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Card Games

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Card Games

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dummies[®]
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Card Games All-in-One For Dummies®

Published by:
John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
111 River Street
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2016951043

ISBN 978-1-119- 27571-8 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119- 27572-5 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-119- 27574-9 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

Card games offer the most fascinating challenges that you may ever encounter. In most games, you can manipulate the 52 pieces of pasteboard into infinite permutations and combinations. Working out those combinations is the fun part of cards — in almost every game, you don't know what the other players have in their hands. During the course of play, you use strategy, memory, cunning, and a whole host of other qualities to put together the best hand possible (or to bluff with the worst hand out there).

All in all, figuring out the fundamentals of a new card game can bring untold satisfaction. At the same time, you don't have to play cards all that well to enjoy yourself. Card games allow you to make friends with the people you play with and against.

If you've never played a card game before, you may wonder why you need to buy a book about the subject. All your friends say the games are easy to pick up, so can't you just sit down and start playing, picking up a few rules here and there? Well, no.

Many card games have been in circulation for hundreds of years, generating scores of variations. A reference book not only explains the core rules of a game but also lists the main variations to let you choose the rules you and your friends want to play by.

Regardless of how much experience you've had with card games, you'll find something here for you. Absolute beginners will appreciate that we discuss each game in this book starting at the very beginning, before a card hits the table. If you've played a few card games before, you can try out a new game or pick up a variation on one of your favorites.

Throughout this book, we talk about specific cards. Instead of constantly saying "the king of hearts" or "the 7 of spades" every time we refer to those cards, we abbreviate the cards and suits by using the following symbols:

- » **The suits:** We represent each of the four suits in a standard deck of cards with spade ♠, heart ♥, diamond ♦, and club ♣ symbols. (However, these symbols are also used when bidding for tricks in Bridge. More on that in Book 5.)
- » **The card values:** We use the following abbreviations to refer to specific card values: ace (A), king (K), queen (Q), jack (J), 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, and 2.

Foolish Assumptions

We haven't assumed that you have all that much technical knowledge. The book is aimed at serving as an introduction to many card games (and a few popular non-card casino games like Roulette and Craps). If you get hooked on a game after reading about it, you can access many other Dummies titles (all published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) that can provide more knowledge of the games. For example, if you want to focus on Bridge, check out *Bridge For Dummies* by Eddie Kantar. You Poker fiends can find more information in *Poker For Dummies* by Richard D. Harroch and Lou Krieger, and *Texas Hold'em For Dummies* by Mark "The Red" Harlan. If playing card games (as well as a few other bonus chapters on games, such as roulette, craps, and slots) in a casino is your thing, get a copy of *Casino Gambling For Dummies* by Kevin Blackwood.

Icons Used in This Book

In each chapter, we place icons in the margin to emphasize certain types of information.



WARNING

This icon points out the wrong way to play a game. Pay special attention to these icons so you avoid finding things out the hard way.



REMEMBER

This reinforces a point that may be less obvious (or intuitively right) than meets the eye. You should keep these points in mind as you play the game.



TIP

These icons emphasize some insights born of our experience that will help make you a sharper player.

Where to Go from Here

Clear your calendar for the next few days because you're going to be busy playing new card games and trying out smart strategies. If you want to play a variety of (mostly) quick and easy card games, head to Book 1. If you're curious about Poker, check out Book 2; Texas Hold'em gets its own coverage in Book 3. Perhaps you've heard an older relative talk about her Bridge club; Book 5 introduces you to this fun but tricky game. Finally, if you're enamored with casinos and want to try your hand at the table games, flip to Book 6. You can also go to www.dummies.com and search for "Card Games All-in-One For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the Search box."

1

Taking a Stab at Card Games

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Chapter 1

Getting Familiar with Card Game Basics

If you've ever played cards, you don't need us to explain what fun 52 pieces of pasteboard can be. But just in case, here goes . . .

Because you don't know what the other players have in their hands in almost every card game, playing cards combines the opportunity for strategy, bluffing, memory, and cunning. At the same time, you don't have to play cards all that well to enjoy yourself. Cards allow you to make friends with the people you play with and against. A deck of cards opens up a pastime where the ability to communicate is often of paramount importance, and you get to meet new faces and talk to them without having to make the effort to do so.

If you want to take the plunge and start playing cards, you encounter a bewildering range of options to choose from. Cards have been played in Europe for the last 800 years, and as a result, you have plenty of new games to test out and new rules to add to existing games.

We can't hope to list *all* the rules of every card game in this book, so this chapter discusses the general rules that apply to *most* card games. Get these basics under your belt so you can jump in to any of the games we describe in detail later in the book.

Talking the Talk

Card gamers have a language all their own. This section covers the most common and useful lingo you encounter as you get to know various card games.



REMEMBER

When card games come together, the players arrange themselves in a circle around the card-playing surface, which is normally a table. We describe it as such for the rest of this section.

Getting all decked out

You play card games with a *deck* of cards intended for that game, also referred to as a *pack* in the United Kingdom. The cards should all be exactly the same size and shape and should have identical backs. The front of the cards should be immediately identifiable and distinguishable.

A deck of cards has subdivisions of four separate subgroups. Each one of these subgroups has 13 cards, although the standard deck in France and Germany may have only eight cards in each subgroup. The four subgroups each have a separate identifiable marking, and in American and English decks, you see two sets of black markings (spades and clubs) and two sets of red markings (hearts and diamonds). Each of these sets is referred to as a *suit*.

Ranking card order

Each suit in the United States and UK decks has 13 cards, and the rankings of the 13 vary from game to game. The most traditional order in card games today is ace, king, queen, jack, and then 10 down to 2.

As you find throughout this book, the ranking order changes for different games. You see numerous games where 10s or perhaps jacks get promoted in the ranking order (such as in Pinochle and Euchre respectively), and many games have jacks gambol joyfully from one suit to another, becoming extra trumps (as in Euchre).

Also, Gin Rummy and several other games such as Cribbage treat the ace exclusively as the low card, below the two.