

Newmarket

This is a versatile game that can keep things moving at family parties but that can also occupy rowdy youngsters eager for prizes or those in search of a boredom cure on a rainy day.

Number of players

This is a game for three to eight players.

Cards

Players each pick a card from the deck of a standard pack of 52 cards, and whoever chooses the lowest card becomes the dealer.

After shuffling and cutting the deck, the dealer distributes the cards as evenly as possible to the players. He or she also deals out a dummy hand, which they place to one side along with any spare cards left over from the deal.

Before the players look at their cards, the dealer takes four cards from a separate pack and lays them face up on the table. These are called the boodle cards and they must be an Ace, King, Queen and Jack each from different suits; so, for example, the Jack of spades, Queen of diamonds, King of hearts and Ace of clubs.

The players are each given ten counters, which they must place on the boodle cards (they are also given another ten counters, which they keep in reserve). They can place all ten counters on one card, but more often will spread them around.

How to play

With the stakes placed, the player to the left of the dealer leads off. He or she can play a card of any suit, but it must be the lowest card that they hold in that suit.

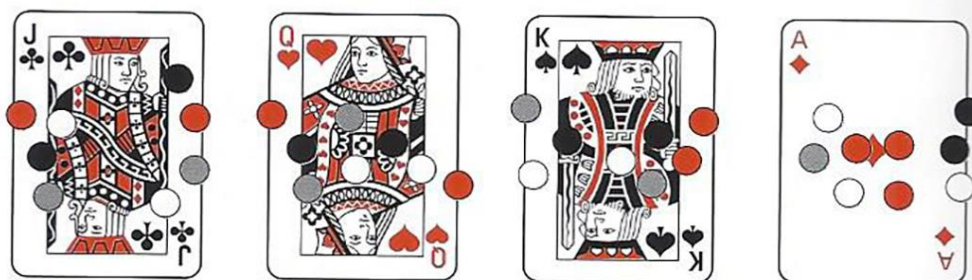
Play is continuous rather than by turn, and the next player to go is the one who holds the next-highest card in the suit. So, for example, if Player One had laid down the seven of hearts, the player who holds the eight of hearts would take a turn next.

The play continues in this way until either play is blocked because the card needed is tucked away in the dummy hand, or because the run is complete (Aces are high, so the appearance of an Ace will automatically bring the run to an end).

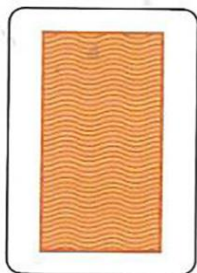
Play is restarted by the person who played the last card, and resumes with them leading the lowest card of another suit. If, however, they do not hold any cards from another suit, the job of leading off passes to the player on their left.

When a player plays a card identical to one of the boodle cards, they receive all the counters that have been staked on that particular card.

Boodle cards



Dummy
hand



The player who gets rid of all their cards first wins the hand. The victor then receives one counter from each player in respect of every card they still hold. If no player manages to get rid of all their cards, the winner is the player with fewest cards when the game becomes blocked. In these circumstances, the winner is entitled to one counter from each of their rivals in respect of the difference between the cards the winner has left and those the losers still hold in hand. So, for example, if David had three cards left at the end of the game and his rivals Stewart and Sharon each had five, they would both have to pay the victorious David two counters.

Winning way

Consider carefully your options when leading off, as this is your opportunity to control the game. Watch the cards played and try to work out which cards your opponents hold. As the game develops, you may be able to frustrate your rivals by playing high-ranking cards that rid you of a particular suit without allowing them the opportunity to do likewise.