through. Those roads are vital for moving 2 hexes per action assigned. Otherwise, the Germans can only move one square. They can get there, but only just in time. I set up my defenses first before determining what the AI will do.

Creating strategy - The Germans don't have a lot of strategic options, but they do have a lot of units and therefore tactical decisions. So in this case, I will make an unusual decision to draw a personality and infer a long term strategy from that personality. NP - Specialist. I interpret this to mean that the Germans are going to try to plow through one of the roads with as many units as possible and break through the defense with just one of the units.

Solo System Note - The trick to getting the Solo System to work is to interpret the results of what the cards say. In this case, there really wasn't a good fit for what the specialist would do, so I had to stretch my imagination a bit. I did have the option of drawing another card to see if I could get more clarification, but I found a simple goal that works. The strategy is not inconsistent with what a specialist would do, so I choose it. Remember, there is no wrong way of interpreting what the AI will or will not do. If you are unclear, use the probability deck with an unsure question.

AI set up. Which road does the AI use? The south one (because I have one less unit on that road)? - p - No. The AI uses the north road. Does he focus all of his units on the north road? - PN - No. How much does he leave to focus on the south path? (ask the auction deck - Minumum.) So he mostly puts his units on the north path and puts a few stragglers on the south path. Does he put his powerhouse tanks on the north path? - U - NO. So his super strong tanks will go on the south route and the normal tanks go on the north. Do any try to take the middle route (slow, but has some cover)? - U - No. The AI stuffs as many as it can on the north road and puts 4 stronger units on the south road.

Turn 1: AI (Germans). SAL. The AI has 2 action points. Because its personality is a specialist, it is gaurenteed to move as many units as possible toward the Goal and shoot at the primary unit that is in its way. I will not check the probability deck. Only problem is that there is only one unit that can shoot at that target ... so no bonuses. Does he shoot at that target (as opposed to the easier shot)? - P - Yes. A roll of 12 intantly kills the target.)

My turn: I get 4 action points, but moving causes all of my units to leave their cover and I can't reach anything. The rules talk about promoting units. So I do that with 2 of my north units and one of my south units.

Turn 2: AI: SAL. Does the AI still charge forward with the north units? - P - No. He turns his attention south. He moves all of those units with the HQ center Panzer calling the shots. Then he has two actions left. Without anything to else to do, he uses those shots to attack the two units that he can. He misses the north shot, but takes out a unit on the south.

My turn: Still don't want to abandon my defense, but I think I will risk taking out a big tank on the south end. I move one armored infantry toward the AI's side, and fire with support from the Howitzer. Miss.

Turn 3: AI: - NP - Copycat. Looks like the AI is loosing focus on what it is trying to accomplish. It needs to move toward the opposing side, but the copycat just wants to bust up units. It has three actions. Does it push through? (I would have said probably, but the personality makes me unsure.) - U - Yes. The AI pushes with the north units and then attacks. This puts its units in harms way, but it seems worth the risk. Both attacks fail. (Even the Ace's reroll).

My turn: The advantage has turned my way. I use three attacks for my actions. One hits a front lying panzer.

And the game continues.

Handicaps

The Solo System has a built in handicap system in the cards. In the main rules this was touched upon, but I will now explain how handicaps work in more detail. I will also give some examples on how you can use the handicap system.

Handicaps may be necessary to make your opponent more difficult. A handicap is an advantage given to one of the players, normally due to their lack of skill or experience. Your reasons for giving the Solo System an advantage might be a bit different. First of all, your opponent has a certain level of randomness in its actions. Due to this randomness, it may make some truly odd decisions. Handicaps can offset this. A second reason to use handicaps is because you really don't want to put that much thought into what the AI is doing. So instead of filtering out bad decisions, you give it some advantages and let it do weird stuff.

What you use as a handicap and how much of a handicap is up to you. Here are some ideas of good handicaps that don't actually use the Solo System.

1) Start the AI with more money.

2) Start the AI with more victory points.

3) Give the AI a head start on the victory conditions. For example, in Settlers of Catan, you could give the AI a victory point card from the deck. So instead of needing 8 more points to win, it only needs 7 more, and there is one less victory point card in the deck.

4) Give the AI a starting extra special ability.

The Solo System also has the Star System written on the personality cards. What is the Star System? On six of the twenty personality cards, there is a little star that can be found on the bottom circle on the left side of the card. Some cards have a single star. One card has two stars. One card has three stars. One card has a single star that looks like a shooting star.

The star system is meant to be used as follows: When drawing personality cards, check the star circle. If the card has a star in that circle, then the AI has a special bonus this turn. The AI may use that bonus this turn if it wants to. The bonus is whatever you choose at the beginning of the game. Here are some examples.

1) For each star that is drawn, the AI gets one extra unit of cash for that turn only.

2) For each star that is drawn, the AI gets one extra victory point.

3) Each time the shooting star is drawn, the AI gets an extra action.

4) Each time the shooting star is drawn, the AI gets 10 victory points.

5) Each time a star card is drawn, the AI gets to activate an extra ability.

As you can see, the handicap system is flexible and can be whatever you want it to be. It also may not be necessary for your game if you are putting a lot of thought into what the AI is doing. The next example will use this handicap system to make a complex game less intimidating when figuring out what the AI will do.

Example #4 - Spirits of the Rice Paddy - Economy eurogame. Complex worker placement game that requires placing multiple workers at the same time.

Some games have very detailed and complex game play. Trying to figure out what you are going to do on your turn might be hard enough, and at first glance, trying to figure out what the AI will do might seem to take a lot more concentration than you want to put into in order to have fun. In order to get games like this to work, it is really helpful to use a handicap of some form and just let the AI do crazy weird stuff. In essence, you don't have to try as hard to figure out what the AI is going to do. Instead, you just give it

advantages that will make it easier to just play the game.

Handicap chosen: When a star card is revealed as a personality, the AI gains 3 rice for every star on the field. It gets 10 rice if the shooting star is revealed.

Creating strategy: I will create a few strategic goals for the AI. First goal will be generated by the Strategic deck. I draw "The opponent will focus on getting cheap buildings/cards/special powers that it can use later in the game". I interpret this to mean that it wants the simpler lower numbered cards in the card draft, hoping to go first if possible. I also interpret this to mean that it would prefer smaller rice paddies at first. For the second strategy, I will look at the achievement tiles and randomly pick two of them that the AI would like to get. The tiles are placed in a 4 by 2 grid at the top of the play area on Tabletopia. I use the dot system located on the personality card to generate a random number and draw more cards if the rightmost dots are chosen. I find that the AI will try to use all of its workers every turn and will try to play 5 different colored spirit cards.

Game Start: Drafting cards: I choose my cards first, so that I don't know what the AI has available when I start. The AI will know what I have. This should simulate a real game. I know the AI wants to grab low cards. But I choose the lowest card possible, because I like its special power: choose your achievement powers first.

AI Chooses: - NP - Aggressive. The AI has 4 cards to choose from, and three could be considered aggressive in some form. One of these is constistent with its long term goals. I use the tactics square movement deck with a bias towards that one card. He doesn't pick that card, but does choose the low card. He is interested in battling for the first player position.

Second card draft: I choose the card that I thought the AI would most likely take.

AI Chooses: - NP - Risk taker - The risky move would be to grab the high card because it could set the AI up for the big point scoring card. Does he do it? - U - Yes. It is not actually that risky because, its point value is only one more than my highest.

Third card draft: I choose the best card that I can think of. Middle ground but not good for staying first. It does make market purchases cheaper though.

AI Chooses: There is still an aggressive card out there, but it pays out very little. I don't even draw a probability card. The AI chooses the other card.

First turn spirit card: I play my level 1 spirit card, ensuring that I will go first in the near future and will always be able to choose my Achievement tile first.

AI first turn spirit card: SAL. Shooting star bonus activated: AI gets 10 rice. The riskiest move that the AI could take makes no sense. It probably will play its low card. - P - No. It plays the special power card instead.

My turn proper. I place my workers so that they build a few fences and set up for the next turn. I also plan to harvest and plant on my initial spot to grab 5 cash, which I will need for a cow.

AI's turn proper: I am interested in speed, so I look at the board and feel like the AI could build a lot of walls right away. The AI can succeed in one of its goal right away. Does it do so? - P - Yes. Does it want to save its resources for the next turn? - U - No. Does it want to make a big 3 field (because it is one of the goals? (It knows that I might grab it first) - PN - No. Does it want the big 5 hex? - P - Yes. The AI dumps as much resources that it can into the 5 hex, which it cannot complete this turn.

And the game continues on.

That concludes this guide and will hopefully give you a better idea on how to use the system.