Card games

ABSTRAC (2) Remove 2s through 8s. Shuffle and deal the 24 cards as a face-up line, overlapping so that values are visible. Dealer chooses whether to play or pass. Players then take turns to claim one, two or three consecutive cards from the "top" end of the line, placing claimed cards in front of them. When the line's gone, total your score for claimed sets (3-of-a-kind = 3, 4-of-a-kind = 8) and sequences within a suit (3 scores 3, 4+ scores 6, 5+ scores 12), then multiply it by the number of cards your opponent drew. If a single player scores nothing, swap scores.

ACES AND FACES (2) Lay all ace and face cards face-up on the table. Each has four relevant characteristics: red or black; rounded (club/heart) or pointed suit top; male or female (aces are female); ruler (king/queen) or follower. Take turns to select a face-up card and hand it to your opponent, who places it into an imaginary shared grid (which may never exceed a 4x4 square). If a player completes a line of four cards which share a characteristic, and notice this, they win. A player also wins if they spot an unnoticed completion before playing the next card.

BARTOK (2+) Deal five cards each, and one face-up to a discard pile. Take turns to either play an eligible card to the discards (one that shares a suit or value with the top card), or draw a card. Jokers can be played as any card. If a player breaks a rule, they take back their card and draw a penalty card. If a player breaks a rule, they take back their card and draw a penalty card. If a player breaks a rule, they take back their card and draw a penalty card.

GIN RUMMY (2) Deal ten cards each and flip the top card of the deck face up to determine trumps. Dealer plays a card, opponent plays a following suit if possible. Highest trump wins. If no trump is played, the highest card of the starting suit wins. Winner draws the face-up deck card into their hand and leads the next trick, loser draws the next deck card into their hand, and the top card of the deck is turned face-up (this does not change the trump suit). When the deck runs out, continue but scoring won tricks instead of drawing cards. Most scored tricks wins.

GINSU (3-7) Deal the deck out equally, set any leftovrs aside face-down. On count of three players call out a chosen "bug" suit, or "misère": note these down somehow. Dealer starts; everyone plays a card, following suit if possible. Highest card of the starting suit wins the trick; winner takes the cards and leads the next trick. (Winner of the final trick also takes the leftovers.) Winning every trick scores 100; losing every trick scores 30, or 100 if misère; otherwise score 10 per won trick. Divided by the number of bug cards you took, or doubled if you took none.

CHINESE TEN (2-4) Deal 24 cards between players, and four cards face-up to the table. On your turn, play one card to the table. If it captures a face-up card (if its values suit of your opponent's cards, minus face value of cards in hand; Ohios score -10 wherever they are). DRACULA (2) Include jokers. Deal four cards each, and one face-up as the centre of a 3x3 grid. Take turns to add one card, orthogonally adjacent to an existing card. After eight plays, Player 1 scores the highest-scoring column; Player 2 scores the highest-scoring column: a line scores its total face value (Queens 10 horizontal but 0 vertical, Kings vice versa. Jacks always 0), x2 if it has two cards of one suit, x3 for three in one colour, x5 for three of one suit. A line with a Joker ("vampire") scores zero. Play six rounds.

GERMAN WHIST (2) Deal 13 cards each and flip the top card of the deck face up to determine trumps. Dealer plays a card, opponent plays a following suit if possible. Highest trump wins. If no trump is played, the highest card of the starting suit wins. Winner draws the face-up deck card into their hand and leads the next trick, loser draws the next deck card into their hand, and the top card of the deck is turned face-up (this does not change the trump suit). When the deck runs out, continue but scoring won tricks instead of drawing cards. Most scored tricks wins.

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**SIX CARD GOLF (2-4)** Deal each player a 3x2 grid of face-down cards, one face-up as the discards. Players flip two of their cards face up and cannot examine these two cards. Take turns to: discard a card from deck or discard, then either place it face-up replacing one of your cards (discarding the replaced card), or discard it. Round ends when a player has six cards face-up. Score: king = 0, jack/queen = 10, 2 = -2, all others at face value. A pair of equal cards in a column are discarded without scoring. Lowest score after nine rounds wins. **SO LONG SUCKER** (4) Players have open hands of seven cards of their own suit. On your turn: play one card as a new face-up stack, or onto an existing stack. If a stack has two consecutive same-suit cards, that suit's player discards any card from that stack, takes the rest, and takes the next turn; otherwise you choose someone with no cards in that stack (it had all four, pick the lowest down) to play next. Players may discard or gift opponent-suit cards from their hand at any time. If you can't play you're eliminated, play returning to the previous player. **SPEED** (2-4) Deal five cards and a 10-card face-down deck to each player. Make two 13-card face-down stacks. Flip the card of each face-up next to it. Playing simultaneously, players add hand cards to either face-up pile, where the played card's rank must be one higher or lower. If stack, replenish your hand from your deck. If nobody can play, flip two cards from the spit stacks. (If a stack runs out, shuffle all but the top card of its pile to replace it.) First to play all their cards scores 1 for each card their opponent still has. **THIRTY ONE** (3-8) Each round, deal three cards to each player, and three face-up onto the table. Taking turns, each player may either pass, knock or draw a card from the table and replace it with one from their hand. If all players pass, the table cards are discarded and three replacements laid out. If a player knocks, all other players get one more turn and the round ends: each player picks a suit and totals the value of their cards in that hand with that suit (three of a kind are instead worth 20%). Lowest scorer loses one of four lives. **UPTAKE** (2) One player is the donor; others are clubs. Shuffling the donor's face-up cards together (minus the aces) and deal out into a 5x5 grid with a hole in the middle. Each turn, use one of your cards to remove an opponent's card with a higher value in the same row or column, your card replacing the removed one. When no further moves are possible, the highest card wins, scoring as many points as its face value. (If tied, player who made the last move wins.) Play to 30 points. **VERISH’N VERISH’** (2-6) For a 2/3 player game, remove 2s through 5s. Remove one random card from the deck. Deal the remainder out. Each turn, play one to three cards face-down and announce them (eg. “two sevens”). You may lie. The next player either accepts or challenges; if they accept, they take their turn, naming the same card rank; if they challenge, played cards are revealed, the loser draws the discard pile, may optionally discard a single four-of-a-kind, and play continues to the loser's left, naming any retire. Retire when your hand's empty; last player remaining loses.

**Dice games**

**CATEGO** (2-4) Draw a grid of eleven columns numbered 2-12, with a row for each player. Take turns to roll two dice and enter the total into any column of your choosing. If the column is full, the player with the highest score in that column (if any) scores the number of the column. Tally the scores as you go. The game ends when the grid is full. **CINQ-O** (1-6) Take six dice, one of them a different colour as the “hi/lo” dice (1-3 = low, 4-6 = high). Roll any number of unbanked dice, then “bank” one or more. Repeat up to five times. If your hi/lo dice was low, score 14 minus the total of the other dice (minimum 1), multiplied by the hi/lo die. If it was high, score the total of the other dice minus 21 (minimum 1), multiplied by three less than the hi/lo die. A straight and five-of-a-kind always score 10 before being multiplied. First to 100 wins. **FARLIE** (2) Take turns to roll six dice. Whenever you roll, if you roll any scoring combinations (100 times the face value for a triple, 1000 for a triple 1. 100 for a 1 outside of a triple, 50 for a 5 outside a triple) set at least one combination aside and either reroll what's left, or end your turn, scoring the combinations you set aside. If you ever make a roll that scores zero, your turn ends immediately, scoring zero. If you set aside all six dice, remember those combinations total and continue with six fresh dice. First to 10,000 wins. **GOLDEN SIXTEEN** (2+) Put two chips per player in the middle. Take turns to: roll three dice, then (optionally) reroll some of them, no more than twice, then score the total. If your dice total ever exceeds 20, you lose a life and take a chip. After each round, the player(s) with the lowest score that round takes a chip, unless they are the only uneliminated player. When all chips are taken, phase two begins: continue without taking chips; instead, discard a chip if you alone have the highest score below 16 in a round. A player with no chips during phase two wins. **Liar’s Dice** (2+) Each player rolls five dice in secret. The starting player predicts the minimum number of times a particular digit appears across all dice (eg. “eight 5s”). If three are wild, always counting as the predicted digit. Going clockwise, a player may either raise the previous player's bid (either a higher quantity of the same digit, or any quantity of a higher digit) or challenge it. When challenged, all dice are revealed - the loser of the challenge discards one die and leads the next round. If you lose all your dice, you're eliminated. (Also playable with banknote serial numbers, barcodes, etc.) **SHUT THE BOX** (1+) Lay out nine face-up playing cards numbered 1 through 9 (or any quantity of a higher digit) or discard it. Round ends when a player scores the number of the column. Tally the totals across all cards or columns, and subtract the score from the number of the column. Each turn, play one to three cards to any column, or to any row. Taking turns, each player takes five cards and then “shut” (turn face-down) any group of un-shut numbers whose totals add up to the die total. (So a 5 of 6 may shut 1, 2, 3, or 4 for 10.) If 7-9 are shut, you may choose to roll just one die. Repeat until you produce a roll which can shut no numbers, then score the total of un-shut numbers. Each player takes five turns, lowest overall total wins. **SIX SIX SIX** (2+) Players take turns to roll three dice, concealing the roll beneath a cup or cover. They peek and call out the result in descending order (“5-3-1”), which must be higher than the previous player’s call, and may be a lie. They then pass the dice, covered, to the next player, who either challenges the call as a lie (the loser of a challenge loses one of their three lives) or accepts it. After the first turn, a player can choose not to reroll some of the passed dice before calling. **TAKE-BACK-TOE** (2) Draw or imagine a 3x2 grid. Place 10 tokens in each of the four squares on the middle row; the other two rows are players’ “home rows”. On your turn, roll a six-sided die and move any chips from one space to an orthogonally adjacent space, or pass. (You can undo your opponent’s previous move.) If three spaces in your home row contain the same (non-zero) number of tokens, you win. **YAHZZEE** (2+) Categories are named: “1” through “6” (score = total of that number rolled), “3-of-a-kind” (score total on dice), “4-of-a-kind” (score total on dice), “Full House” (triple+pair) (score 25), “Small Straight (sequence of four)” (30), “Large Straight (five)” (40), “Yahzzee (5-of-a-kind)” (50) and “Chance (any dice)” (score total on dice). Take turns to: roll five dice, then reroll any number of them, twice. Pick a category and score it for your final roll; each player can only score each category once. If you score a Yahzzee, further Yahzzees score 100. Scoring at least 63 in first six categories gives 35 bonus points.

**Miscellaneous games**

**THE DICTIONARY GAME** (4-6) The Reader selects an obscure word from the dictionary, reads the word aloud (checking that no player knows its meaning) and copies the definition onto a piece of paper. The other players write their own definitions on identical papers. The Reader collects the papers to read aloud in a random order. Going clockwise, other players vote aloud on which definition they believe to be correct. Then: score 1 for selecting the true definition and 1 for each player who selected your false definition. If nobody guessed correctly, the Reader scores as many points as players. Take turns to be Reader. **LYNX** (2) Take an empty crossword grid. Players take turns to write a word or crossword-suitable phrase into an empty clue space. First move must be into one of the shortest spaces, subsequent moves must cross at least one existing word. The first move scores 2 points per letter in the word or phrase; subsequent moves score 1 point per letter, multiplied by the number of words the move crosses. Continue until both players resign; the first to resign gets a 10 point bonus.
Mafia (7+) Prepare as many cards as players: two "Mafia", one "Detective" and the rest "Citizens". A Moderator deals these out secretly then moderates repeating Night and Day phases. Night: Players close their eyes, the Moderator asks the Mafia to open theirs, silently nominate a player, and then close their eyes. Moderator asks Detective to open their eyes and indicate a player, and gives a thumbs-up if they are Mafia. Day: Everyone opens their eyes, the Mafia-targeted player is eliminated and players vote on one player to eliminate. Mafia lose if eliminated, and win if only two non-Mafia remain. Nonic (4+) Rule 1: Going clockwise, players take turns to roll a die and add the result to their score, then propose the enactment, repeal or amendment of any rule. Rule 2: When a proposal is made, every player must vote for or against it; if the vote is unanimously in favour, the proposed change takes immediate effect, otherwise the proposer loses 10 points. Rule 3: If players disagree about rule interpretation, the player to the left of the current player resolves the dispute. Their decision is binding. Rule 4: The first player to reach 100 points wins.

Pennywise (2) Players start with identical pools of coins (standard is 4 pennies, 3 nickels, 2 dimes and 1 quarter). On your turn, play one coin from your pool to the middle and (if you can) take back change up to one penny less than the value of the coin you played. If your pool is empty at the end of your turn, you are eliminated. Zendo (3-6) Pick any medium (coins, words, drawn shapes, etc) for constructing small, unambiguous "koans". The Master picks a secret rule (eg. "a circle surrounds a square"), and builds one koan that fits the rule and one that doesn't, marking which is which. Students take turns to: build a koan, and optionally call for all Students to privately nominate a player. If one student is chosen, they have 10 seconds to construct a "koan" that fits the rule, and one that doesn't, marking which is which. Students take turns to: build a koan,
and must claim at least two words. Multiply the line of adjacent letters (including the new letter), may claim one word you can anagram from a column and diagonal containing that letter, you two or more existing letters; for each row, letters. Take turns to: add any letter adjacent to an answer, 1 point for each shared answer, 0 for an answer voted to be incorrect. HACKENBUSH (2) Draw a horizontal “ground” line, with any number of dots above it. Draw lines from one or more dots to the ground, and draw any pattern of lines between dots such that each dot has at least one route to the ground. Players take turns to “cut” a line by erasing or crossing it through; any line that now has no connecting route to the ground is also erased. If a player has no line to cut, they lose. Variant: draw lines in two or three colours, each player picks one colour and cannot cut lines of their opponent’s colour. HIPBONE GAMES (2) Draw ten large circles, and join them with lines to make a symmetrical pattern, such that each circle has between two and four connecting lines. Players take turns to write a word or phrase into an empty circle: upon doing so, they score a point for each filled circle which is both connectedly adjacent to their move, and for which they can argue some logical connection between the circles’ contents. The second turn of the game must be unadjacent to the first. KROPKI (2+) On a square grid of any size, players take turns to add a dot of their colour (or an identifying symbol) to an intersection. After placing a dot, you may connect a loop of your own adjacent dots (including diagonals) by drawing a line through them. This forms a “territory.” If one territory encloses another, the enclosed one is no longer counted as a territory. At the end of the game, score one point for each dot of an opponent inside your territories. Alternate scoring: score the total size of your territories. LAST WORD (2-4) On a 9x9 grid, fill the middle 3x3 with random letters. Take turns to: add any letter adjacent to two existing letters, unless an orthogonally adjacent cell also contains an opponent’s stone - in which case, you get another turn. Play until the board is full, and the player with most stones on the board wins. SAINT MARK’S (2+) Draw a 12x12 grid. One player writes a letter in any square. Players then take turns to add a letter adjacent to an existing one, crossword-grid-style. If a player completes a word of three or more letters, they lose. Instead of their turn, a player may challenge the last move: if their opponent can show that every horizontal and vertical sequence of two or more letters can be extended to form a word, forming no illegal words in the process, the opponent wins. Otherwise the challenger wins. SCOREWORDS (2-6) Each player draws their own 5x5 grid (6x6 for a game with five players, 7x7 for six). Players take turns to call out a letter; for each letter, every player must privately add it to a single square in their own grid. When only one square remains, each player fills it in with a letter of their choice, and the game ends. Score points equal to the length of each word in your grid which is not wholly inside another word; 3 for 3 letters, 4 for 4, 10 for 5 (12 for 6, 15 for 7). SHANNON SWITCHING GAME (2) Draw an arbitrary network of small circles connected by lines. Emphasise any two circles as targets. Players are known as “Short” and “Cut”, and take turns, starting with Cut. On Short’s turn, he or she colours (or otherwise emphasises) a line. On Cut’s turn, he or she erases (or crosses out) a non-coloured line. If a coloured path exists between the two target circles, Short wins; if no path exists between them, Cut wins. SLIMETRAIL (2) Draw any rectangular grid of squares, and mark two “goal” squares in opposite corners, each owned by one player. A player marks a Slime in any square, and the other player chooses who will play first. Players take turns to add a Slime to an empty square adjacent (orthogonally or diagonally) to the most recently added Slime. If a player’s goal square contains a Slime (irrespective of who marked it), that player wins.
SOS (2+) Draw any grid, at least 3x3 in size. Players take turns to add a letter to a square: either “S” or “O”, as they choose. If doing so completes an “SOS” in any direction, draw a line through it and take another turn. When the grid is full, the player who completed the most SOSes wins. (Optionally have players mark completed SOSes in different ways, for ease of counting.)

SPROUTS (2) Draw a few thick dots on paper. Take turns to: draw a curved line between two dots (or from one dot back to itself) which crosses no other line, and add a new dot somewhere along that line. No dot may have more than three lines attached to it. Last person to draw a line wins.

TWIXT (2) Draw a grid of 6x6 dots. Take turns to connect two adjacent dots (including diagonals), or a line of three adjacent dots (again, including diagonals). You can draw the final line that encloses an area, claim it by marking it with a symbol. Play until the grid is full; the player whose claimed areas have the largest total area is the winner.

URBANIZATION (2) Draw a grid of 6x6 dots. Take turns to connect two adjacent dots (including diagonals), or a line of three adjacent dots (again, including diagonals). If you draw the final line that encloses an area, claim it by marking it with a symbol. Play until the grid is full; the player whose claimed areas have the largest total area is the winner.

VERBAL SPROUTS (2) Write a four-letter word across four circles connected by left-to-right arrows. Players take turns to: add a new circle anywhere on the paper containing a previously unused letter, draw any number of connecting arrows, then spell out any number of words from connecting paths of letters. Each word must use the new letter, and all added arrows must be used that turn. Score 1 point per letter for each word; if one is a substring of another, score only the longest.

Maximum 4 arrows per circle, arrows may not overlap, and no double-arrows between a pair.

Spoken word games

BOTTICELLI (2+) The Thinker thinks of a person and says the first letter of their surname. Others take turns to ask a yes/no question where the asker has a person in mind for “yes” (who fits all confirmed information about the mystery person); the Thinker either says “No, I am not [name]”, naming someone who fits but is not the mystery person, or conceives. If conceeding, the asker reveals who they had in mind and may ask direct yes/no questions to the Thinker until they answer “no” to one. A guesser wins if they mention the Thinker’s chosen person on their turn.

BREAKEFAST COMBO (2+) The Server thinks of an object. Another player makes a guess as to what this object might be, and this automatically becomes the best guess so far. Other players then make guesses. For each guess: if it is closer than the current best guess, the Server announces that this is the new best guess; otherwise, the Server declines it but names something that the guess has in common with the object. (eg. “A wasp?” “No, a calculator is still the best guess, but like a wasp, my object has a sharp point.”) A correct guess wins.

CONVERGENCE (2) Both players think of their own four word key sentence. Each turn, a player announces a “test sentence”, and their opponent indicates whether each word in their own key sentence is alphabetically before (“up”) or after (“down”) the corresponding word in the test. (For example, if a player’s key sentence was “HAVE A NICE DAY” and the other tested with “LET THERE BE LIGHT”, the player would answer “up, up, down, up.”) Repeat until a sentence is guessed.

The Freeze-Dried Games Pack Crystal Edition

86 games described in no more than 100 words.

Compiled by Kevan Davis. Last updated September 2022. Latest at kevan.org/fgdp.