

ON THE CARDS

A game for 2 to 6 players aged 10 or more

Playing time: 30 to 60 minutes

Both a game and a way to create games, On The Cards is a window into the possibilities offered by the humble deck of cards. The various rule cards define how cards move from the deck, through players' hands and into tricks, and how cards are scored at the end of the round. By combining these rule cards you can create thousands of games.

COMPONENTS

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| 1 Standard Deck of 52 playing cards | 10 Aim rule cards (yellow border) |
| 1 Start Player card | 10 Card Play rule cards (green border) |
| 2 Double cards | 10 Trick Taking rule cards (blue border) |
| 4 Fixed Rule cards (black border) | 12 Optional Twist rule cards (mauve border) |
| 10 Deal rule cards (red border) | 1 Create Your Own Rule card (grey border) |

HOW TO PLAY

The **Fixed Rule** cards (black) are always used. In each round, the rules on the Fixed Rule cards are combined with the rules on one card of each other type: Deal, Aim, Card Play and Trick Taking.

- The **Deal** card (red) defines how the dealer will distribute cards.
- The **Aim** card (yellow) defines the objective of the round and how it will be scored.
- The **Card Play** card (green) defines how the players will play cards.
- The **Trick Taking** card (blue) defines how tricks will be won.

In later games you can add **Optional Twist** cards (mauve) and **Double** cards to spice things up.

Before the start of any round we recommend that one of the players reads aloud the text of each of the current Deal, Aim, Card Play, Trick Taking and Optional Twist cards, so that all players are clear about the rules for the round.

For new players, we recommend the introductory game, **Opening Hands** (see separate sheet). The introductory game lasts five rounds and uses pre-set rule cards.

Once you've mastered that, try the standard game, **Out of the Box** (see below). The standard game lets the rules vary from round to round.

The advanced game, **Round the Twist** (see overleaf), is for more experienced players.

In a 2-player game, set aside cards marked '3+'.

OUT OF THE BOX

The standard game

Winning: The first player to have **four** rule cards is the winner. If two or more players tie, all tied players win.

Put the four Fixed Rule cards face-up where everyone can refer to them easily. Set aside the Optional Twist and Double cards; they are not used in this game. In a 2-player game, also set aside the two rule cards marked '3+'.

Take the Deal cards, shuffle them and make a face-up stack. Do the same with the Aim, Card Play and Trick Taking cards to make four face up stacks of 10 cards each. Players are only allowed to look at the top of each stack.

Shuffle the playing card deck and pick a dealer. The player to the left of the dealer takes the Start Player card. The first round is now ready to begin.

The Fixed Rule cards and the four rule cards on top of the stacks define how the first round will be played.

The player with the most points wins the round. The winner takes any one of the top rule cards and keeps it face-down. If two or more players are tied with the most points, all tied players take a rule card from the top of the stacks. This creates a new combination of rules for the next round.

At the start of each round gather up all the playing cards and shuffle them. The start player from the previous round becomes the new dealer. The player to the left of the dealer takes the Start Player card.

ROUND THE TWIST

The advanced game

Winning: The first player to have **five** rule cards is the winner. If two or more players tie, all tied players win.

The game is set up and played in the same way as the standard game, but with the following changes.

At the start of the game, shuffle the Optional Twist cards and make a **face-down** stack. Put the two Double cards to the side of the card stacks. In a 2-player game, also set aside the four Optional Twist cards marked '3+'.

In each round, after you have looked at the cards you have been dealt, you may announce 'Double!' and take one of the Double cards. If more than two players want to double, use something else (such as the box) to keep track.

If you have doubled, you **take two** rule cards if you win the round, but **lose one** if you do not win. If you do not have a rule card to lose, every other player takes one rule card from the bottom of any of the stacks instead. In a 2-player game, you lose **two** rule cards if you do not win.

The player winning the round may take an Optional Twist card instead of one of the other rule cards. The player keeps this card face-down and then turns the next Optional Twist card face-up. This rule card is then in play for the next round. At the end of the round, turn it face-down again.

VARIATIONS

Here are some starting combinations.

- **President:** *Deal Thirteen, Empty Hand - Take Tricks, Same Sized Sets, President*
- **Winning Whist:** *Deal Seven, Take Lots of Tricks, Whist - Clubs Trumps, Winning Whist*
- **Black Maria:** *Deal All, Avoid High Value Cards, Whist - No Trumps, Whist*

Here are two alternative styles of play:

- **Loser Chooses:** The player with the lowest score in the round chooses which card the winner takes.
- **Partnership:** The Optional Twist card *Partnership* stays in play at all times.

How do you play?

The blank Create Your Own Rule card is for you to add a rule you think that we missed. If you come up with a particularly good new rule, or if you invent new ways to play On The Cards, let us know by email at the address below. We will publish the best ones in the second edition, and there will be prizes for the inventors of any we publish.

Email: onthecards@surprisedstaregames.co.uk

More information is available on our website: www.surprisedstaregames.co.uk/onthecards

CREDITS

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