

Kemps

Kemps spices up gatherings with a little subterfuge and a whole lot of tension, making it a party classic.

Number of players

Kemps is for four, six, or eight players.

Cards

Players are divided into pairs and each team takes a moment in private to discuss the signals they will use during the game. Once all is agreed, the players reconvene and the cards are cut to decide who will deal; the player with the lowest card becomes the dealer.

Four cards are dealt face down to each player, with an additional widow hand dealt face up to the centre of the table. The remainder of the cards are placed in a stack face down on the table.

How to play

The players pick up their cards and when the dealer says 'Go' they can begin exchanging cards with the widow hand in the centre of the table. Players are looking to collect four-of-a-kind. They can only exchange one card at a time, but may do so continuously; there is no need to wait until an opponent has taken a turn. If two players go for the same card, the first of them to touch it gets it. If children are playing, they may need a little supervision to avoid a fight breaking out!

When the players have taken all the cards they wish from the widow hand, the dealer takes away the four cards and deals out replacements from the stack of unused cards. When the new cards are laid out, the dealer says 'Go' again and the card swapping resumes.

The hand carries on in this fashion until one of the players calls it to a halt or the stock of cards runs out. If the latter situation occurs and the hand reaches a stalemate, it is ruled a draw and has no impact on the outcome of the game. However, a positive outcome for the game can be achieved in two ways:

A call of 'Kemps'

If a player achieves a hand made up of four-of-a-kind, he or she must try to alert their team-mate to the fact, without drawing the attention of their opponents. It is not possible to call the hand to a halt, so each player but must instead rely upon the system of signals agreed between them prior to the game. Signals cannot be verbal and are usually gestures or body movements. Players are also not allowed to deliberately try to confuse opponents by using signals when they do not have four-of-a-kind.