

Deluxe Edition

# PAIRS

Companion Book

PDF Edition



More than 30  
Pairs Games  
and Variations



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# Welcome!

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Pairs is not just a single card game. It's a whole family of games that use the same deck.

Some of these games are related, and some are unique. We hope you'll enjoy discovering them all as you play through this book.

The Pairs deck is a "pyramid" or "triangle" deck, which has a different number of cards in each rank. It has 1x1, 2x2, 3x3, and so on, up to 10x10, for a total of 55 cards. There are no suits, just numbers, and no other cards.

With this simple deck we have created more than 30 games and variants, including great bluffing games, bidding games, wagering games, and more.



The basic Pairs game is a simple press-your-luck game where the object is to avoid getting a pair. There is no winner, just one loser!

The first section of this book includes the complete rules for the basic game, and some variations on it. If you're new to the game, you should start there.

The rest of the book is a collection of games you can play with this deck. If you're not sure where to start, our favorite games are **Octopus**, **Port**, **Regent**, and **Sweep**. But really, we love them all!

## The History of Pairs

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Pairs is a new game, originally created by veteran game inventors James Ernest and Paul Peterson. The two had been working on a card game called “Quicksilver,” based on a two-player poker game that they invented in Las Vegas.

They chose the triangular deck because of one core rule: don’t get a pair! Because the deck has a different number of each rank, the odds of catching a pair is different for each.

What started as a 2-player game turned out to be even better for more players. After several months of testing, including analysis by casino mathematicians, Pairs was ready for prime time!

The game was crowdfunded in 2014, and was a huge success, thanks to novelist Patrick Rothfuss, who incorporated the game into the world of his books.

The campaign raised more than \$300k, and resulted in a dozen different Pairs decks with variations on artwork and game rules.

Now Pairs is celebrating its third birthday with a “Deluxe” edition, which includes a few games that have never been published before. The new deluxe cards were designed by Andrew Kolb, with a flashy retro feel.

We hope you’ll enjoy playing Pairs!



*The box from the original “Fruit” deck*



## The Basics

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*The basic game of Pairs is a simple press-your-luck game with no winner, just one loser. Players score points by catching pairs, or by folding. The first player with too many points is the loser.*

*If you like, you can choose a penalty for the loser. The loser might have to tell a joke, buy a round of drinks, make a funny noise, or whatever is appropriate for your group.*

*This section contains the basic rules for Pairs, and a few simple variations.*

# How to Play Pairs

**Players:** 2 to 8

**You Need:** A Pairs Deck.

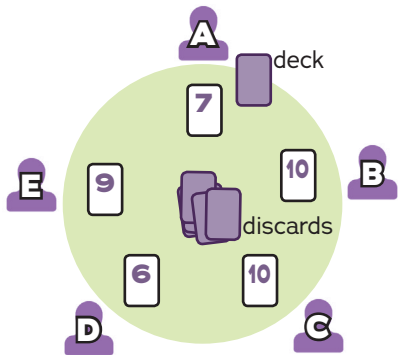
**To Begin:** Shuffle the deck and *burn* (discard) five cards, facedown, into the middle of the table. This creates the start of the discard pile.

*Each time you reshuffle, you will burn five cards. This makes it harder for players to guess what cards are left at the end of the deck.*

To start each round, deal one card faceup to each player. The player with the lowest card will go first.

If there is a tie for lowest card, deal a second card to the tied players to break the tie. If the second card creates a pair, discard it and deal another. (See page 7 for more details.)

**Example:** In the diagram at right, Player A is dealing. She shuffles the deck and burns five cards into the middle. She then deals one card to each player, faceup. Player D will go first because she has the lowest card, a 6.



**What is a Pair?** Just like in poker, a “pair” means any two cards in your stack that have the same rank. Because the cards are dealt in sequence, players might think that pairs have to be together, but that’s not the case.

**On Each Turn:** On your turn, you have two choices: You may *hit* (take a card), or *fold*. If you get a pair, or fold, the round is over and you score points. If not, play passes to the left.

**Hitting:** When you hit, you're hoping not to get a *pair*. If you catch a pair, the round ends, and you score points equal to the rank of the paired card. For example, if you catch a pair of 8's, you score 8 points. Keep one of those cards aside faceup, to track your score.

**Folding:** You can surrender (fold) instead of taking a card. This also ends the round. When you fold, you must take *the lowest card in play* and keep it for points. You may choose this card from any player's stack, including your own.

*Folding can be better than hitting, depending on your odds of catching a pair, but it's up to you to decide when to do it.*

**Ending the Round:** As soon as one person catches a pair or folds, the round is over. Discard all the cards in players' stacks, facedown into the middle, and deal another round.

Scoring cards (those cards that were kept aside for points) are *not* discarded.

**Reshuffling:** When the deck runs out, just shuffle and continue. Pause the deal, reshuffle the discards, and resume dealing where you left off. (Remember to burn five cards.)

**Losing the Game:** There is no winner, just one loser. The game ends when one player reaches the target score. This number changes with the number of players (see the chart below).

For example, in a 4-player game, the loser is the first player to score 16 points.

If you want to give a penalty to the loser, you should choose it *before* the game begins!

### Target Scores:

*The first player to reach the target score is the loser. This depends on the number of players:*

<b>Players:</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6+</b>
<b>Score:</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>

*Formula: For 2 to 6 players, take 60 points, divide by the number of players, then add 1. For 7 or 8 players, keep the value at 11.*



## Example of Play

---

In the example game on page 4, the names of the players are Angie, Bob, Carlos, Delia, and Echo (A, B, C, D, and E).

Here's an example showing the first few turns of that game.

**Delia is First:** Because she has the lowest card, a 6, Delia will take the first turn. Her choices are to *fold for an automatic 6 points*, or to take a *hit*, and *risk getting 6 points*.



Obviously, she takes a hit. (This is an easy choice on the first turn, unless you start with multiple cards because of a tie breaker.)

Delia's new card is an 8, so she avoided pairing up. She survives!

**Echo's Turn:** The turn passes to the left. Echo can hit her 9, or fold for 6 points. Folding for 6 seems costly, and hitting the 9 isn't all that risky. (There are only eight 9's left in the deck.) So Echo takes a hit, and catches a 3.



**Angie's Turn:** Angie is next. She could now fold for 3 points, since Echo has a 3, but she decides to take a hit. She catches a 9.



**Bob's Turn:** Bob has a 10. He could fold for 3 points, but he decides to take a hit. He gets a 5.



**Carlos' Turn:** Carlos is a cautious player. Rather than risk pairing his 10, Carlos folds.



Carlos takes Echo's 3 and sets it aside, face up. All the other cards are discarded facedown in the center. If Carlos had taken a hit, rather than folding, and if he had paired his 10, he'd take 10 points. On any other card, play would continue.

**The Next Rounds:** Angie keeps dealing until she reaches the bottom of the deck, or until someone loses the game.

When the deck runs out, Angie shuffles the discards (not the cards in play, and not the scoring cards). After shuffling, she burns five cards, then resumes dealing wherever she left off. The game continues until someone scores 13 points, which is the losing score for 5 players.

## Breaking a Tie for Low

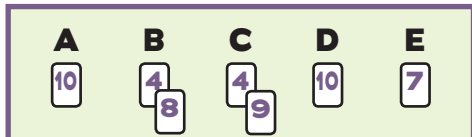
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If two or more players are tied for low, you need to break the tie to determine who goes first. Deal additional cards to the tied players, and use those cards as tie breakers.

If the tiebreakers are tied, deal more cards until one player has the lowest card.

If someone gets a pair during this process, discard the paired card and deal a replacement. Players can't be knocked out by a pair in this process, although they can sometimes wind up with several extra cards!

In the example below, there is a tie for low. Another card is dealt to players B and C. Player B gets the lower second card, and will go first.



Players B and C start with the same low card. They each receive a second card, and B goes first.

If the second card is tied, deal a third card, and so on until the tie is broken. It is possible, though *extremely* unlikely, that players will get exactly the same cards all the way down. If this happens, just shuffle up and play again!

## Some Hints for Dealing

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As the dealer, your job is to keep the game moving smoothly. You can help by calling out the cards as they are dealt, and making sure that every player acts in the right order.

It doesn't matter if one person deals all the time, or if the role of dealer passes around the table. The first player is always determined by the low card, so it doesn't matter where the dealer sits.

Be sure to deal cards in a *consistent order*. Start with the player on your left each time, and deal clockwise around the table. Deal tie breaking cards in the same order.

If you have a cut card (an extra blank card), you can use it to cover the bottom of the deck so that players can't see the bottom card.

## Continuous Pairs

Continuous Pairs is almost the same game as basic Pairs, but it is a single long round, rather than several short ones. This version is favored by many experienced players.

Whenever a player pairs up or folds, *only that player's cards are discarded*, and the game continues.

The player whose cards were just cleared is still in the game, just with an empty stack, and everyone else keeps their cards.

There are two slightly different rules:

**1:** When you have no cards, you *automatically hit*. (This never happens in basic Pairs.)

**2:** When you fold, you may take *any card in play*. (It doesn't have to be the lowest card.)

There are a few rare times when you might not take the lowest card. For example, when the lowest card is in your stack, but you also want to remove another low card from play!



Cards from the "Leaf" deck by Phil Foglio

## Calamities

**Calamities** is a variation for basic Pairs or Continuous Pairs.

In this Pairs variant, the 7's are bad luck or "calamities." They are bad in two ways, keeping the focus on you, and they work as follows:

**1:** 7's are lower than 1's when determining who goes first.

**2:** If you are dealt a 7, the turn *stays on you*. In *Continuous Pairs* (described at right), this is true even when the 7 gives you a pair, so you will discard your cards and immediately receive another card!

The **Calamities** variant was created for the *Commonwealth Pairs Deck*, based on Patrick Rothfuss' *The Name of the Wind*. In this book, there are seven powerful beings, each associated with a different terrible event. The 7's in this deck have pictures of various calamities.

## Pieces of Eight

**Pieces of Eight** is a variation for basic Pairs or Continuous Pairs.

In this variant, 8's are special. If you have an 8, you have a third option, which is to discard the 8 and take two cards.

Two cards might seem riskier than one, but at least you get rid of an 8!

*Note: If you take this option and the first card gives you a pair, you don't deal the second card. This is only important when playing Continuous Pairs.*

You can adapt this rule to any card rank (pieces of seven, pieces of six, etc).

You can also modify the rule so that your second card goes to the *next player*, but only if your first card doesn't create a pair!

**Pieces of Eight** was created for the *Pirate Pairs deck*, from which we also get **Port** and **Starboard**.

## Playing for Chips

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*Here are some variant rules for the basic Pairs game, using chips to keep score. These rules can be used with either basic or Continuous Pairs. You will need about 100 chips per player.*

*To win at these variants, you just need to end the game with more chips than you started with!*

**Seattle Rules:** This is the simplest of these variants. At the end of the game, the loser pays *one chip to every player*.

**Tacoma Rules:** In Tacoma, the loser pays a predetermined amount (for example, 6 chips) to the player with the *lowest score*. Tied winners split the prize. If there are odd chips, leave them in the pot for the next game.

*Note: We suggest 6 chips because the penalty is often split between multiple players, and 6 chips is divisible by 2 and 3. You'd have an even easier time splitting these pots if you played for 12 chips.*

**Olympia Rules:** In Olympia, the loser pays the player(s) with the lowest score, as in Tacoma, but the penalty is equal to *the difference in those players' scores*.

This makes each point more interesting, so players are now playing to minimize their score and not just to avoid losing.

If this penalty is split, then any remaining chips carry over to the next hand.

**Portland Rules:** Portland is like Olympia, but in Portland the loser pays *every player* the difference between their scores. There's no rounding error in this version, since each player gets their own payment.

**Eugene Rules:** Each time a player takes a scoring card, that player puts one chip into the pot. At the end of the game, the pot is divided by the players with the lowest score. Odd chips carry over to the next hand.

**Medford Rules:** Same as the Eugene Rules, but the cost of taking the scoring card is equal to *the size of the card*.

For example, if you score 3 points, put three chips into the pot.



## More Games

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The **Pairs** deck lends itself to many entertaining games. Some of these are slight changes to the basic game, while others are completely new.

We have listed these games in alphabetical order rather than dividing them by type. Several games are related, while others are in a class by themselves. All of the games can be played with any Pairs deck.

Many of these games require chips to keep score. You'll need about 100 units per player. In many cases, a single "game" is like a hand of poker, so you'll want to play several times to determine the overall winner!

# Blackstone

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**Players:** 2 to 8

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**Summary:** Blackstone is based on the idea of drawing stones from a bag, but using cards instead. The 10's are "black stones," and all other cards are "white stones." The game ends as soon as a player collects two black stones.

Each hand is a self-contained, separate game. Your goal over the long term is to finish with more chips than you started with.

**Antes:** Each player antes 5 chips. Leave each player's ante in front of that player, not in the pot, so the dealer can easily see who is still in the game. When a player is knocked out, her ante moves into the pot.

**Blackstone** is a gambling game that's a bit like a game of "chicken." Players take as many cards as they dare, and their opponents must take at least that many cards, or give up.

**Starting Deal:** Shuffle the deck and deal one faceup card to each player. The lowest card will go first. Break ties for low card by dealing more cards, similar to basic Pairs, but leave pairs of white stones in play because they do not hurt you.

If anyone catches *more than one 10* during the tiebreaking process, they are not knocked out. However, you must return the extra 10's to the deck and reshuffle after you determine who is going first.

After determining who goes first, bring all white stones (all cards that are not 10's) into the center of the table, arranging them so that they can be easily counted. It helps if you stack them in two rows, using bunches of five, so players can compute the price of folding (see below).

Players keep *only their black stones*. The first player to collect two black stones loses.



*Sorting the White stones:  
Arrange the white stones in two rows, in blocks of five, to make them easy to count.*

**On Each Turn:** You have two choices. You may either *take cards* or *fold*.

**Taking Cards:** If you take cards, you must take *at least as many* cards as the previous player. (The first player must take at least one card.)

You must declare how many cards you will take *before* any cards are revealed.

All white stones go into the center. But if you get a black stone, you must keep it.

If a player collects two black stones, that player loses, and the game is over. (Stop dealing as soon as this happens.)

The loser surrenders his ante, and also pays one chip to the pot for *every white stone that has been dealt*.

For example, if 15 white stones have been dealt, the losing penalty is 15 chips.

All surviving players win. They retrieve their antes and split the pot.



**Folding:** If you fold, you drop out of the hand, but the game continues. *This is not free.*

To fold, you must pay the pot an amount equal to *half the white stones that have been dealt, rounding up*. Your ante also goes into the pot.

For example, if you fold when there are 15 white stones in the center, your penalty is your ante, plus another 8 chips (half of 15 stones, rounding up).

Folding *does not end the game* unless there is only one player left, in which case the surviving player wins, and takes the pot.

Folding isn't cheap, but it's half the cost of catching a pair of black stones!

**Ending the Game:** The game ends as soon as someone collects two black stones.

After she pays her penalty, the pot is split among all the surviving players. Any odd chips remain in the pot for the next game.

**Blackstone** is the oldest game in this book, even older than Pairs. It was originally played with a real bag of stones!



# Carousel



Cards from the “Las Vegas” deck by Andrew Kolb

**Players:** 2 to 8

**You Need:** A Carousel layout, shown at right, a “first player” button, and chips for wagering.

In Carousel, the house deals to six hands of cards, and players bet on how many of those hands will survive the next card.

You will need a simple betting layout, with spaces numbered 0 to 6, similar to the one on the next page. You can just draw seven circles on a piece of paper, making the spaces large enough to hold several stacks of chips.

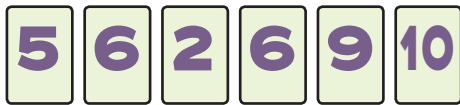
Each player starts with 100 chips. Give the button to a random player. It will pass to the left after each game.

**Carousel** is a casino-style betting game in which players wager on how many hands will survive each round without getting a pair.

## Carousel



**To Begin:** Shuffle the deck and deal six cards in a line, as shown below. These cards are the first cards of six hands. A hand is eliminated when it gets a pair, similar to basic Pairs.



**Betting:** Starting with the button and proceeding to the left, each player must place a bet on a number between 0 and 6. This is the number of hands that the player thinks will *still be alive* (will not have a pair) after the next round.

Each player must bet the same amount, for example, 5 chips. *You can indicate the owner of each bet by its position within the betting circle.*

When all bets are placed, deal a new card to each hand, and then eliminate all hands that contain a pair.

All players who correctly guessed the number of surviving hands win the round, and they divide *all the chips* that were bet. Odd chips are left in the pot for the next round. If no one wins, *all bets* remain in the pot for the next round. (This is called a “carried” pot.)

**Ending the Game:** The game is over when zero or one hand remains. If no one wins the last pot, it carries over into the next game.

Pass the button to the left after each game. New players may join in between rounds, unless there is a carried pot, and players may withdraw at any time.

# Deadfall

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**Players:** 2 to 7

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**Summary:** *Deadfall is a bluffing game. When you play a card, you are claiming that someone still holds a card of that rank.*

*To win, you must either catch someone in a lie, or trick them into calling you when you are telling the truth.*

**To Begin:** Each player antes 1 chip into the pot. Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of six cards to each player.

**Exceptions:** With only two players, start with seven cards each. With seven players, start with five cards each.

**Deadfall** is a bluffing game where players try to guess what cards remain in other players' hands. Like poker, Deadfall has a number of variants in addition to its core rules.

**Door Cards:** Each player chooses one card from his hand, called the *door* card. These cards are revealed at the same time. The lowest door card will take the first turn, and play will proceed clockwise around the table.

**Ties:** *If there is a tie for lowest door card, then everyone plays another door card. Determine the first player using the second card only, with the first door card acting as a tiebreaker. If the tiebreakers are tied, everyone plays a third door card, and so on.*

**Each Turn:** You have two options: you may either *play* a card, or you may *call* another player, which will end the round.

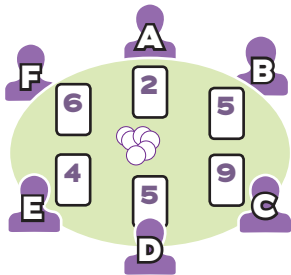
If you play a card, stack it on the cards you have played so far, arranging them so that each card is visible, but the last card is clearly on top.

When you call, you are choosing another player's top card, and claiming that card is *dead*. "Dead" means that there are no more cards of that rank in any player's hand, *including your own*. If you are right, you win. If you are wrong, you lose. Either way, the hand is over.

**Restrictions on Calling:** You may usually call any player's top card. However, if there are multiple top cards of the same rank, you may choose only the one that was played *last* (that is the one closest on your right).

For consistency, this restriction applies *even for door cards*, even though they were actually played at the same time.

In the example below, Player A will go first, and she may call any player's door card except player B. Both B and D have played a 5, and D's was technically played "later" by the clockwise direction of play.



**The Showdown:** When a player calls, this ends the hand. All players reveal their remaining cards.

The caller is claiming that no more cards of the called rank are in anyone's hand, so if she is correct, she wins, and if she is wrong, she loses and the called player wins.

**Penalties:** The loser pays the winner a number of chips equal to the *value of the called card*. The winner also collects the antes. In the example at left, if Player A calls Player D's 5, the following two results are possible:

**If 5's are dead.** This means *no one* had a 5 left in their hand. Player A is correct, and she collects 5 chips from Player D, plus the antes.

**If 5's are not dead.** This means someone still holds a 5. Player A is wrong, and she pays 5 chips to D. Player D also collects the antes.

**Deadfall** is available as a deck of its own, with fantasy art by Bill McGuire. This was the first Pairs deck marketed as a stand-alone game.

## Deadfall Strategy

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You obviously need to pay attention to which cards have been played, but counting cards is fairly easy because all the cards remain exposed.

However, you must also watch *how* and *why* those cards were played. People give away information by their choices of card and many other clues. This will come with experience.

There are times when you want to be called, and times when you don't.

To win at this game, you must do more than just avoid conflict. You must learn how to trick others into calling you, *and* how to read other players well enough to call them.

Experienced players can be fooled in more subtle ways. Once they understand "obvious" plays, you can use those plays deceptively.

One example is the time you take to choose between two cards in your hand when they are the same rank. Beginners don't hesitate. Decent players pretend that it's a hard decision. Experts never do it the same way twice!

**Choosing a Door Card:** Often, you want to get rid of a low card when you choose your door. So if your starting hand is 3-4-6-8-8-10, you might want to play the 3 or the 4.

The clear reason to ditch low cards is that they are hard to get rid of later. A round doesn't always last to the final card, but if you are stuck with several low cards, you may have to play one and will almost certainly get called.

However, unless you are leading the 1, playing a low door card can also be risky. This is because going first isn't all that great, *and* if someone plays a lower door card, you might get called right away.

**Saving Pairs:** Often, you will want your last two cards to match, so that if you get called with one card left, you are safe. This isn't always the right plan, but players do typically save pairs until their last two cards.

**"Running":** This means playing a card that you think is dead, hoping not to be called. This is easier with high cards, and harder with low cards. Once you get a sense for when people try to do this, you can learn to catch them at it.

## Deadfall Variants

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*Here are some variations on Deadfall.*

**Blind Start:** Players do not play a door card. Instead, the leader is the winner of the last hand.

**“Breaking Nines”:** The first player to play a 9 must pay 1 chip into the pot, and the first player to play a 10 must pay 2 chips.

If multiples of these cards are played as door cards, they *all* incur the penalty.

This penalty can actually be based on any number. If you play “Breaking Eights,” then players pay 1 chip for playing the first 8, 2 for the first 9, and 3 for the first 10.

**Cherry:** If a player is called and doesn’t have a matching card in his hand, but another player has one (and therefore saves him from losing), then the *called player* pays a kickback of 1 chip to the *player who saved him*.

If there are multiple saviors, they each get a chip. This payment is called a Cherry, named after the Cherry on the 3 card.

**Cold Calling:** Players can “cold call” their opponents. Rather than declaring that your opponent’s top card is dead, you can guess the *exact contents* of your opponent’s hand. This is easiest to guess when it’s just one card, but you can also try it against larger hands.

The penalty for correctly (or incorrectly) cold-calling is the *total value* of all cards in the called player’s hand. For example, if you cold-called a player’s hand with two 10’s, that player would owe you 20 chips.

*Cold calling makes people think twice about holding a pair as their last two cards. If their next-to-last play seems suspiciously safe, they probably held another copy of that card. Or did they?*

**Red Devil:** In Red Devil, each player passes one card to the left. This happens after the deal, before the door cards are played.

**Double Devil:** Two cards are passed: one card before the door card, and one after.



# Ghost Town

---

**Players:** 2 to 6

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**Setup:** Every player pays an ante of 10 chips to create the pot. Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of five cards to each player, facedown.

**First Card:** Each player chooses one card in secret, and these cards are revealed together. The player who plays the *lowest card* will go first.

Collect these first cards in the center of the table, to create a row of community cards called the *street*. The cards in the street are shared by everyone. If there are multiple cards of the same rank on the street, discard the duplicates.

**Ghost Town** is a gambling game that attempts to answer the question “What would poker be like if there was nothing like poker?” It’s a bit like poker mixed with blackjack, a game where the pot doubles as the bank. It was created for the Wild West Pairs deck, from Breaking Games.

**Ties for Low:** If there is a tie for low card, break the tie by dealing cards from the deck. These cards are used only for tiebreaking, and are then discarded.

**On Each Turn:** Play starts with the low card and passes to the left. On your turn, you have three choices. You may *play, draw, or fold*.

**Play:** Pay 2 chips into the pot, then choose a card from your hand and play it onto the table in front of you. This area is called your *house*.

You can’t play a pair (two cards of the same rank) into your house, and you also can’t play a card that matches any of the cards in the street.

Under some conditions, you may play a card into your *neighbor’s house*. If you have a card of a particular rank in your house, but your neighbor to the *left* does not have a card of that rank, then you are allowed to play a card of that rank into that player’s house.

For example, if you have a 9, but your neighbor doesn’t have a 9, you may play a 9 on your neighbor. This play still costs you 2 chips.

*Note that you may do this only to the active player on your left, but since players can leave the game by folding and busting, the identity of this target can change.*

**Draw:** Take a card from the deck faceup into your house.

If drawing gives you a pair, either with your own upcards or with the board, you are *busted*. This means you are out of the game, and must *pay* the rank of the matched card into the pot. For example, if you bust with a pair of 8's, this costs you 8 chips, and knocks you out.

However, if your draw does not bust you, then you immediately *win chips from the pot*, equal to the value of the card you received.

If this empties the pot, the game ends.

**Fold:** Withdraw from the game and discard your cards. Often this is the smartest play.

**Ending the Game:** The game ends when the pot is empty, or when only one player remains, in which case that player collects the pot.

**Passing the Deal:** There is no need to pass the deal in Ghost Town, since the play order is determined by the rank of the players' starting cards. One player can deal for the whole game, or you can pass the deal to the left.

**Strategy:** There are two basic methods for getting ahead in Ghost Town. Short-term gains can be made by taking hits from the deck and winning chips from the pot. Long-term gains require winning the pot at the end, which means surviving longer than everyone else.



*A card from the  
"Wild West" deck  
by Val Mayerik*



# Goblin Poker

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**Players:** 3 to 8

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**Setup:** To begin, each player antes one chip. This is the beginning of the pot. Shuffle and deal a hand of six cards to each player.

**First Card:** Each player chooses one card in secret, and these cards are revealed together. This card becomes the start of your faceup stack. The lowest card will go first.

If there is a tie for low card, the tie is broken with cards from the deck, exactly as in basic Pairs. These cards become part of your stack.

**Each Round:** Players take turns *pitching* or *folding*, always starting with the lowest stack (defined at right) and proceeding to the left.

Not surprisingly, **Goblin Poker** is a less chaotic cousin of **Troll Guts**. Players discard cards into a central pool that is then mixed up and redistributed, and the goal is to avoid getting a pair.

On your turn, you may either *fold*, by paying chips into the pot, or you may *pitch* one card. After everyone has done this, the pitched cards are shuffled and distributed to the players, as described below.

**Fold:** Pay a number of chips into the pot equal to the value of the smallest card in play. Turn all your cards facedown, and you are out.

**Pitch:** Choose one card from your hand and add it to a stack of cards in the middle of the table, facedown.

**Defining “Lowest Stack”:** *The identity of “lowest stack” can change frequently, each time cards enter and leave play. It’s always the stack with the single lowest card, with ties broken by the second lowest card, and so on.*

*An extra card is lower than no card at all, so 2-3-6 is lower than 2-3. If there is a perfect tie, even mid-game, you must break it with more cards from the deck. As in basic Pairs, discard and replace tie-breaker cards that form a pair.*

After each player has acted, there will be a stack of pitched cards in the center, equal to the number of players who are still in.

Shuffle the pitched cards and deal them to the remaining players, faceup, starting with the lowest stack and proceeding to the left.

If any player catches a pair, she is out of the game, and must turn her cards facedown. She pays a penalty into the pot, equal to the value of the paired card. For example, if you catch a pair of 8's, you pay 8 chips.

Note that players are eliminated *in sequence*, so if only one player remains, that player wins, even if he was about to get a pair.

**Moving Forward:** If only one player remains in the game, that player wins, and takes the pot.

If at least two players are still alive, play another round. There can be as many as five rounds, since you start with six cards.

If multiple players survive the final round, those players split the pot, leaving any odd chips for the next game.

**Strategy:** Obviously, when you pitch a card, you want to throw away something that can hurt everyone else, and not you.

Looking around the table, try to guess how many other people have good ways to hurt you. Do you share lots of cards with other players, or is your hand mostly unique? If the latter, you might be an easy target.

If you want to fold cheaply, but there are no low cards in play, then try pitching a low card. If you survive the round, you can fold for a cheaper cost. But you do have to survive!

Goblin Poker is competitive and chaotic. Goblins like it that way.



*Goblin from the  
“Deadfall” deck by  
Bill McGuire*

# Horn of Plenty

---

**Players:** 2 to 6

**You Need:** A way to keep score.

**Setup:** Shuffle the deck and deal five cards to each player as follows: one card faceup, and four facedown. (Players can look at their down cards.)

The player with the lowest upcard will go first. If the lowest card is tied, deal more cards to break the tie, as in basic Pairs, but then discard them. Play proceeds to the left.

**On Each Turn:** Play a card from your hand facedown, and declare the rank of the card. This declaration may be *true or false*. The player on your left gets the first opportunity to *agree, disagree, or pass*.

**Horn of Plenty** is a bluffing game. Players play cards facedown, and declare what rank they are. Other players must guess if they are lying.

**Agree or Disagree:** To do either of these, say whether you agree with the declared rank of the card.

If you are *right*, you may decide which of the two players (yourself or the person who played it) receives the card into their faceup hand. If you are *wrong*, this decision is made by the player who played the card.

For example, Beth plays a card and declares that it is a five. Andrew says “yes it is,” and the card is revealed. If Andrew is *right* (it is a five) then he may keep it, or give it to Beth. If it is not a five, then Andrew is *wrong*, and Beth may decide either to keep it, or to give it to Andrew.

**Pass:** If you pass, then the option to agree or disagree moves to the left.

If the card passes all the way around, then it is revealed, and the player who played it may place it *anywhere*.

After the first card, play continues to the left of the first player, and so on until all the cards are played.

**Scoring:** The object of the game is to accumulate the *most points* in your faceup hand, but *without getting pairs*. Each card is normally worth its rank in points, but if you get two cards of the same rank, you must throw them both away immediately.

For example, if you have 10-8, you have 18 points, but if you get another 8, you discard both 8's and are down to 10 points.

**End of Round:** The round ends after the last card is played. The player with the most “card points” (ranks of cards) scores “game points” equal to the number of players.

For example, if there are 5 players, the best hand scores 5 points.

Lower hands receive one less point each, so if there are no ties, the scores for five players will be 5-4-3-2-1.

If two players are tied for card points, they both get the *higher* amount of game points.

**End of Game:** Play to a total score of 11 game points (or more). If two players tie with a winning score, play another round.



Cards from the “Antique” deck by BJ Becker



Art from the “Cuisine” deck by Echo Chernik

# The Judge

---

**Players:** 2 to 6

**You Need:** A way to keep score.

**Summary:** The game is played over several rounds. The winner is the first player to reach a target score, listed on page 27.

**To Begin:** Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of 7 cards to each player. Then, deal a facedown stack of 8 cards in the middle of the table. This stack represents “The Judge.”

Play begins with the player who scored the most on the previous round. On the first round, start with the dealer.

**The Judge** is a game about a cooking contest. Each player creates a recipe from random cards, and enters that recipe in a contest. To win the contest, you have to avoid cooking with things that the Judge doesn't like!

**Step 1, Cooking:** Players will take turns playing cards from their hands faceup onto the table. Your faceup cards represent your recipe, which is your entry into the contest in step 2.

Each time you take a turn, you may add one more card to your recipe, or you may pass. If you pass, you're finished cooking, and you can't add more cards.

Your recipe *can't* contain a pair (although it could if you play by the variant rule below).

Step 1 is over when everyone passes.

**Step 2, The Contest:** The Judge will now eliminate recipes from consideration.

Reveal cards from the Judge one at a time. These cards represent things that this Judge *doesn't like*. If any recipe contains a matching card, that player is eliminated.

Continue until the Judge runs out of cards, or until there is only one player left.

Occasionally, *all* the remaining recipes will be eliminated by the same card, in which case no one scores this round, and the same player leads the next round.

**Scoring:** The surviving recipe(s), if any, will score their face value.

For example, if a recipe contains 1-4-6, that player scores 11 game points.

Play until someone reaches the target score, which depends on the number of players:

<b>Players:</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Score:</b>	50	40	30

## The Judge Variant

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In this version, your recipe *can* contain multiple cards of the same rank, and the Judge works as follows:

When a Judge card is revealed, it eliminates only the recipes that contain the *most* copies of that card.

For example, if there are three hands containing 10's, but one of those hands has two 10's, only that hand will be eliminated.

If the Judge reveals *another* card of the same rank, the same rules apply for the recipes that remain.

# Kitty

---

**Players:** 4

**You Need:** A way to keep score.

**To Begin:** Shuffle the deck and deal a face-down stack of 7 cards in the middle of the table. This stack is the “kitty.” Deal out the remainder of the deck to the players, 12 cards each.

**On Each Round:** The game takes seven rounds, one for each card in the kitty. To start each round, turn over the top card of the kitty. This card is the “target.” The steps of the round are *pass*, *play*, and *capture*.

**Pass:** First, each player chooses one card from his hand and passes it to player on his left.

**Play:** Next, each player plays a *bid* card, facedown. When all four bid cards are played, reveal them.

*Kitty is a simple bidding game for four players. There are also variations for 3 to 6, explained on the next page.*

**Capture:** The player who played the *lowest unique bid* will take the target card, adding it to his hand. “Unique” means that if two or more cards are tied for lowest, they can’t win, and the *next lowest rank* takes the target.

If there are no unique bid cards, then *no one takes the target*, and it is discarded.

**Exception:** The 1 is an unbeatable bid card, but it does not take the target. When you win a bid with the 1, you must hand the target card to another player.

After the capture, discard all the bid cards.

You will play seven rounds, and then score the game.

**Scoring:** The player with the most cards in each rank scores the value of that rank.

For example, whoever has the most 8’s scores 8 points. If there is a tie for most cards, both players score the full amount.

The highest total score wins the game.

**Long-Form Scoring:** It’s okay to score each game of Kitty as a separate game, but you can also keep score over several games. In that case, play to a target score of 100 points.

## Kitty Variants

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*Depending on which rules you choose, you can play Kitty with any number of players from 3 to 6. For example, changing to “Soft Kitty” lets you play with more people without running too low on cards.*

**Soft:** The 7-round game described in the basic rules is the “hard” version. To play “soft,” each target after the first contains *two cards*, rather than one, so there are only four capture rounds (the targets are 1-2-2-2 cards).

In the soft game, the lowest unique bid in each round chooses *one* target card, and the second lowest bid takes the *remaining* target card (if there is one). Tied bids are still ignored, and unclaimed cards are still discarded.

The soft variation can be played by 3 to 6 players. The kitty is always 7 cards. *With five players, 3 cards must be removed from play unseen, so that the starting hands come out even.*

**Sticky:** If a target card is not taken, it isn’t discarded. Instead, it sticks around and becomes part of the target for the next round. If the final target sticks, it is discarded.

**Partners:** Four or six players can play in teams of two. Teams sit across from each other. You’re not allowed to communicate with your partner about the cards in your hand, but you can infer what your partner has (or needs) by how she plays.

In a partners game, if you take a card with the 1, you must give it to someone on another team (not to your teammate). At the end, teammates’ hands are *combined* for scoring.

**Playing for Chips:** If you want to play for chips, the winner of each hand collects from each player the *difference* between their scores.

For example, if the winner has 19 points, he would get 4 chips from a player with 15 points, 10 chips from a player with 9 points, and 6 chips from a player with 1<sup>3</sup>





# Monster

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**Players:** 4 to 8

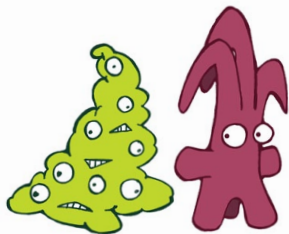
**You Need:** A button for indicating the dealer, and chips for keeping score.

**To Begin:** Start by paying an ante into the pot. If you have 4 or 5 players, the ante is 2 chips. With 6 to 8 players, the ante is 1 chip.

Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of six cards to each player. The player on the dealer's left will act first. (Move the dealer button only after a full game, i.e., after the pot clears.)

Each player acts once, in turn. On your turn, you may *discard* zero to three cards, or *fold*. You are *not allowed* to keep a hand that includes a pair; if this is your only choice, you must fold. You may want to fold some other hands as well, depending on circumstances.

**Monster** is a gambling game in which the best hand must defeat the Monster, a hand made from everyone's discards.



Your discards go facedown into a pile in the middle, which becomes the Monster's hand. Folded cards *do not* go to the Monster; they go completely out of play.

*Note: This is not draw poker. Your discarded cards are not replaced!*

**The Showdown:** After each player has acted, there is a showdown. The high hand (defined on the next page) becomes the "Champion," and must compare hands with the Monster.

When the Champion faces the Monster, he *must defeat* it in order to take the pot. The Monster wins ties.

If the Champion loses (or ties), he pays 5 chips to the pot and is *knocked out of the game*.

**Definition of High Hand:** Any player hand that contains a pair is a losing hand, and can't be kept for the showdown.

All hands in the showdown will be compared by highest card, then second highest card, and so on. The best player hand is 10-9-8-7-6-5. A card is better than nothing, so a hand of 10-8-7-4 is better than 10-8-7.

This is similar to comparing poker hands for high card, except that there is no limit on the number of cards that can play.

The Monster uses the same rules, but it *ignores duplicate cards*. Treat the Monster as if it had only one card of each rank.



**Winning:** To win the pot, you must become the Champion *and* defeat the monster. If no one wins, play another round with only the surviving players. Players who folded, or who lost a fight with the Monster, are out.

All cards are reshuffled in the next round (the Monster does not keep its cards).

**Oddities:** If one player is left, he automatically wins. If *zero* players are left, either because they all had to fold, or because the last player couldn't defeat his own discards, then play again with the same players who started the round.

**Ties:** If two Champions *win* with exactly the same hand, they split the pot.

If two Champions have the same hand but lose to the Monster, they must each drop out and pay the 5 chip penalty, unless they are the only two players remaining, in which case they pay 5 chips but play another round.

**Strategy:** In the first few rounds, you may want to “duck,” playing low hands and trying *not* to become the Champion. As players leave the game, it becomes easier to defeat the Monster, because it is getting fewer cards.

# Octopus

---

**Players:** 4 to 6

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**To Begin:** Each player antes one chip.

*Exceptions:* The *loser* of the last hand (see below) antes 5 chips instead of 1. If there was no loser on the last hand, or if this is the first hand, then everyone antes 2 chips instead of 1.

Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of eight cards to every player.

**Declare:** Each player must declare whether he will *fold* or *continue*. This starts with the winner of the previous hand, or with the dealer on the first hand, and proceeds to the left.

To *fold* you must pay one chip to the pot.

To *continue* is free, but this will be your *only opportunity to fold*.

**Octopus** is a high-hand game with multiple rounds of card passing. The player who calls the showdown decides which type of hand is best.

If everyone but the last player folds, that player takes the pot and starts the next hand. As mentioned above, in this case everyone antes an extra chip.

**Each Round:** Each player chooses one card from her hand in secret. Reveal these cards at the same time.

The player who played the *lowest unique card* decides whether players will *pass* or *show*.

If there are no unique cards, there is no option, and another round is played, unless players have only one card left, in which case there is an immediate showdown.

*Pass:* Each player passes one card to the left (skipping folded players). Play another round.

*Show:* All players show their cards. The best hand wins, and the worst hand pays a penalty.

**Hand Ranking:** There are three types of hands: *Set Hands*, *Clean Hands*, and *Dirty Hands*. The player who calls the showdown may decide whether Set or Clean hands are the best. Dirty hands are always the worst.

**Set Hands:** These are hands that contain *no unique cards*. For example, 99-888-33. This is a “set hand” or a “hand of sets.”

**Clean Hands:** These are hands that contain *no duplicated cards*. For example, 3-4-5-7-9.

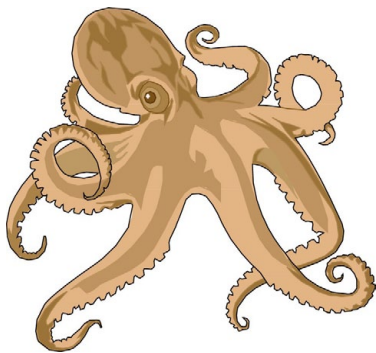
**Dirty Hands:** Hands with a mix of unique cards and duplicated cards are *dirty*. This type of hand is always the worst.

**Comparing Hands:** Between hands of the same type, *high cards are bad*. A hand where the highest card is a 9 is worse than a hand where the highest card is an 8. If the top cards are the same, compare the next cards, and so on.

When comparing clean hands, this is fairly straightforward. When comparing other types of hands, this can be a bit more challenging. Remove cards one at a time from each hand until one is clearly worse.

This means that 999-44 is worse than 99-888. After two 9's are removed from each, the cards are 9-4-4 and 8-8-8.

Note that it's possible for a dirty hand to be the best, as long as all the hands are dirty!



**Prize and Forfeit:** The winner of the hand takes the pot, and the *loser* (that is, the worst hand in the showdown) must ante 5 chips into the next pot.

**Ties:** If there is a tie for best hand, those players split the pot. If there is a tie for worst hand, they both ante 5 chips on the next hand.

**Last Hand:** If players agree to play “last hand,” then the loser's penalty is paid to the winner of the final hand, rather than into the next pot, and that is the end of the game.

# Pendleton

**Players:** 2

**You Need:** A way to keep score.

**Setup:** Shuffle the deck and deal five *unmatched* cards into a row. (Discard any matching cards.) Sort these five cards from lowest to highest, as shown in the center of the diagram at right. These are the “target” cards.

If you had to discard any duplicated cards on the deal, reshuffle the deck.

Choose a random player to go first. On later rounds, the player who scored the fewest points in the previous round will go first.

**Each Turn:** Draw a card from the deck, and play it faceup on your side of any column.

You can't play a card if it matches *any card* in the column, including the target card and the opposing player's cards.

Players take turns until someone draws an unplayable card. This ends the round, and it's time to take score.

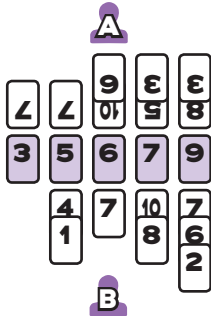
**Scoring:** Whoever played the most points on their side of each target card scores the point value of that target card.

If the players are tied in a column, they divide the point value of the target, rounding down.

Record your score and play again. The winner is the first player to collect 100 points.

Here is an example of a game in progress. Currently, Player A is winning the 3, 5, and 6, and player 2 is winning the 7 and 9.

This round will end if another 7 is drawn. That rank is unplayable because every column contains a 7.



**Pendleton** is a simple two-player game in which players bid on five cards in a center row. It was originally called “Five Cards.”

# Port

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**Players:** 2 to 7

**You Need:** A way to keep score.

**Basics:** **Port** is similar to basic Pairs, but there is only one winner. The game is played in rounds, keeping score after each round.

**To Begin:** Shuffle the deck and burn five cards. (You can deal several rounds from the same shuffle, as in Pairs.)

**Each Round:** Deal one faceup card to each player. The lowest card will go first, with ties broken exactly as in Pairs.

**Each Turn:** On your turn, you may either take a *hit*, or *lock* your stack.

***Port** is a press-your-luck game similar to Pairs, but with a single winner instead of a single loser. Pairs still knock you out, but rather than folding, you have the option to stop taking cards. **Port** is a sister game of **Starboard**, and was first published in the Pirate Pairs deck.*

If you hit, you are trying to get more card points without getting a pair. A pair busts you, and you will get no points at all.

If you lock, you will receive no more cards.

The round continues until everyone has locked or busted.

**Scoring:** The player who has the *most card points* in her stack (adding all the cards together) scores N game points, where N is the number of players. (For example, this is 4 points in a 4-player game.)

The next highest card point total scores N-1 game points, and so on, down to 1 game point for the lowest valued stack (if no one busted). Players who busted get no points.

If there is a tie for any level, both players receive the higher amount.

*For example, in a 5-player game, the final card totals are 23, 22, 22, 17, and bust. These players earn 5, 4, 4, 2, and 0 game points.*

Play to a winning score of 21 game points. If there is a tie (people tied with more than 20 points), then *only those players* play one more round to break the tie.



# Regent

---

**Players:** 2

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**Setting Up:** Shuffle the deck and burn (discard) five cards. You can deal several rounds before shuffling. Reshuffle only when you reach the bottom of the deck.

**Each Round:** To begin each round, deal each player a hand of three cards: two facedown, and one faceup. *In Regent, your "hand" includes your upcards and downcards, as in poker.*

**Regent** is similar to basic Pairs, but adds more options that make it an excellent bluffing game.

Your goal is to catch your opponent with a pair, before she does the same to you.

The player with the lowest upcard will go first. Break ties by dealing more cards from the deck, discarding paired cards, exactly as in Pairs.

**Each Turn:** On your turn, you will choose one of the following five actions: *draw, attack, gift, fold, or see.*

**Draw:** Take a card from the deck into your hand, facedown.

**Attack:** Deal a card from the deck into your opponent's hand, faceup. You *don't* want to create a visible pair with this move.

If you attack and give your opponent a pair, you *lose*. You pay a penalty equal to the value of the pair. For example, if you deal a pair of 8's, you pay your opponent 8 chips.

**Gift:** Play one of your facedown cards into your opponent's hand, faceup.

You may only give cards that *do not match* any of your opponent's upcards. You can't gift your opponent a visible pair.

**Fold:** Withdraw and pay your opponent the value of the *lowest faceup card* (in either hand). This ends the round.

**See:** Reveal your opponent's facedown cards. If there is a pair anywhere in her hand, you win. If not, you lose.

If your opponent has a pair, she pays you the value of that pair. If she has more than one pair, she pays only for the highest one.

If she has no paired cards, then you lose, and pay her the value of her *highest card*.

**Note:** *You can't see a player who has no face-down cards, since you would automatically lose. If this seems like your best option, fold instead.*

**Ending the Round:** The round ends when someone catches a faceup pair, or folds, or when one player sees the other. Whatever the reason, pay the penalty as described above, and then play another round.

**Strategy:** *You need to clear your hand of pairs, and pay close attention to how your opponent behaves, what cards she plays, and so on.*

*Sometimes paired cards will be stuck in your hand, and the best option might be to fold.*

*Once players understand the basic flow of the game, bluffing becomes a big factor. This will be more apparent after you play a few rounds.*

## Regent for 3-6

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The basic options in the 3-6 player game are the same as two-player Regent. However, the turn does not always pass to the left.

If you draw or fold, the turn passes to the left. If you attack, gift, or see someone, the turn passes *to that player*. If that player is knocked out, the turn moves to the left from there.

Losers are out of the game, and their cards are discarded. The round continues until only one player remains.

If you *attack* someone and they catch a pair, the paired card is discarded, *and you are out*. Pay that player the value of the pair.

If you *see* a player and catch him with a pair, he pays you, and he drops out. If he does not have a pair, his cards remain faceup. You pay him, and you drop out.

If you fold, put your penalty into the center. This will go to the last surviving player.





# Rocket

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**Players:** 1 to 6 (and a dealer)

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**The Basics:** Rocket is a casino-style table game, similar to blackjack. All players are playing against the dealer (not against each other), and the dealer plays by fixed rules.

In a home game, players should take turns being the dealer. There is a slight advantage for the dealer, so the game is only fair when the deal passes around the table.

**The Deck:** You can play with a single Pairs deck, or with up to 8 decks shuffled together.

To guard against the advantages of card counting, the cards should be reshuffled when approximately 20% remain.

*Rocket is a casino-style Pairs variant. Since the dealer's choices are automatic, this game can be played solo! Rocket is named after the Las Vegas Johnny Rockets where it was invented.*

**The Bet:** To begin, each player must place a bet. Different players can bet different amounts. A bet *must be divisible by 10 units*, because all payouts will be based on 1/10 of the bet.

The dealer agrees to cover bets of any size, up to a maximum bet agreed upon by all players.

**The Starting Deal:** Deal one card faceup to each player, and then to the dealer. The action begins on the dealer's left.

**Player's Turn:** Each player is playing against the dealer. In turn, players may either *fold* or *hit*. All players act before the dealer.

**Folding:** When you fold (similar to *surrender* in blackjack), you are paying to get out of the game. Pay the dealer a fraction of your bet, which is 1/10 of the total bet multiplied by the lowest card in either *your stack* or *the dealer's*.

For example, if your bet is 20 chips, and the lowest card between you and the dealer is a 4, you can fold by paying  $2 \times 4 = 8$  chips.

You retrieve the remainder of your bet.

**Hitting:** When you hit, you are hoping not to get a pair. Take one card faceup. If you don't pair up, you are safe. If you get a pair, you

lose, and must pay that card's value, multiplied by 1/10 of your bet. For example, if you have bet 20 chips and get a pair of 8's, you pay  $2 \times 8 = 16$  chips. (You keep the rest of your bet.)

**Dealer's Turn:** The dealer always acts last, and plays by a different set of rules:

**Dealer Must Hit:** The dealer *always hits* (she cannot fold).

**Dealer Pair:** When the dealer catches a pair, she pays all surviving players that amount, multiplied by 1/10 of *their bet*.

*For example, if the dealer catches 7-7, and your bet was 50, the dealer pays you  $5 \times 7 = 35$  chips. (You also keep your bet.)*

**Death Card:** A 3 is *sudden death* for the dealer. The dealer loses immediately if she gets a 3, even as her first card. This pays all bets at 3/10 (as if the dealer caught a pair of 3's). *Note: A 3 is not deadly to players, only the dealer.*

**Continuing:** If the dealer doesn't pair up or catch a 3, play resumes with the first player. The game continues until all players either catch a pair or fold, or until the dealer pairs up or catches a 3.

**Using a Button:** For fairness, casinos may wish to start the action with the lowest card, rather than on the dealer's left.

*In this case, mark the starting position with a button, and break ties by choosing the player closest to the left of the previous button (rather than by dealing an extra card).*

*Under these rules, the dealer still acts last.*

*In a home game, it's best if the role of "dealer" passes to the left after each round, so that each player shares the house's advantage.*



# Starboard

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**Players:** 2 to 7

**You Need:** A “first player” button and chips for keeping score.

**To Begin:** Each player antes 1 chip into the pot. The player with the button will act first. If this is the first round, assign the button to a random player. It will move one seat to the left after each round.

Shuffle and deal two cards faceup into the middle. This is the beginning of a single hand that everyone will play. If the first two cards are a pair, discard one of them and replace it.

**Each Turn:** Starting with the button, each player in turn may either *hit* or *lock*.

**Starboard** is a sister game to Port. They both involve guessing whether a hand can survive taking another card. But in Starboard, players are all playing the same hand!



**Hit:** To hit, pay 1 chip into the pot. Deal a card to the center, faceup. Your goal is to draw a card without pairing. (A “clean draw.”)

If your card makes a pair, you *bust* (lose), and the game continues. *Discard the paired card*, and you drop out.

If you make a clean draw, *all locked players are knocked out*.

**Lock:** Declare that you are locked. You are claiming that the hand can’t take another card without pairing. To win the pot, you must lock and not be eliminated by a clean draw.

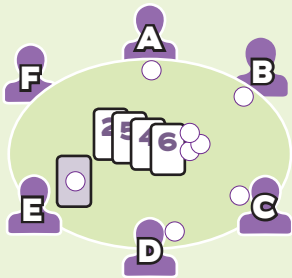
**Ending the Game:** The game ends when every player busts or locks. If you are the only player left, you automatically lock.

The pot is split among all surviving players. If the pot does not divide evenly, leave any odd chips for the next pot.

**Starboard Dealing Tips:** To remember which players are in and out, keep each player's ante in front of him until he is out.

When a player busts, move his ante into the pot. When a player locks, deal her a "lock card" facedown, under her ante.

When a locked player is knocked out, you discard the lock card, and move her ante into the pot.



In this example, players A through D are still in. Player E has locked, so a "lock card" is under her ante chip. Player F is out.



Art from the "Pirate" deck by Brett Bean

# Sweep

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**Players:** 3 to 6

**You Need:** A way to keep score.

**Setup:** Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of five cards to each player.

**Each Round:** Deal five cards into the center of the table, faceup. These cards are called “targets.” Each round proceeds in two steps, called *Play* and *Capture*.

**Play:** Start with the player who took the last target on the previous round. On the first round of the game, start with a random player.

In turn, each player plays one card faceup. This card is a “shooter.”

All players play one shooter before moving to the next step.

**Capture:** In ascending order, each shooter will *capture* target cards, and then fall into the middle. Cards you capture go *into your hand*.

First, the *lowest shooter* captures all targets of the *highest rank*. For example, if the lowest shooter is a 4, and the targets are 3-5-7-9-9, then the 4 captures both 9’s.

After each shooter captures its targets, it falls into the center, where it becomes a target.

All shooters, except for the lowest, capture all targets with values *lower than themselves*.

**Ties:** If two or more shooters are the same rank, those players *take turns* capturing targets, starting with the player who played first.

These players usually divide the targets roughly evenly, but sometimes those who played last might get fewer cards, or nothing at all!

If several shooters are tied for *lowest*, they must all shoot at the highest ranked target cards *in the original set*.

After the last capture is resolved, discard any remaining targets. Deal five new targets and play another round. Repeat this until the deck is exhausted, and then take score.

**Sweep** is a bidding game similar to **Kitty**. In *Sweep*, players play cards from their hands in order to pick up targets from the table. The goal is to collect the most cards of each rank.

**Scoring:** For each rank of cards, the player who has collected the most cards of that rank scores that many points.

For example, if you have collected the most 5's, you score 5 points. If players are tied for most cards, they each score the full value for that rank. *Hint: Set aside one card of each rank as you score it, to help track your total.*

You can play for just one round, or keep a running score. We suggest a winning total of 150 points.

**An Example Round:** The starting targets are 3, 4, 4, 6, and 10. There are four players, who play the 5, 6, 7, and 7.

The 5 will shoot first. It will capture the highest card(s), which in this case is the single 10. That player picks up the 10, and his 5 joins the targets in the middle.

The 6 shoots next. There are several targets lower than 6. That player sweeps up the 3, 4, 4, and 5. Then the 6 joins the middle.

Last come the 7's. They must take turns, starting with whoever played first. Each of them picks up one 6, and then 7's are discarded.



Art from the "Tak" deck by Nate Taylor

# Troll Guts

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**Players:** 3 to 6

**You Need:** Chips for keeping score.

**Setup:** Each player antes 1 chip. Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of 5 cards to each player. Deal one more card faceup in front of each player. The low card will go first, and play proceeds to the left. Break ties as you would in Pairs, keeping the extra cards.

Players must now *stack their down cards* in the order they want them to be revealed. Once you arrange your cards, you can't rearrange them (though you can still look).

**Each Turn:** Players must either *draw*, *steal*, or *buy* a card. Each of these actions will get you a single faceup card.

*Troll Guts is a fitting way to end an evening as well as a booklet. It's an even more chaotic version of **Goblin Poker**, because you're not even allowed to fold!*



**Draw:** Take a card from the deck, faceup.

**Steal:** Take the top card of anyone's face-down stack, faceup.

**Buy:** Pay a chip into the pot, and take the top card of your own facedown stack, faceup.

In all these cases, if your new card gives you a pair, you lose. Pay the value of the pair into the pot. For example, if you catch a pair of 4's, you pay 4 chips. When you are knocked out, turn all your cards facedown.

**Winning:** The pot goes to the survivor. There is no folding, so you're always going to win the pot or die with a pair!

# Credits

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**Pairs** was designed by James Ernest and Paul Peterson. This booklet and the Deluxe Edition of Pairs were created by James Ernest, with cover and card art by Andrew Kolb. “Monster” art by John Kovalic. Other art credits as noted. Additional art from [clipart.com](http://clipart.com)

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For more information about the game, including new variants, more history, and links to different versions of the deck, please visit Hip Pocket Games, at [hippocketgames.com](http://hippocketgames.com).