



SimCity 4 Tips

Preparation and Facilitation Tips

- Read the manual for SimCity 4. Do the Tutorials. Read the SimCity 4 Guide.
- Learn the Hot Keys.
- Google SimCity 4 for more FAQs, tips and tricks to get ideas on how to run your city. (Remember: Do not use the cheats, just the tips and formulas)
- Read the rubric and plan accordingly.
- Ask students to look up the zoning map of the city they live in to learn about zoning codes and see the real thing. For example:
<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/zoning/>
- Suggest to the team(s) to think carefully about naming their city. Name it something clever but not too goofy. The name may influence the judges even though it shouldn't.
- Copy the Benchmark Form on page 19 of the Educator's Manual and have students check on their "vitals" at the end of every design session.
- End each design session with a share session. Tips about making the city grow, etc.
- Encourage kids to take city home to work on it.

Time Management

- There are three speeds of the simulation in SimCity, but you can't (or shouldn't) keep the simulation constantly running. When you are making major infrastructure changes, stop the simulation and restart. In particular, be sure to stop when you are replacing power plants, water pumps and roads. The run-stop-run method of playing the game is recommended.
- Getting to 150 years takes time – this is not an overnight assignment. Here are some estimates when you are running the simulation continuously:
 - Slow speed – takes about 12-13 minutes to progress one year. 30 hours to 150.
 - Medium speed – takes about 6-7 minutes to get one year. 15 hours to 150.
 - Fast speed – takes about 1.5 minutes to get one year. 4 hours to 150.
- See what doesn't work and start over. Minimum of 40 hours play time for a successful city.
- Let your city cook, put it on fast-forward and watch, especially for disasters, this game does not have an off switch for disasters and they pause the city so it cannot develop.

Save, Save, Save

- A back up city or two might also be nice in the event of a catastrophic, natural, calamity such as a file deletion.



- After each session of playing the game copy the City folder into a safe place like a flash drive. This is to ensure that the City is saved from accidental erasure. Many schools tend to clean out the My Documents folder.
- At the beginning of each session copy the City folder back into the region folder.
- If you reach a rough spot and your city sinks you can exit without saving and revert to the previous point. Also learn to save multiple copies in different places, it is a pain but well worth the effort.

Game Play Strategies

General

- Pay attention to your advisors and Mayor Panel.
- Don't take out loans (not recommended but still a possible remedy)
- Watch everything; do not work on a single part at a time.
- The query tool is your friend! Use it to adjust utilities by changing individual funding of schools, hospitals etc. so you get the coverage you want most efficiently.
- Turn off your urgent messages, there are so many non-important ones that they get in the way of developing your city. When necessary you can go to the message bar and read them when you have time.
- Don't build everything at once.

Budget & Property Values

- Watch your money, especially at the beginning. Spending too much money is very easy to do in SimCity 4.
- Property nearest schools, museums, parks and water with slightly sloping hills will have the highest value. You can create museum parks by placing a museum with parks surrounding it greatly boosting land value. (Only do this if you can afford it!)

Growing a City

- Three strategies to start the game -Start small -Start small - Start small
- Build slowly and keep your cash flow positive
- With SimCity 4, you cannot create a single city, the game was designed to develop an entire region so other cities are needed to balance land demand.
- Two Ways Cities Grow
 1. From small to big organically without overall planning (and the occasional fire). Think London England
 2. From small to big with city-wide generalized plans. Think Canberra, Australia
Build SimCity 4 the same way:
 - Start your city with a purpose and build your city with that in mind (Rail or road junctions are most popular in SC4.)



- Or start a seed town. Start a town in a corner of the map for which the only purpose is to generate Simoleons so you can build your Grand Design. Don't worry about the high crime and poor schools so long as the money just keeps rolling in. You can come back later and fix it.
- Or start converging towns
 - Start a whole bunch of small towns scattered all over the map.
 - Label them different names.
 - Watch them grow together while still having their separate names.
 - Know any cities like that?
- Experiment. Do not attempt to make your city perfect right from the start or fit the Future City Rubric. Try different approaches first.
 - What helps with air pollution?
 - What helps with water pollution?
 - Why is my budget so high?
 - Why is the traffic soooooo bad?

Pollution

- Don't put a water source next to a pollution source

Power

- Place Power plants in the map corners to minimize pollution
- Be very careful with the nuclear plants, radiation does not disappear in any realistic amount of time, or at least it was there for the 1000 years that we played the game.

Services (Schools, Medical, Libraries)

- Add schools as soon as you can afford to. Keep the schools budget only at the demand level. Same with Medical Centers.
- Watch your zones of coverage for Schools, Medical and Libraries so the circle cover residential areas, don't overlap and do not cover commercial and industrial areas. Plan accordingly.
- You can enter into "neighbor deals" between cities for import/export of garbage, power, and water. These can help your city grow and can be a source of income (for example, a neighbor city pays you to take care of their garbage when you have extra capacity). However, when judging the city, the neighbor deals don't survive the city import process that the judges have to use to open the city. So, the kids should be aware if they – for instance – export all of their garbage to a neighbor (my personal preference for keeping pollution low in my city), the judges won't be able to confirm this when they check for sufficient garbage capacity (one of the rubric criteria). Or if they import all their power from a neighbor – the judges will have a hard time



confirming sufficient generation capacity. I guess what I'm saying is – don't do a 100% import or export neighbor deal.

- Don't provide more police, schools, etc. than required.
- When you do build the schools, etc., click on the schools and drop their budget until it's just enough.

Transportation

- Use Bus Stops to keep traffic down. Sims will walk 8 squares to a bus stop so keep them 16 squares apart.
- Start roads in a corner (Preference, not mandatory)
- Traffic is the most difficult part of getting your city up to par. Use the route query tool to find places that use many cars and place bus stops, highways, etc. near there.
- (Also bulldoze the highway connections at the start of the game as they are costing you 12 Simoleons per month!)

Terrain

- Build pretty terrain
- Rich people like water and elevated land so when you are building your terrain keep that in mind.
- Keep pretty flat geography (Good for transportation, bad for land value)

Trees

- Use trees and parks to buffer industrial pollution from residential areas. Plant lots of trees during the terraforming phase. They are free at this point, but they cost money later on.

Zoning

- When creating residential and commercial zones, the arrows must point to the roads. Use the Alt and Shift keys. Build the roads first.
- Start with lower density on the outside (Preference, not mandatory)
- Industrial on the outskirts