

Card Games for Playing at Home



H O R T O N

Counting On

Number of players: 2

Materials: You will need a deck of cards with the picture cards removed (Jack, Queen, King, Joker). You may also use 1 or 2 dice for the second pile, if you desire.

The ace = 1 in this game.

Instructions

1. Separate the cards into two piles, one with the cards: ace, 2, 3 and 4 and the other pile with the cards 5 – 10.
2. Shuffle each pile so they're in a random order and place face down on the playing surface.
3. Players take turns turning over the top two cards. They add the two numbers using the counting on strategy: count on from the larger number, and count on the smaller number. For example, if the two cards turned over were 8 and 4. They would start with 8, count on 4: 9, 10, 11, 12. More advance players may choose to say the sum instead of counting on.
4. If players have the correct answer, they get to keep both cards.
5. If the answer is incorrect the other player can have a go at answering the question to keep both the cards.
6. Continue play until one of the piles run out of cards.
7. The winner is the player with the most cards at the end of the game.



Builder's Paradise (Introduction to Fan Tan)

Number of Players: 2 or more

Materials: single deck of cards with face cards (Kings, Queens, Jacks) removed

Object of the game: To be the first player to get rid of all of their cards.

Instructions

1. Start with the sevens placed in a row.



2. Shuffle and deal the remaining cards equally to each player.
3. To begin, players take turns putting down one or more cards above or below a seven, in sequence, according to their suit.

For instance, in the first round, **players will play sixes and eights.**



If a player cannot play anything, they pass that turn. If no one that round can play a card, the game is over and the player with the fewest cards in his/her hand wins.

Fan Tan (Sevens)

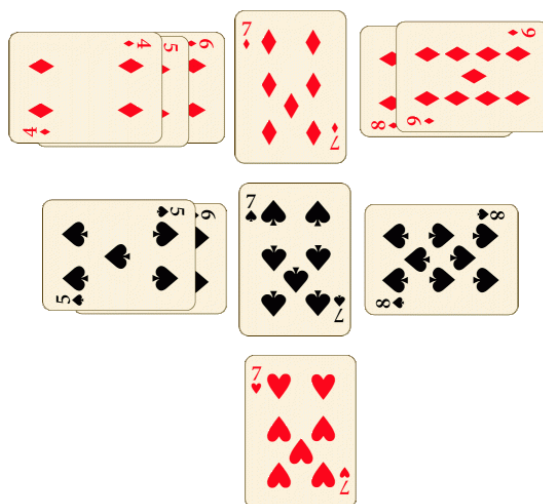
Number of players: two or more, best with four to six.

Materials: one complete deck of cards (including face cards, no Jokers), or a double deck for more than six players.

Aces = 1

Instructions

1. Deal out all the cards, even if some players get more than others.
2. The player to the dealer's left begins by playing a seven of any suit. If that player does not have a seven, then the play passes left to the first player who does.
3. After that, on your turn you may lay down another seven or play on the cards that are already down. If you cannot play, say, "Pass."
4. Once a seven is played in any suit, the six and the eight of that suit may be played on either side of it, forming the fan.
5. Then the five through ace can go on the six in counting-down order, and the nine through king can go on the eight, counting up.
6. You can arrange these cards to overlap each other so the cards below are visible, or you can square up the stacks so only the top card is seen.



A Fan Tan game in progress.

7. Players do not need to wait for both the six and eight of a suit to be played before they begin building the fan up or down.
8. first player to run out of cards wins the game.

If you want to keep score, count the cards remaining in your hand after one player goes out. After everyone has had a turn as dealer, whoever has the lowest total score is the champion.

Variations

In some traditions, play always begins with the seven of diamonds, so whoever has that card goes first.

Domino Tan

The player to the dealer's left may lead any card, and then all the suits must start with that number (instead of with seven) and build up and down from there.

Fan Tan Trumps

When the dealer gets to the end of the deck and there aren't enough cards to give every player one more, the last few cards are turned face up and may be played by anyone as needed. The suit of the last card becomes the trump suit, and cards of that suit may be played on any of the fans, with the card they replace going on the trumps fan. In this case, the cards must be laid out in overlapping rows, not stacked up, so everyone can see where the trumps have gone.

For instance, if spades are trump, then a nine of spades could be played on the eight of hearts, which would leave the nine of hearts without a home—so it has to go on the spades fan.

Exceptions: The seven of the trump suit starts its own fan, like any other seven, and the last card dealt (the one that named the trump suit) must also be played to the trumps fan when its turn comes.

Crazy Tan

Deal only seven cards to each player, and set the rest of the deck out as a draw pile. The first player who cannot play must draw one, which he may play if possible. If not, and the next player also cannot play, she must draw two. If neither of those cards will play, and the next player has nothing to play, he must draw three, and so on, each player drawing one more card than the last person. When one of the players is finally able to lay down a card, this resets the draw count back to zero.

In Crazy Tan, players are allowed to lay down a *run* (playing several cards in a row of the same suit on a single turn). Or they may play *parallel cards* (cards of the same rank in different suits, all played in the same turn). Or a player may even lay down parallel runs, if the cards happen to work out that way.

Fast Facts

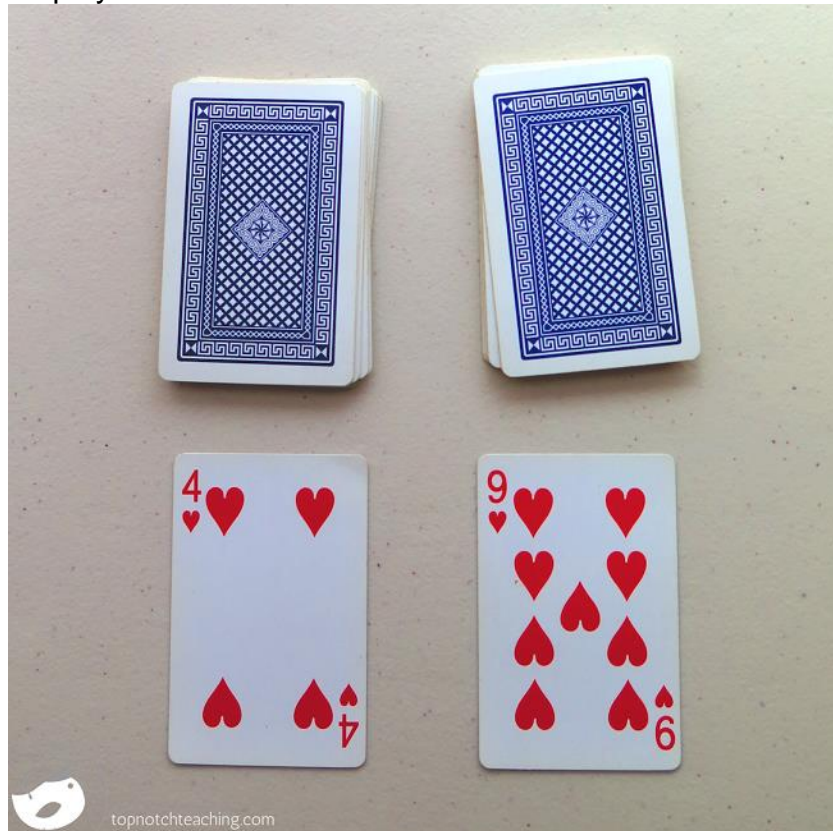
Number of players: 2

Materials: one deck of cards with the face cards (kings, queens, jacks) removed

In this game, aces = 1.

Instructions

1. Deal out half the cards to each player with the cards facing down in a pile.
2. Both players take the card on the top of their pile and lay it face up in the middle.
3. The first player to call out the product of the two cards wins both cards.
4. If it is a draw the cards are left on the table. Turn 2 more cards over and whichever player wins, picks up all the cards in the middle.
5. The winner is the player with the most cards once all the cards have been used.



Variations

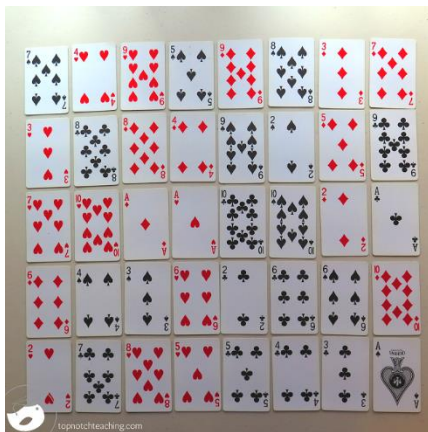
- You could also use addition or subtraction.
- If you are just introducing multiplication to your students you could remove the cards that are beyond their ability at the moment, such as 7, 8 or 9.

I Spy with My Little Eye

This card game is for two players. You will need one deck of cards with the picture (Jacks, Queens, Kings) cards removed (40 cards remaining).

Instructions

1. The cards are dealt face up in an array, either a 10 x 4 or 8 x 5 array.
2. The first player challenges the other one to find two cards next to each other that add to make a particular number. The first player says, "I spy with my little eye two cards that add to make (I prefer to use have a sum of)_____."
3. The second player then looks for 2 cards that add to make the number. The two cards to be added need to be next to each other either horizontally or vertically. The player then picks the cards up to add them to their pile. They do this with any other pairs that add to make the number as well.
4. If the second player misses any pairs that add to the number, then player one may claim them.
5. The players alternate taking turns and continue until all the cards are gone.
6. The winner is the player with the most cards at the end of the game.
7. As large gaps appear in the array, move the cards closer together to fill those gaps.



Variations

- You could change the operation that students use, for example, multiplication or subtraction.
- Allow your students to add three numbers together.
- You could also allow students to add pairs of cards diagonally.

First to Add It Up

Number of players: 2 – 4

Materials: one deck of cards, pencil, paper to record each player's score

In this game, picture cards = 10 and ace = 1.

Instructions

1. Shuffle the cards and have them in the center facing down.
2. One player draws 3 cards from the deck and lays them face up in the middle.
3. Players must add the 3 cards to find the total. The first player to call the total of the 3 cards is awarded that number of points.
4. No points are awarded for an incorrect answer.
5. Play continues with each player having a turn at revealing the 3 cards.
6. The winner is the player with the highest number of points when all cards have been turned over.



Variations

- You could draw any number of cards, for example 2, 4 or even 5.
- Use multiplication instead of addition.

Hit Me!

Number of players: 2 or more

Materials: deck of math cards (Jacks, Queens, Kings, and Jokers removed) (two decks may be needed for a large group), pen and pencil to keep score, if required

Aces = 1

Black cards are positive numbers, which are added to the total.

Red cards are negative, which are subtracted from the total.

Instructions

1. One player (the dealer) shuffles the math cards and deals one card face down for each player, beginning with the player on his left and proceeding in turn around the table.
2. Then he deals one card face up beside each face down card.
3. Players do not pick up their cards! Each player may peek at his own face down card as often as he likes, but it remains hidden from the other players until the end of the round. The card that is face up remains visible to all players.
4. Each player mentally calculates the sum of the numbers on his cards. Aces count as 1. Black cards (positive numbers) are added to the total; red cards (negative numbers) are subtracted. A player's score may go below zero.
5. When all players have had a chance to check their cards, the dealer asks each in turn whether he wants a **hit** — an extra card, also dealt face up so everyone can see it. If the player wants the extra card, he says, "Hit me!" Last of all, the dealer may take a hit, if he wishes.
6. Then each player in turn has a chance to ask for a second hit, and then a third, and so forth.
7. Players may take up to 5 hits, for a maximum of 7 cards, or they may **hold** (stick with the cards they already have) at any time.
8. A player may hit after refusing cards, as long as they do not exceed 7 cards in total.

End of the Game

The round is over when all the players have either taken their maximum number of hits or refused any more cards. At the end of the round, each player turns his hidden card face up and announces his score.

The player with the lowest **absolute value** (the sum closest to zero, whether positive or negative) wins the round. When every player has had a chance to deal, whoever has won the most rounds is the champion.

Variations

1. Players are not able take any more cards once they have decided to hold. They must stay with whatever hand they have received up until that point, regardless of whether they have less than 7 cards.
2. Keep a running total of each player's scores. After everyone has dealt, the player who has the lowest total absolute value is the winner.
3. Rather than bothering to keep score, we let the winner of each round deal the next one. If there is a tie, then whoever has not dealt recently gets a chance.

Make a Buck

Number of players: 2

Materials: One complete deck of cards (with Jokers removed)

How to Play Make a Buck:

Object of the game: To be the first person to collect **ten cards** that **exactly equal \$1.00**.

In this game, If you are playing to \$1.00, Ace = \$0.01, Two = \$0.02, Three = \$0.03, ... Tens = \$0.10, Jack = \$0.11, Queen = \$0.12 and King = \$0.13.

Instructions

1. Shuffle the deck and deal ten cards to each player.
2. Players then take turns **drawing and discarding one card at a time** until the deck of cards is depleted or a player collects exactly \$1.00.



For example, in the hand shown above, **the total would be \$0.74**. So, you would want to start by discarding the smaller card values to try and get larger ones, and then go from there.

3. The first player to collect ten cards that equal \$1.00 **wins that round** and **earns 1 point**.
4. If no one has \$1.00 after the deck is depleted, the person closest (without going over) **earns .5 of a point**.
5. The person with the most points at the end of all rounds, wins!

Variations

Whole Number Values

For younger kids, you could change the cards to **whole number values** and play to \$100. For instance, Ace = \$1, Two = \$2, Three = \$3, ... Tens = \$10, Jack = \$11, Queen = \$12, and King = \$13.

Integers

Or to work on **integer operations**, make the black cards **positive values** and red cards **negative values** and play to zero.

Make Ten Solitaire

Number of Players: 1-2

Materials: deck of cards (no Jokers).

This game is traditionally played as solitaire, but it can easily be modified for two players.

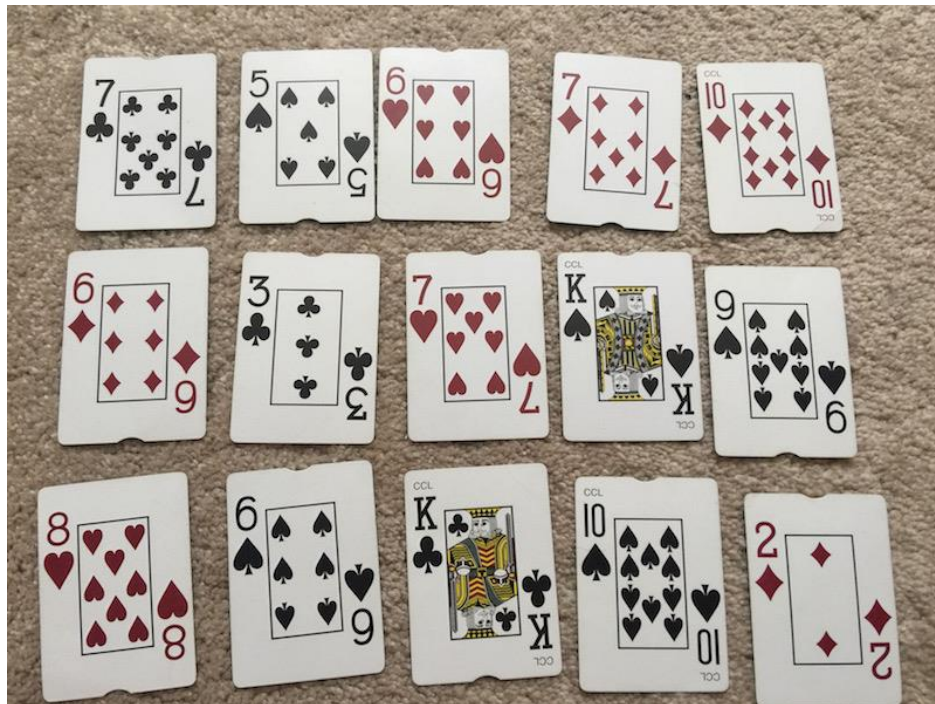
Instructions

1. Deal the cards into three rows of five face up, and the rest are in a pile face down to the side.
2. If you can add two cards that equal the sum of 10, you collect the cards.
3. Face cards (King, Queen, Jack, 10) can only be picked up if you have a matching pair.
4. New cards are dealt into the holes that were left from the cards that were picked up.

How the winner is decided:

If you are playing the solitaire 1-player version, you win if you can pick up all the cards in the entire deck without getting stuck.

If you are playing with two players, and there are no more moves to be made, the player with the most cards collected at that time is the winner.



Math Card War

Number of players: 2 or more

Materials: 2 decks of math cards (remove Jacks, Queens, Kings, Jokers)

Optional: As students learn their math facts, they need extra practice on the hard-to-remember ones like 6×8 . With a normal deck of cards, they turn up far too many problems like 1×9 or 2×7 . To give a greater challenge to older children, make each player a double deck of math cards, remove the aces, deuces, and tens. This gives each player a 56-card deck full of the toughest problems to calculate. (You will need 2 decks of cards for each player).

Instructions

1. Give each player his/her own pack of cards. Don't shuffle the decks together at the beginning, although you could if you really want to.
2. Each player turns one card face up.
3. The player with the greatest number wins the skirmish, placing his own and all captured cards into his prisoner pile.
4. Whenever there is a tie for greatest card, all the players battle: each player lays three cards face down, then a new card face up. The greatest of these new cards will capture everything on the table. Because all players join in, someone who had a low card in the initial skirmish may ultimately win the battle.
5. If there is no greatest card this time, repeat the 3-down-1-up battle pattern until someone breaks the tie. The player who wins the battle captures all the cards played in that turn.

End of the game

When the players have fought their way through the entire deck, count the prisoners. Whoever has captured the most cards wins the game. Or shuffle the prisoner piles and play on until someone collects such a huge pile of cards that the others concede.

Variations

For most variations, the basic 3-down-1-up battle pattern becomes 2-down-2-up. For advanced games, however, the battle pattern is different: in case of a tie, the cards are placed in a center pile. The next hand is played normally, with no cards turned down, and the winner of that skirmish takes the center pile as well.

Addition War—Players turn up two cards for each skirmish. The highest sum wins.

Advanced Addition War—Turn up three (or four) cards for each skirmish and add them together.

Subtraction War—Players turn up two cards and subtract the smaller number from the larger. This time, the greatest difference wins the skirmish.

Product War—Turn up two cards and multiply.

Advanced Product War—Turn up three (or four) cards and multiply.

Fraction War—Players turn up two cards and make a fraction, using the smaller card as the numerator. Greatest fraction wins the skirmish.

Improper Fraction War—Turn up two cards and make a fraction, using the larger card as the numerator. Greatest fraction wins.

Integer Addition War—Black cards are positive numbers; red cards are negative. The greatest sum wins. Remember that -2 is greater than -7 .

Integer Product War—Black cards are positive numbers; red cards are negative. The greatest product wins. Remember that two negative numbers make a positive product.

Wild War—Players turn up three cards and may do whatever math manipulation they wish with the numbers. The greatest answer wins the skirmish.

Advanced Wild War—Black cards are positive numbers; red cards are negative numbers. Players turn up four cards (or five) and may do whatever math manipulation they wish with the numbers. The greatest answer wins the skirmish.

Reverse Wild War—Players turn up three cards (or four, or five) and may do whatever math manipulation they wish with the numbers. The answer with the lowest absolute value (closest to zero) wins the skirmish.

Multi-Digit War—Turn up two or three cards and create a 2-digit or 3-digit number.

Multi-Digit Subtraction War—Turn up three cards. Make two of them into a 2-digit number, then subtract the third. Example: Suppose you turn up 3, 4, and 5. Should you arrange them as $54-3$ or $45-3$ or $35-4$ or . . . ?

Multi-Digit Product War—Turn up three cards. Make two of them into a 2-digit number, then multiply by the third. Example: Suppose you turn up 3, 4, and 5. Should you arrange them as 5×43 or 4×53 or 3×54 or . . . ?

Math War Trumps—Players alternate choosing “trump” for the math card battles. After the cards are turned up, the player whose turn it is gets to say which operation (+, −, ×, ÷) to do.

Speed Racer—For two players of evenly-matched ability. Each player turns up one card, and the first player who calls out the correct sum (or difference, or product) of those two cards wins the pair.

Nifty 50

Number of players: 2 (or 3 or 4, but you may need two decks of cards or a reshuffle in the middle of the game).

Materials: deck of cards (no jokers), whiteboard, felts, whiteboard eraser, or pencil and paper to record and perform equations

Object of the game: To come up with a math equation that has a sum or difference closest to the number 50. First player to five points is the winner.

Aces = 1

Face Cards (kings, queens, jacks) and 10s = 0

2 to 9 = face value

Instructions

1. Deal all the cards between all the players.
2. Each player turns over four cards and makes a two-digit + two-digit number sentence or two-digit – two-digit number sentence that has solution is closest to 50. (examples: $12 + 47$, or $68 - 17$)
3. Players can work out various equations before settling on the one closest to 50.
4. The player with the equation that is closest to 50 gets one point. IF you can create an equation that is exactly 50, it's worth 2 points. If both players have the same answer, no one gets a point.
5. After the cards are used, they are put in a discard pile.



Once Through the Deck

Players: 1

Materials: one deck of math cards (Jokers, Kings, Queens, and Jacks removed)

Instructions

1. Shuffle the deck and place it face down on the table in front of you.
2. Decide which number you are going to keep constant for the round.
3. Flip the cards face up, one at a time.
4. For each card, say out loud the sum (or product) of that number plus (or times) the number you want to practice. (For example, if your constant number was 8 and you were doing multiplication, if the card flipped up was a 2, the product would be 16, because $2 \times 8 = 16$. If it was addition, the constant was 5, and the card flipped was 3, it would be a sum of 8, because $3 + 5 = 8$).
5. Don't say the whole equation, just the answer.
6. Go through the deck as fast as you can. But don't try to go so fast that you have to guess or get an incorrect answer. If you are not sure of the answer, stop and figure it out.



Place Value Cards

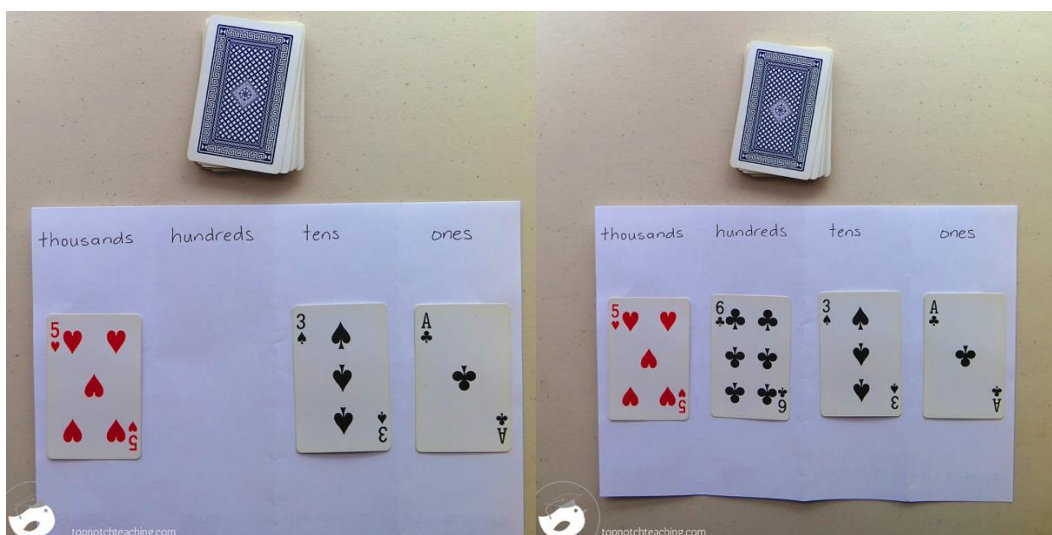
Number of players: 2 or a small group

Materials: You will need a deck of cards with the 10s and picture cards (jacks, queens, kings, jokers) removed, a sheet of paper split into 4 columns labeled thousands, hundreds, tens and ones, pencil and paper (if keeping score)

The ace = 1 in this game.

Instructions

1. One player shuffles the deck of cards and places it in the middle face down.
2. Players take turns to pick a card from the top of the deck and turn it over.
3. The player must decide where to place the card (wanting to create the greatest number), either in the ones, tens, hundreds or thousands place. They add the card to the column on their sheet of paper. The card is to be placed before another card is drawn from the deck. Players can't switch the place value of a card once it has been played.
4. Players keep adding cards to their sheet of paper until all columns are filled in. The winner is the player who produces the largest number.
5. In the example below 5 631 was produced using the cards, 5, 6, 3 and Ace. The best number that could have been formed was 6 5 31.



Variations

- You could make larger or small numbers depending on the level of your students.
- Use numbers with decimals.
- Incorporate a scoring system.

Thirty-One

Players: 2

Materials: one deck of cards, only aces, 2s, 3s, 4s, 5s, 6s (remove 7s, 8s, 9s, 10s, Jacks, Queens, Kings)

Instructions

1. Lay out the ace to six of each suit in a row, face up and not overlapping, one suit above another. You will have one column of four aces, a column of four twos, and so on—six columns in all.
2. The first player flips a card upside down and says its number value.
3. Players alternate, each time turning down one card, mentally adding its value to the running total, and saying the new sum out loud.
4. The player who exactly reaches thirty-one, or who forces the next player to go over that sum, wins the game.



Variation

For a shorter game, use only the ace to four of each suit. Play to a target sum of twenty-two.

Triple-Digit-Dare

Number of players: 2 or more

Materials: single deck of cards with 10s, Jacks, Queens, Kings, and Jokers removed

Aces = 1

Optional: could have Jokers = wild card that can be used for any digit, Queens = 0, if desired

Basic Version

1. Deal each player 3 cards.
2. Players use the cards to create the largest 3-digit number possible.
3. Players show their cards, and the player with the greatest 3-digit number takes all the cards.
4. Play continues with 3 more cards for each player.
5. The player with the most cards at the end of the deck is the winner.

You could easily vary this game to use 2-digit, 4-digit, or even larger numbers. Decimal numbers are also possible.

Advanced Version

1. Same standard deck of cards with the same cards removed.
2. Each player still gets 3 cards (or more, if desired).
3. Remaining cards are placed face down in the middle of the table.
4. After each player looks at their cards and determines their greatest 3-digit number, the fun starts! Taking turns, each player has the option to...
 - Stick—keep their 3 cards
 - Swap—remove one card from their hand and take a new card from the pile in the middle of the table
 - Steal—trade a card from their hand for a card from any other player's hand (without looking at what card they are picking)
5. After all players have had a turn to adjust their cards, players show their cards and the greatest 3-digit number wins.
6. The player with the most cards at the end of the deck is the winner.

21

Number of players: 2 – 4

Materials: deck of cards (no Jokers), pen and pencil for scoring

Object: be the closest to 21 without going over.

Aces = 1 or 11

Face Cards (King, Queen, Jack) = 10

2 to 10 = face value

Instructions

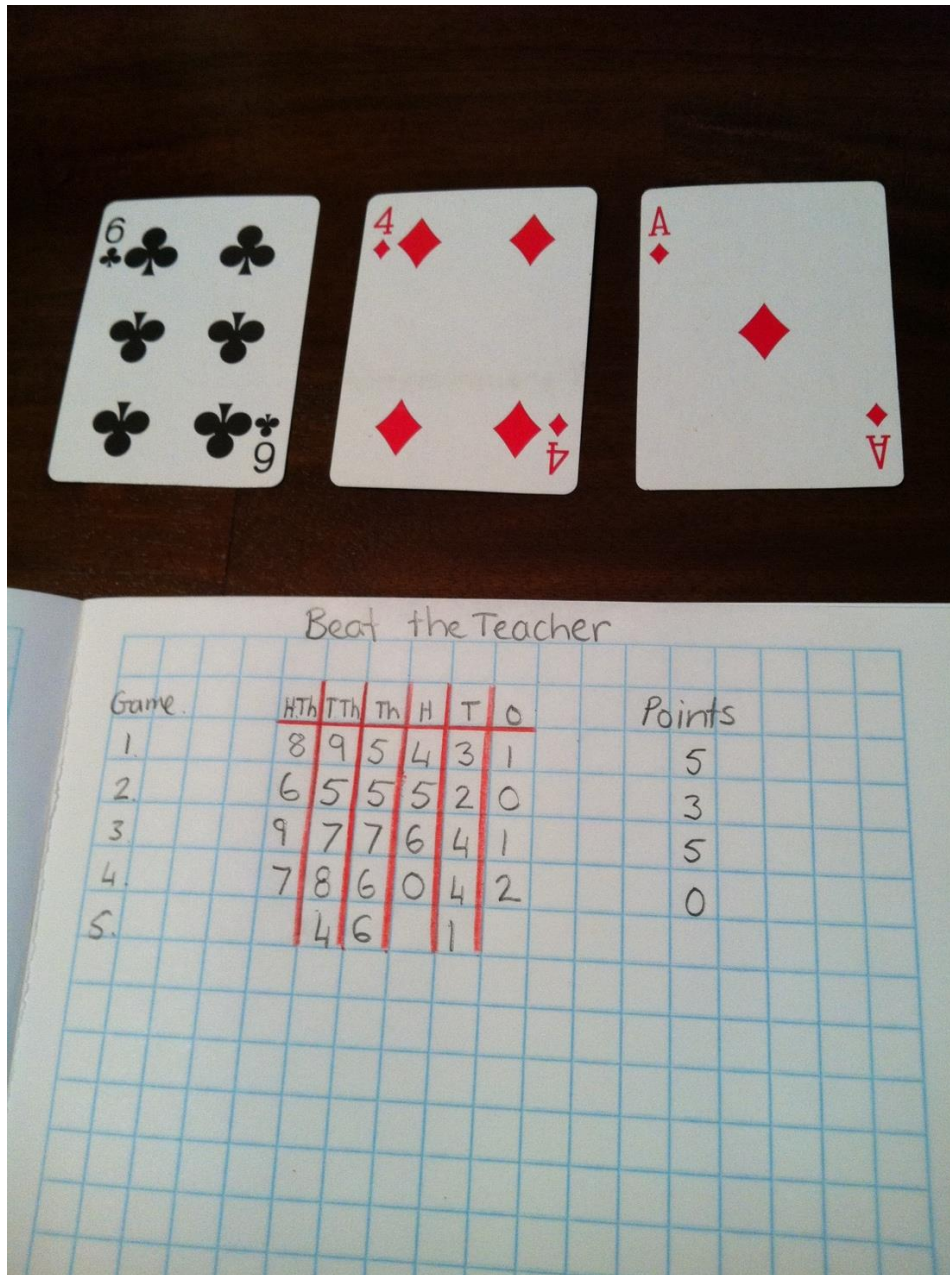
1. Each player is dealt two cards to start.
2. Each player has the option to take another card to attempt to improve their hand to the number 21.
3. If they go over or “bust” they get 0 points.
4. If they are the closest to 21 without going over, they get 1 point.
5. If there is a tie, all the players that are tied get 1 point.
6. If they get 21 on the first 2 cards dealt, they get 2 points. First player to 10 points wins.



Beat the Teacher – A Place Value Game

Number of players: 1 or more

Materials: one deck of cards without the face cards (remove the Kings, Queens, Jacks, and Jokers). Students draw up a playing grid like the one pictured. You can get them to draw up more or less columns, depending on how big of a number you would like them to practice, and whether you would like decimals or not.



Aces = 1
10s = 0

Instructions

1. The teacher shuffles the deck and flips over one card at a time & calls it out. If the teacher flips a 10 that will be called out as a '0'.
2. Students write the number called out in one of the columns. They need to decide where the best place it should go. The teacher will also do the same, but without letting the students see.
3. The teacher will continue drawing cards until all of the columns are filled out.
4. The students and the teacher call out their final number.
5. If the student has a higher number than the teacher they receive 5 points. If it is the same, 3 points. If it is less, 0 points.
If the teacher gets a higher number than all of the students then the teacher receives 20 points.
6. If playing head-to-head against one other player, a point can be awarded to the player or the teacher, depending who has the greatest number at the end.

You can play as many rounds as you would like before seeing who has accumulated the most points.