

Beginner's guide

This article is timeless and should be accurate for any version of the game.

Getting into Europa Universalis IV can seem overwhelming for new players. Yet Paradox has put more effort and infrastructure into making the game more newbie-friendly than ever before. The guide has been divided into five sections for your convenience.

There are five sections below each pertaining to a specific part of the game:

Total Beginner: Those who have never played a 4X game before.

Paradox Beginner: Those who have experience with 4X games from publishers besides Paradox Interactive. Examples: Civilization series, Total War series, etc.

New to EU: Those who have played other Paradox Interactive titles (Crusader Kings II, Victoria II, Hearts of Iron 3) and so have experience with some common core Paradox mechanics, but never played any version of Europa Universalis before and need to understand how EU4 differs from the other games.

EU4 Refresher: Those who have played earlier versions of EU, such as EU3, but need to understand how the new version differs.

Common Questions: A FAQ for many starting problems.

Where possible, this guide will tailor its presentation to highlight points for these different audiences.

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Total Beginner player's guide

Europa Universalis IV (EU4) is a game in which you explore, expand, exploit, and exterminate. But before you do any of that, you need to get a few basics down. It's a good thing you're here because learning how to play EU4 can be a daunting challenge. The most important thing to realize is that you are playing as an omnipresent leader of a country in which the peoples and armies within it will follow your every command. As long as your nation exists you may continue playing till the end date of 1821.

Europa Universalis IV is a grand strategy game that will take you on an epic adventure through an alternate history of Earth. The player is controlling a nation which has armies, navies, military leaders and civilian specialists at their disposal. Though each of the start-dates is set up to be as historical as possible, as soon as the game is unpaused history will often veer off its rails and become an alternate Earth, where players will have the power to influence the destiny of nations.

Europa Universalis IV gameplay is not centered around a specific character as Crusader Kings II is. Heads of state will eventually age and die, and a new successor will take over. The player is more of an abstract controller of a country and they may for the most part do with the country as they wish until the end of the game which is January 1, 1821. During the course of the game, the player must make sure their nation is not annihilated or annexed by other powers, as this results in a game-over.

There are no specific victory conditions in Europa Universalis IV, although there is a score visible throughout and at the end of the game at the top right corner of the interface. The player is free to take history in whatever direction they desire. They may take a small nation with a single province and turn it into a powerhouse to rule the world, take control of a historically powerful nation and cause it to crumble and anything in between.

How does gameplay work?

The general flow of the game works as follows:

The player chooses to begin a singleplayer or multiplayer game

Most new players will begin with a single player game.

If you have a friend who wants to give you a walk through and show you how to play using the multiplayer features (possibly using some sort of voice or video chat to help you along, or playing side-by-side on a LAN), you can start a multiplayer game.

The player may select a country and a historical start date if they desire and begin the game from the flags positioned on lower-middle, or alternatively directly pick any country on the map. Try to start an easy game as it will help you learn the basics.

The player may also select a custom date by clicking on the arrows that go up and down.

Additional data is provided to the player while he or she fiddles with the view mods in the upper-middle part of the screen. Political map view is best used for assessing the situation of a country.

Study the initial position and, if desired, spend the initial treasury and make some strategic choices before unpausing the game, such as hiring advisors and dispatching envoys, such as merchants and diplomats.

Once the game is unpaused, time will flow and days will pass, either quickly or slowly. The passage of time may be controlled with the + and - keys on the k

eyboard or by clicking the plus and minus buttons on the top right corner of the screen. Pressing the spacebar will unpause/pause the game. Alternatively the game may be paused by clicking directly on the arrow at the top right corner of the screen and unpaused in the same way.

The player may move their armies and navies, and the AI will move forces under its control.

Recruitment of armies, hiring of mercenaries and construction of both buildings and ships is located in a province menu, accessed by left-clicking a province. If the window is displaying a political menu, you can close and re-open it by left-clicking a province in order to view its details.

The economy, which is comprised of taxation, production, and trade income, may be manipulated by the player by adjusting expenditure on the armies, colonists and missionaries as well as by increasing income through other means. It is also possible to take loans from a bank, which is done automatically if the national treasury's balance goes negative.

Interaction with other nations occurs using the Diplomacy interface. It is advised to improve relations with neighboring nations and seek out alliances to keep the nation safe from attack and to more easily invade opponents.

Managing technological development by spending Monarch points to unlock new capabilities and bonuses.

Events will appear from time to time, which may present the player with choices and affect some aspect of game play.

Eventually, warfare will break out between nations. War is conducted through land and naval battles as well as sieges and naval blockades. In the end, depending on who is getting the upper hand in the war, peace offerings will be made by one party or the other, which can result in exchanges of territory, money, and other concessions. Player can do that by opening the war details window located in bottom of the screen.

After a war, the player may need a respite to allow depleted regiments to reinforce and repair damaged ships, recover its manpower, and recuperate its treasury. Some time may be required to solve issues of overextension or to improve reputation with neighbors. A nation being too aggressive may result in the AI forming alliances or even a coalition to oppose them. As such there is often a period of peace between wars and it is normally advisable to wait a period of time between wars.

After a while, a new player will learn to expand their borders through colonization, enforce their state religion through missionaries, expand their control of trade through merchants, and maintain diplomatic relations through diplomats.

Much of Europa Universalis IV revolves around these general concepts. Game play in general can be rather relaxed with the ability to pause the game at any time and action can be taken while paused as well. Oftentimes pausing the game to construct buildings, recruit units or conduct diplomacy is beneficial. Armies and navies may also be given move orders while the game is paused, but will not move until the game is unpaused.

Like an intense game of chess, Paradox wants the game equilibrium and the strategic and tactical player choices to be the fascinating part of the game. Much of the game play is simply monitoring all the dials and knobs of the machine of a nation. The player can be compared to a disembodied puppet-master with an entire nation at their fingertips.

What this game is not

This is not a pure wargame. For players looking to simply send their forces off into heroic combat without worry or care of long-term consequences, you will be sorely disappointed. Although there is a great deal of emphasis put upon the military side of things in EU4, there is a lot more that needs to be managed. If you just rush blindly into wars, you will find your regiments shattered, your economy bankrupt, and your neighbors collectively enraged. Even the most bellicose o

f rulers must pay heed to the finesse of diplomacy, and the pragmatism of economics.

This is not a roleplaying game. There will not be heart-to-heart chats with your advisors, and you will not see rival heads of state looking to engage you in dialogue. Though you can have royal marriages between your country and the ruling dynasty of another, it is mostly an abstract decision. Don't expect to see any sort of romantic interludes.

This is not a tactical combat simulator. Though there is a battle interface, where you can see your forces engaging the enemy, you can't really control your troops on the field. The game is focused on strategic decision-making, not battlefield command.

This is not a turn-by-turn game. The calendar ticks away equally for all nations of the world. Yet because the game can be paused and the passage of time can be controlled, it is not precisely correct to call it a Real Time Strategy (RTS) game either.

This is not a quick-binge game. Even playing on the highest speed, most games that go from 1444 to 1821 will last about 12 cumulative hours, this is not a game you can quickly boot up, play for 10 minutes and win.

This is not a Civilization game. Many people that are unfamiliar with Paradox Interactive games will often try to connect this game to Civilization, but that is simply not the case, about the only thing that both games have in common is that you play as an ageless benevolent (or malevolent) being that controls the lives of whoever you choose, but the similarities pretty much end there. Both games are good in their own right, and people like them for different reasons, but drawing a comparison is quite pointless.

Paradox Beginner player's guide
Singleplayer or multiplayer?

There are many advantages and disadvantages to playing both singleplayer and multiplayer in EU4. It is generally recommended that your first game be a singleplayer one as one of the nations Paradox recommends new players play as, just to get a feel for the game and learn at least some of its many mechanics. But it can also be nice to play a private multiplayer game with a friend who will walk and talk you through the game, and show you things not shown in the tutorial.

Tutorials

If you have never played a game like this, or even if you are a diehard EU3 player, take the time to play through the tutorials, which you can find at the Main Menu. They will introduce you to the major game concepts, such as how Paradox has implemented standard strategy game systems like combat and economics and also highlight what features are entirely unique and new to EU4.

Choosing a country

One of the first things you will need to do is figure out which country to play as. Unlike in CK2 (Crusader Kings II) in which you would want to pick a smallish nation with little to do with the rest of the world, in EU4 you want a largish nation. This is because other nations like to gobble up small nations, as you will start to learn later on. Even though it would seem easier to take a single province country to start with, because of the handicaps involved, picking a One Province Minor (OPM) country to start with is a challenge, even for experienced players. So picking a large nation to start with gives you a few advantages: more income, more armies and navies, and more provinces to buffer you in case you get into a war.

A good choice in this game is to try either Castile or Portugal. Both of these n

ations are on the periphery of Europe, and although they can get drawn into wars in the distance, their large navies usually means you can be free of having to worry about combat in your home provinces.

Tutorial states

Certain countries have been labeled as educational and beginner-friendly by Paradox:

Ottomans

... which in 1444 is a military powerhouse in the Eastern Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Middle East, with many opportunities to expand militarily with leeway for mistakes due to its sheer stature.

Castile

... which in 1444 is arguably the dominant state in the Iberian peninsula, yet without any major rivals save the southerly Berber states of Granada, Morocco etc., and later France, who however is not particularly interested in conquering Spanish land. Castile also has interesting missions and events, quick short-term goals to form the Kingdom of Spain and the Reconquista, easy long-term goals such as colonization, while domestically it is almost entirely religiously and culturally unified.

Portugal

... which in 1444 has the potential to become the biggest colonial power, besides that Portugal's only borders are with Castile who is a historical friend (easy alliance) and Morocco who have more or less the same army as Portugal but with the help of Castile, Portugal can easily defeat them.

Managing government

The most important button in this game is at the top left hand corner of the screen. It will look like a shield with the flag of your nation on it. When you click this button, a window appears with many different tabs at the top, showing your king and his stats as well as spots of vacant advisors. Before you go along and fill them up, you need to worry about the currency of the game. Go to the third tab and it will show you the economy of the nation. Most nations start the game with an economy that is making money every turn. You should check back periodically to make sure that your nation is always profitable. Now, it is time to go back to that first menu and hire some advisors. There are three slots for three different categories of advisors: administrative (represented in game with a paper and quill), diplomatic (represented in game with a dove) and military (represented in game with two crossed swords). You may only have one of each type. If you are making less than 4 ducats per month you shouldn't hire any advisors. If you are making less than 30 ducats per month you should stick with an advisor with a level of 1. This is because advisors increase in cost quadratically according to their rank. It doesn't really matter what kind of advisor you pick for now, as long as you find one for each category. If you read the description on them, you can tell what sort of advisor they are. Later on, you can pick them for a specific need, but since all of them are relatively useful, just go for the cheaper ones.

Territory & armies

Now that you have selected your advisors and are still making money, it is time to look at your nation. Your nation will be composed of one or more provinces. Your country is only comprised of land provinces. No one truly "owns" sea provinces, though you have the ability to affect naval control and trade in nearby sea provinces.

There will always be a capital province in your nation. If you know world geography, these often correspond to where the capital of the country is today. London is the capital province of England and so on. There may also be a separate trade capital, though the national capital is most often the same province as your trade capital.

You may notice some figures on your provinces, such as a 3D "toy soldier" to represent your armies, or small 3D ships. These are units that you will use to fight wars with. Your neighbors will have their own forces. Building units takes quite a while, so you should always have some units on hand. If you go to the interface screen that you were at earlier and go to the military tab you can see how many land and naval units you have as well as your force limit. The force limit is a "soft cap" which means that you can build over that quantity of regiments or ships, except that each additional unit will cost more and more. You can click on a particular unit to select it, or drag click over an area to select multiple units.

Moving units to a friendly province will result in a yellow arrow. Moving units to an enemy province or one besieged will have the arrow show as red. If you keep a unit selected as it moves, the progress between provinces actually looks like a progress bar. You can cancel the move until they are halfway there. Halting a move doesn't have a direct repercussion on your troops except that if you want to move to that same province again you'll have to restart the march all over again. Movement may also subject the unit to other effects, such as attrition due to supply limits, weather, or moving over hostile territory.

Other countries

If you look around, you will see provinces with a different colour than yours. They aren't yours - yet. They belong to a neighbouring country controlled by the computer. They aren't dead weights though; they will negotiate with you and other computer-controlled nations to fulfill their goals. Speaking of goals, your nation has some too, if you're interested in following them - although EU4 will attempt to point you in the right direction, you can do basically whatever you want with your nation. These goals will be found under the mission section of your government tab.

Budget

Let's now head back into the economy screen. You should notice some sliders on the right hand side. This allows you to pay more or less for your troops, missionaries, ships and colonies. As a good rule of thumb, your missionary and colony sliders should always be maxed out to the right. This ensures that they take the least amount of time and can be done in a reasonable amount of time. Only reduce them if you're desperate for income; don't be afraid to take loans from time to time instead. Note that these cost nothing if you have no active colonists or missionaries, in which case lowering them won't help anyway.

Next in line is your naval slider. You can afford to let it go down to 75% or even 50% when at peace. This will significantly reduce the cost of your navy but come at a cost of trade power from light ships and a lessened morale. It may be prudent to maintain 100% naval maintenance as directly at the onset of wars your fleets that aren't in port can be sunk fairly quickly. It is also important to remember that the costs of reduced trade power from your light ships, which affects your trade income, can outweigh the immediate benefits to lowered maintenance spending if you possess a significant fleet of light ships. If you have the Art of War expansion, you should mothball fleets you're not using while at peace instead.

Lastly is the army maintenance slider. This one is the most adjustable; at war it should always be at 100%, but in peacetime it can be safely dropped down to th

e 50%-75% range. With experience, you will be able to judge when the threat from enemies, rebels and natives is low enough that it's safe to send it all the way to 0%. With reduced maintenance, units will have much less morale and will not replenish as quickly (not at all at 0%). Units with low morale are less effective in combat, making it risky to reduce army maintenance with armies stationed in provinces with unrest or on the border of a potential invader. Reducing army maintenance below 75% or even 25% can serve as a major boost to an early game economy, however it is important to station armies in this case away from borders where enemy armies and foreign rebels may cross and outside of provinces with unrest to prevent them from being destroyed.
Making your provinces work for you

In EU IV, just because your country is large doesn't mean that it has a large economy or great military strength. To extract more out of your provinces, you have to look out for two attributes: local autonomy and unaccepted cultures.

High local autonomy reduces the usefulness of a province to you in many ways. If the autonomy is high enough for you to manually lower it, you should do so. But, beware of the resulting unrest (and long cooldown), and be ready to handle it. If you have The Cossacks DLC activated, most provinces granted to the various estates will have a minimum of 25% local autonomy. However, each estate will ignore the penalties of local autonomy in certain attributes (e.g. the Burghers estate will ignore penalties due to local autonomy for a) Naval force limit, b) Production efficiency and c) Trade power).

If your provinces have unaccepted cultures (especially from a different culture group, which has a larger penalty and is represented by the culture's name being in red), you should also try to convert them to your culture. This is impossible if the provincial religion is not your state religion. As religious conversion receives a penalty for non-accepted cultures, you may have to increase missionary power to achieve the conversion.

New to EU player's guide
General tips

EUIV can look like a very complex web of diplomatic and militaristic decisions that must be carried out according to a very tight schedule with no room for error, but that's simply not the case. Yes it is true that there are some aspects of the game that do require a little bit of learning, and the tutorial is a little bit sub-optimal, but after sinking just a few hours into the game, you'll be well on your way to conquering the world as Ryukyu.

Total domination takes time, practice, and experience, even experienced players who have sunk hundreds of hours in the game still find some tasks to be quite difficult.

There are many aspects of the game that are hidden away and not shown in the tutorial such as Personal Unions, coalitions, colonialism, and the ledger. It is a wise decision to read the wiki if you are confused about anything.

There are some pretty nasty events that can fire in EUIV, but most are preventable, such as the peasants' war or becoming the junior partner in a PU. There are however, some events that can fire with no way to prevent them, such as "Comet Sighted". It is imperative that no matter what happens, you stay calm and think logically. Freaking out and uninstalling the game because you lost 1 Stability is not the kind of attitude that is required to play.

Know your strengths and weaknesses. Getting into a land war with Russia is usually a bad idea unless you've got very capable allies in both Asia and Europe who are capable of throwing away countless ducats and men only to siege 1 province. But generally, getting into a land battle with Russia is a bad idea simply due to their harsh winters, endless manpower, huge amounts of land to occupy, and seeming tendency to have amazing generals.

Play as an easy country to start off, like France, Castile, Portugal or the Ottomans before you try and tackle the big boys such as Austria, Muscovy, or Pol

and.

Pay attention to your economy! Having a stable economy is the key to any successful empire. Many new players get extremely frustrated when playing as Austria because no matter what they do, their economy will fail. The main reason that many players fail to maintain an economy as Austria is simply because there is a gold mine in Tirol that will make you roughly 2.5 ducats a month. But wait, how is that a bad thing? One word... inflation. The gold mine in Tirol will give you 0.07% inflation per month. Now that might not seem like much, but it adds up quickly. So every 15 months you will be gaining 1.05% inflation. But this is not permanent, since you can hire advisors and choose ideas to reduce inflation every month (in fact, Austria's third national idea does just that).

A good way to indirectly kill a country is to split it in half, either by taking territory for yourself or making them release nations. A country that is split in half cannot transport troops from one side to the other (unless they get military access from the country(s) splitting them). If a country gets a really nasty rebellion on one side of its country, but all of the country's troops are on the other side, then there is little to no chance that the country in question will be able to raise enough troops to combat the rebellion. Splitting countries is not easy however, and usually requires you to overextend a little (or a lot).

Before you unpause

Even before you unpause the game, and allow time to start ticking, you should do a few things. Check out the map. Look at some interfaces and really understand what you have in front of you. Basic geography and history knowledge will help you here, as EU4 will usually follow along the same paths as history did, however it is not entirely impossible for something to happen that will look a little strange, such as France losing a war to Spain and having to release half the countries they've annexed, splitting the country in half and making it weak. New players will need to get an orientation to the interface, because there are a lot of choices to make and controls at your disposal.

Pan around the map, and see what you can see. What land provinces do you have in your nation? What are the nearby sea zones? What trade nodes are within your borders or close by? Also note that at the beginning of the game, much of the map might be obscured from your direct observation behind the Fog of War, or even greyed out and hidden as Terra Incognita.

You can change map modes by pressing the buttons just above the map. The most important ones are the political, trade, and religion map modes.

Click on the shield to see details of your own nation. What's happening with your economy? What is your ruler like? What form of government is your country? What is the predominant national religion? What national decisions do you have to work for ahead of you?

Learn more about your neighbors using the diplomatic interface. They could be your allies, rivals, or enemies.

Check out the Information Bar and Alerts Zone underneath it, and make sense of what the interface is telling you about your nation at game start. Find the balance of your treasury. Find out what your national Stability is at when the scenario begins.

If you have some spending money in your treasury, consider building some land forces, called regiments, or some ships using your disposable income. Otherwise, keep it as a war chest for now. Just make sure you don't spend more than you have, or you will have to take out expensive loans. And don't build over your force limit just yet, since this costs increasingly more.

Click through the various map options to see if your neighbours have any of your core provinces. If so, those might be some of the first targets for conquest, but be careful of who owns those cores, make sure you are fully prepared to slug it out in a long drawn out war. Also click on your neighbors and see if they have any core provinces within your borders. If so, those will be a point of co

ntention between you. Also see what the status is of the religion of your provinces. Are they all of your same religion, or might you need to dispatch missionaries to convert these people to the One True Faith? (Yours, of course.) Is that even possible at the moment? You don't want to shell out a couple of ducats per month and incur 6 unrest trying to convert Ceuta when your missionaries are too weak to make any progress at all.

What nation should I start as?

A lot of players, when they first come to a Paradox Game, often make the mistake to start with a single small one province minor country. Don't. It may seem like your easiest way to learn the ropes since you have very little to manage, but, in reality, what it means is that you are playing under an extreme handicap. You have limited options in terms of economics, military power and diplomacy. If you make a wrong move you will find yourself annexed in a heartbeat.

Generally, it is better to take one of the larger nations. You will have more spending money, toy soldiers and boats to play with. You also have more strategic options and can play around with less worry. If you do mess up (and everyone does in their first game), you can lose a disastrous war and even a few provinces and not be entirely out of the game.

In the scenario start screen, the game will make suggestions of some of the larger powers available during your current scenario. In the designer's view, these are the nations that are most interesting to start with. Once you learn the ropes, you can go back and pick a smaller nation to fine tune your skills. For now, "go big."

Even just limiting your choices to the big nations, you have a lot to consider in determining which one. Should it be a mostly land-based power to field massive armies (and not have to worry about learning naval mechanics), or do you want a coastal nation to play with fleets and colonization? Please note that some nations start embroiled in a war and others are just about to start one.

Opposing Viewpoint: If you do want to start as a one province minor (preferably in the Holy Roman Empire, New World or Japan), you may be able to get a handle on your nation pretty easily, and you might be able to find one in a hope fully out-of-the-way location. Also, if you do start with a large nation, you may get overwhelmed with all the possible choices and challenges ahead of you.

Another suggestion for totally new players is to stick to European powers. There are technological handicaps and some special rules for nations outside of Europe (such as the choice as to whether to Westernize or not). Until you learn how to handle the challenges of technological development, it is probably best to stick with a European nation.

What scenario should I start?

Paradox gives players the chance to begin the game using one of 11 preset "bookmarks" or "scenarios". You can always start the game by choosing the default 1444 campaign, or choose from one of the other bookmarks. Plus, you can also choose any date in the time frame covered by the game as your starting point.

If there is a specific period of time you love more than others, feel free to choose that bookmark as your starting point. Note that in the later start dates there are some different nations available, many nations may have significant changes to their border over time, and each of the nations will have upgraded its technology to be contemporary to the scenario. Otherwise, you can start with the default 1444 scenario.

EU IV Refresher guide

Outside of the game itself is a large array of support, such as this Wiki.
Manual

Read The Manual. In this busy world many people do not take the time to do so. To make it as easy as possible, Paradox released the EU4 Manual online for free as a PDF download. You will need a PDF reader (such as Adobe Acrobat), or a browser capable of opening PDFs. All major browsers (including Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Opera) support PDF viewing. If you are using Internet Explorer, download a PDF reader or use a browser that can read PDFs.

Unfortunately the manual is not very useful today, as it hasn't been kept up to date and EU4 has changed a lot in the few years since it was released.

Developer diaries

Paradox also put out dozens of Developer Diaries and videos that discuss many details and design decisions that went into the new game. Paradox clearly aimed these at their core audience of die-hard EU3 players, and, to a lesser extent, players of Crusader Kings, which shares much of the underlying engine and infrastructure of EU4. Players of other Paradox strategy titles, like Victoria II and Hearts of Iron III may also be able to grok much of the discussion. Less-experienced players may appreciate reading through these, familiarizing themselves with the patois of EU, though they may fail to understand many of the finer details of the statistics and interfaces discussed.

Check out the forums

The Paradoxplaza forums is your best way to get in touch with the community of experienced players and their advice. Register your game and post your questions.

You can also find a lot of good "Walkthrough" or "Let's Play" videos, and read After Action Reports (AARs) posted by other players.

EU3 to EU4 differences summary

For experienced EU3 players who just want to catch up on the differences between the two versions of the game, Paradox published a free 44-page downloadable PDF manual that describes, in great detail, the major differences between these games. You can find it at the link below. You will need a program capable of reading PDFs to view this, for more info check the EU4 Refresher guide section.

EU3 vs EU4 PDF

Tooltips

Tooltips are small popups that show up when you hover over certain areas of the interface. They usually provide more details about the game. Though often technically written, once you understand the lingo, you'll see that they are showing you some pretty neat details of how the game works.

Hints

The game also has a series of in-game hints. These are pop-up windows that will appear when you first encounter certain aspects of the game. The hint window will explain basic concepts of that game feature, which can then be dismissed. Hints may be disabled entirely if you are tired of seeing them, or they can be turned on again if you felt like you dismissed a screen a bit too quickly and didn't have a chance to read it through.

Controls

The use of keyboard shortcuts and mouse controls tips can simplify manipulation, increase accessibility, and ultimately speed up game play.

List of keyboard and mouse controls

Common questions

Why am I losing money and what if I go below zero?

Events, advisors, military maintenance, reinforcements to understrength regiments, and repairs to damaged ships can cost you money. If you hover over the Treasury icon (coins with a + sign) in the top toolbar, you will see how much you have in your treasury, how much you are gaining/losing per month, and how you are spending your budget. During peacetime, you can lower your army or navy maintenance, or even disband regiments (such as mercenaries) and ships that are too costly to maintain. During war, you can consolidate understrength regiments. You can also fire advisors if your budget can't sustain their employment. You can lower monthly support for missionaries and colonists, though these will slow down or even halt their progress.

You should also check your force limit under the Military tab on the left-hand side; if you have more units than your force limit, those units will cost far more money than the rest of your army/navy. Disband units until you are at least even with your force limit if you've gone above it.

Even for all your cost-cutting, occasionally you will find yourself with a negative amount of money -- a debt. States in EU4 are allowed to run at a deficit to a limited extent. At the end of any month you have a negative balance the bank will automatically take a loan out for you. You will need to pay this loan back in five years as well as pay the interest on the loan. If you cannot, the loan will be extended at the cost of a higher interest rate. Taking a loan or two is nothing to worry about as long as you can pay it back. Taking a loan to hire mercenaries or pay for a nasty event is a perfectly reasonable action to take. Taking out too many loans, however, may be unsustainable. In extreme cases, countries can be forced to declare bankruptcy.

After a war, when trying to pay a loan back remember to dismiss your hired mercenaries and any other regiments over your force limit, and lower your military maintenance so that you can stockpile some money to pay it off sooner. When your loans are paid off, consider investing in buildings as many of these will increase your income in the future. Also keep track if you set your military maintenance below 100%, as that can leave your troops or ships with decreased morale at the start of your next war!

How to colonize and why?

Europa Universalis is all about the colonization of the new world. To colonize you must have a colonist. To do this you have to unlock either the Expansion or Exploration idea group (unless you already have access to a colonist like Portugal, for instance), which may first require advancing your Administrative Tech Level. For early colonial growth overseas the Exploration idea is superior, as it allows you to recruit Conquistadors and Explorers. These function in much the same way as other Generals and Admirals do, except that they are able to explore terra incognita (the unrevealed sections of the map) and also are a bit weaker than normal Generals and Admirals. You will get much less taxes from overseas provinces and instead of production income you will get tariff income. The upside of this is that you can get valuable trade goods which can bring in buckets of money through tariffs and trade. Conquistadors must be attached to an army and may traverse and reveal terra incognita covering land regions while explorers must be attached to a fleet and may traverse and reveal terra incognita covering sea regions. Explorers sometimes remove terra incognita from provinces adjacent to any sea region they enter. Likewise Conquistadors can discover sea regions adjacent to the land provinces they enter. Expansion is an option for countries that border uncolonized frontiers, and do not need to explore to find rich lands to occupy. If you fancy yourself as a main colonizing nation, you can unlock both Exploration and Expansion idea groups, allowing your country to have up to three Colonists, which allow your colonial possessions to grow very quickly.

What is trade, why should I care, and how do I monopolize it early?

Trading is vital to any superpower. The placements of your merchants and your trading fleets is the most important thing to bringing the riches from the new world and the Orient to your capital. If you switch your map view to the trade overlay it will indicate trade regions, centers of trade, flow of trade and more importantly show you which centres of trade you have trade power in.

You will always have a home node, in which your capital (or trade capital) will be located. Your home node is usually the best place to collect from trade as it won't have any penalty attached to it. When starting the game, it's a good idea to send your merchants to trade nodes that contain a lot of value that immediately border you. If you have more than one merchant, the other one should be sent to a trade region where you have provinces and set him to steer the trade to your home node.

If it is a coastal trade node, also assign your light ships to patrol this route. Each additional light ship you build and set on patrol will help steer trade towards your home node. Simply group your light ships together into one fleet, click the 'Protect Trade' icon (the one with the coins on it), and select the node you want to protect trade in. You can mouse over each selection to see how much more money you will make by stationing the fleet there, and opening the trade mapmode using the buttons at the bottom right will show you where each node resides in the world. Note that, of course, you can't use ships to protect trade in inland nodes, such as Kiev or Wien.

Unless your navy is vast, it's usually a wise decision to check the 'Go home at war' box (which you can find if you select any fleet) before they go off to protect trade. If this fleet is protecting trade, it will sail directly to the nearest allied port during war time, getting itself out of harm's way. After peace is established, it will go back to protecting trade.

Each province you conquer in a trade node improves your trade power. Specifically, open the trade mapmode and find provinces which have little river or market icons on top of them. These are Estuaries and Centers of Trade, respectively, and each gives you a massive increase to trade power in the node they reside in. If you want to go to war and expand, but don't know what you want to take, these are good places to start.

I'm fighting a war. How can I win?

Fighting a war can be a difficult proposition. The most important thing though is numbers. This is a game about logistics and thus the one with the most units usually wins. Having a general can also be a good way to stack the odds in your favour. When fighting an enemy that is your size or greater it is almost always advised to play a defensive war, so that you can receive terrain bonuses to the battles. Using the terrain mapmode, try to position your armies in provinces with a large mountain percentage. Unfortunately, numbers are only important to a point. As the game progresses, the importance of proper army composition (Such as having an army comprised of less than 50% cavalry in the western tech group which avoids a significant combat performance penalty) increases. Check out the Land warfare page for more in-depth detail. In addition there are other factors that become increasingly vital to military survival: morale, tactics, maneuver and discipline. Some of these are increased by technology and ideas, so always make sure to carefully inspect your opponents before attacking.

Overall, the best way to ensure success in war is to find powerful allies before it happens and to try not to ally those who are often invaded by great powers and constantly call you into their losing wars.

I'm in a war against a much larger country. How can I survive?

This can be one of the harder things to deal with. It is very difficult to fight a country which is significantly larger than yours, as their armies are usually larger than yours as well. If you are stuck in a war against a superpower with no favourable alliances it is often best to attempt to surrender and give the attacker whatever it is they desire. Not doing so may result in the attacker (and in some cases, the defender if you are the aggressor) occupying much more of your territory and taking more than just the war goal in the peace deal. If you must fight, attempt to stay in advantageous terrain such as mountains which will reduce the combat width (combat width refers to the maximum amount of regiments that may take part in a battle at one time) and lower the importance of their greater numbers by allowing only a certain portion of their army to fight at one time, although generally it is still advisable to avoid a battle you cannot afford to lose. If at all possible, besiege territories they are unable to defend such as islands if you have a navy capable of fending off your opponents navy. Your goal in this war is to drive their war exhaustion through the roof. This will drive their war enthusiasm to a low and allow you to peace out in a better deal. This is a very risky strategy, however help may arrive in the form of other AI nations declaring war on your opponent in order to further their own goals. If things are beginning to go your way, do not become too greedy. Even if an opponent may seem weak at the moment, it may be possible that they are recruiting units out of your sight or bringing far-off armies in to reinforce their position. If your goal is simply to survive, white peace may be the best option.

How do I deter aggression?

Your best bet for stopping a large country from attacking you is to maintain as many regiments as you can afford as well as securing powerful alliances. Good relations with your neighbours will also lessen the chance that they will attack you when you are weak.

What are possible ways for small countries to grow?

Where a larger country can whip together some allies and win by superior force, a smaller country needs to be smarter. Allying larger countries and letting them do the fighting is generally a good plan. Ensure that your ally is ready for war (can be seen on the Declare War page), and always check that your opponent does not have strong allies or invisible allies like the HRE. Scavenging weak(er) countries is also a good strategy, and fits well with the constant vigilance a small country needs to survive. If you can't find any meaningful allies early and you instead find a hungry Great Power declaring war on you, don't be afraid to reload an autosave or even just restart.

What do I do with monarch points?

Monarch power is essential to EU4 and represents one of the largest changes from EUIII. It is a measure of a ruler's influence and ability to govern his country. It is a central mechanic in Europa Universalis IV, influencing how effective a country is at technological improvements, diplomatic relations, and infrastructure investments. The ruler's skills are the main factor affecting how many monarch points the country gets each month.

There are three types of Monarch Power.

Administrative power.png Administrative Power is used:

- to research administrative technology and ideas (this category is the one that unlocks idea groups)
- to boost stability
- to reduce inflation
- to construct cores on newly conquered provinces (and newly colonized provinces on the home continent)
- to maintain administrative policies

with the Common Sense.png Common Sense DLC, to develop a province's base tax

Diplomatic power.png Diplomatic Power is used:

- to research diplomatic (including trade and naval) technology and ideas
- to make unjustified demands in a peace treaty
- to diplomatically annex a vassal or junior personal union partner
- to hire naval leaders (admirals and explorers)
- to reduce war exhaustion
- to maintain diplomatic relations beyond the country's current cap
- to maintain diplomatic policies
- with the Common Sense.png Common Sense DLC, to develop a province's base production.

Military power.png Military Power is used:

- to research military technology and ideas
- to recruit land leaders (generals and conquistadors)
- to maintain military leaders (including naval) beyond the current cap
- to do various military actions:
 - harsh treatment (reducing the progress of a rebel faction)
 - attacking natives in a colony or uncolonized province
 - assaulting forts
 - moving armies that have forced march enabled
- to maintain military policies
- with the Common Sense.png Common Sense DLC, to develop a province's base manpower.

All three types of monarch power are used for westernizing.
How do I increase my ducats?

You can increase ducats in several ways. One is to cut costs in the budget window. You can lower your army, naval, and missionary upkeep using the slider bar. However, do this only during peace time since it will lower your morale which can cost you a battle. Also early on, only use advisors where your monarch is weak, as they cost money to keep in your court. Income generating buildings will increase your income over time and are a necessary investment. Use light ships to increase your trade power where you have a large presence. Check for cultures and autonomy in your country. Provinces with non-accepted cultures/high autonomy should be converted to your culture/have their autonomy lowered. Do these when you're at peace, as converting cultures/lowering autonomy may lead to unrest. What is the HRE and should I pay attention to it?

HRE stands for Holy Roman Empire (even though in reality, it wasn't any of those words), depending on where your country is in the world, the HRE can be a very important factor, or not a factor at all. Generally if you're playing as any country in Europe or the surrounding area, then the HRE does deserve at least a little bit of your attention. A good rule to follow is that the closer to Austria you are, the more influential the HRE will be on you. If you are playing as any of the OPM countries in Europe then the HRE should be a really big deal as you are most likely a part of it, and certain countries in Europe can even influence who gets picked as the emperor. It is equally possible that Austria will stay as emperor for the entire game as it is that another HRE member like Brandenburg or Bohemia will become emperor. If you are playing as any Asian, African, or American country, then the HRE should be of little concern to you at all as none of the 1444 start date HRE members are colonial nations (unless one of the Low Countries forms the Netherlands and manages to stay in the empire). The HRE is a complex political system and it takes time to fully understand its many mechanics, but one general rule is that taking land from the HRE is generally a very bad idea unless you're playing as an expansionist France and you are very confident in

both you and your allies' abilities. For more information about the HRE, see its article.