



BIG SCHOOL USA

Simulation Guide

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Big School USA*! In this guidebook, you will learn how to facilitate this simulation properly and create an engaging, insightful experience for all participants.

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OBJECTIVES

Big School USA is a game-based simulation of a freshman year at the eponymous American university. Participants (referred to as “players”) will take on the role of a freshman student, either local (American) or international (Chinese). Depending on their roles, they will have markedly different experiences as they attempt to survive their first year. After 15 rounds, all players who have not succumbed to poor health or low grades will have successfully completed the simulation.



Your Role as Moderator

A Moderator must always be present during the *Big School USA* simulation. As the Moderator, you are responsible for:

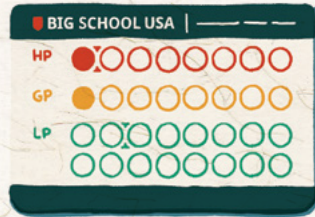
- Familiarizing yourself with the rules
- Setting up the simulation
- Answering player questions
- Resolving player disputes
- Keeping track of the rounds
- Facilitating the debriefing phase

COMPONENTS

Before starting the simulation, ensure that all components are present.



1 × Freshman Academic Calendar



6 × Student Records



6 × Student IDs



1 × Moderator Badge



6 × Encounter Dice



50 × HP Tokens



50 × GP Tokens



100 × LP Tokens



100 × Encounter Cards



50 × Lingo Cards



50 × Confucian Cards



6 × Card Racks

SETTING UP

Student IDs

The six possible students are divided as follows:

*Chinese
International
Students*



*American
Students*



To start, flip all **Student IDs** face-down so that players can randomly draw the students they will play as.

Players should take time to familiarize themselves with their students. Each student starts with different stats (denoted by the red and green token values). They also have special **Player Skills** (based on their majors of study) that can help them *or* their classmates in Encounters. Additionally, the American students all share the Player Skill **Native Speaker**.

Encounter Dice

Each player receives one ten-sided **Encounter Die** that will determine the outcomes of the **Encounter Cards**. Instead of numbers, the letters A, B, and C are inscribed on the ten faces, corresponding to the Encounter Card text.

NOTE: The colors and faces of the dice differ between the Chinese and American students. The Chinese students use the red dice, while the American students use the white dice.



Chinese Encounter Dice Probability

A: 2/10 B: 4/10 C: 4/10



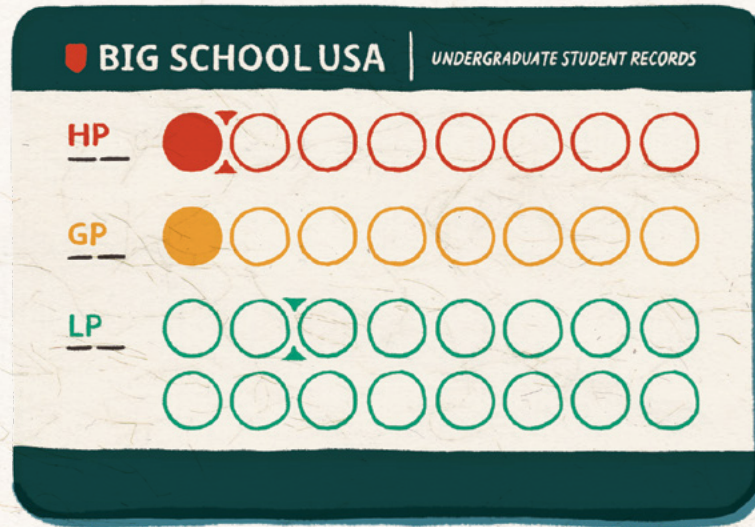
American Encounter Dice Probability

A: 6/10 B: 2/10 C: 2/10

SETTING UP *(continued)*

Student Records

Each player receives a **Student Records** board, which will hold their tokens. Each player will also start with 8 gold GP tokens, while the red HP and green LP token values are determined by one's specific Student ID.



- ▼ **NOTE:** This symbol indicates a threshold of certain tokens.
- ▲ Having less than 2 HP or less than 3 LP will adversely affect one's gameplay.

TOKENS

Tokens are the main resource in this simulation. Each of the three types of tokens corresponds with important factors in one's collegiate experience.



Health Points (HP)

HP are red and marked with a heart. They represent the student's mental/physical health. The Chinese students, who have already taken great pains to relocate to the US for their studies, start with 1 fewer HP than their American peers.

NOTE: Any player that only has 1 HP on their board at the start of their turn must draw a **Confucian Card**. Any player that loses all their HP must "drop out."



Grade Points (GP)

GP are gold and marked with a "check-plus". They represent the student's grades. Each player starts with 8 GP.

NOTE: Any player that loses all their GP must "drop out."



Lingo Points (LP)

LP are green and marked with a speech bubble. They represent the student's language proficiency and can be used to draw **Lingo Cards**.

NOTE: Any player that has 2 or fewer LP must remove 1 GP at the end of their turn.

CARDS *Big School USA's* core gameplay centers around three types of cards.



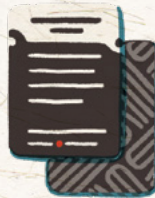
Encounter Cards

Encounter Cards have gold-colored backs. They are the most essential cards for gameplay. Each card features a specific scenario to which the player will respond based on the Encounter Die roll.



Lingo Cards

Lingo Cards have green-colored backs. At the start of a player's turn, they can spend 1 LP to draw 1 Lingo Card. Each of these cards has an effect that can be used to improve the outcomes of the Encounter Cards. Players can follow the directions on the cards to resolve their turns. Up to 4 Lingo Cards can be held at a time.



Confucian Cards

Confucian Cards have dark grey backs. At the start of a player's turn, if they only have 1 HP, they must draw a Confucian Card. Each card has an effect based on a Chinese proverb/colloquialism. Humorous and even sometimes surprising, Confucian Cards will impede one's gameplay until the player meets the requirement to discard them.

NOTE: While "in Confucian," players may be incapacitated, having to rely on fellow players to help with their turn actions and stay "in school."

TURN/ROUND PROGRESSION

Turn Progression

In *Big School USA*, the oldest player goes first, and turns are passed clockwise.

Turn Actions

1. At the start of a player's turn, they can decide whether or not to draw a **Lingo Card**.
2. The player draws an **Encounter Card** and reads the described scenario.
3. For most Encounters, the player rolls their **Encounter Die** to determine how their player character responds to the scenario. Other Encounters may have special instructions and even affect multiple players.
4. Based on the result, the player may gain or lose tokens. At any point before the Encounter is resolved, the player (and others) can use their **Lingo Card** or unique **Player Skills** to improve the outcome.
5. Once the Encounter is fully resolved, the turn passes to the next player.

Round Progression



After all players have taken their turns, the round ends. The Moderator announces the end of the round and flips the **Freshman Calendar** one page ahead. The player turn rotation proceeds as before.



ENDING THE SIMULATION

Dropping Out

Although *Big School USA* encourages collaborative play and can have multiple victors, many students will not make it to the end of the simulated Freshman year. The following conditions will cause players to “drop out” immediately:

-  **Losing all their HP** or
-  **Losing all their GP**

Players that have dropped out can continue to spectate the simulation and interact with the remaining players. However, they cannot interfere with gameplay.

Finals Week

All players who survive through the 15 rounds of the simulation will go through the last gauntlet: “Finals Week.” Players who have 2 or fewer GP are automatically eliminated. Those who have 3 or more GP are considered the victors.

This ends the Big School USA simulation proper. Continue to debriefing.



DEBRIEFING

As the Moderator, you will conduct a debriefing session following the *Big School USA* simulation—a model based on existing cross-cultural simulations. During this final, critical phase in the training process, you will guide the participants' discussion about their experiences in the simulation. All participants should be encouraged to ask questions, share the challenges (or relative ease) of staying "in school," and reflect on any disputes.

The Importance of Debriefing

In any cross-cultural simulation, debriefing is crucial because each participant could have a drastically different experience of the simulation or idea about its objectives. Regardless of the character they played as, all participants should understand the core themes portrayed in *Big School USA*.



DEBRIEFING *(continued)*

Sample Debriefing Questions

1. What surprised you about *Big School USA*?
2. What confused you about *Big School USA*?
3. How difficult or easy was it for your player character to “survive” the simulation?
4. How different was your experience playing as your character than your real-life experience as a university freshman?
5. How did you feel about your player character? Your peers?
6. What do you think the objectives of *Big School USA* were, and did you think they were successfully conveyed throughout your experience?
7. How does this simulation make you think differently (or not) about the Chinese/ international students in your classes?
8. What final thoughts would you like to share about your experience?

RESOURCES & FURTHER RESEARCH

Congratulations on facilitating *Big School USA* and taking a step to increasing intercultural empathy in higher ed!

If you are interested in more resources or learning more about the research behind this cross-cultural training tool, visit www.bigschoolusa.com.

For inquiries or suggestions pertaining to *Big School USA*, please contact the developer at Cathy.Li@tamuc.edu.

THANK YOU.

谢谢。



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