



Welcome!

Pairs is a simple press-your-luck card game, using an unusual “triangular” deck. The deck contains the numbers 1 through 10, with 1x1, 2x2, 3x3, and so on. You can play many different games with your Pairs deck, but let’s start off with the basic rules.

The Basics: Pairs has no winner, just one loser. In each round, players will take turns drawing cards, until one person either *folds* or gets a *pair*. Either of these scores points, and points are *bad*. The first player with too many points loses:

	Target Scores				
Players:	2	3	4	5	6+
Losing Score:	31	21	16	13	11

(The formula: Take 60, divide by players, then add 1.)

Penalties: If you like, you can choose a penalty for the loser. The loser could tell a joke, buy a round of drinks, make a funny noise, or whatever is appropriate for your group.

Who Should Deal? One player can deal for the whole game, or the role of dealer can pass around the table. The dealer’s position doesn’t matter, since the starting player is always determined by the low card.

Playing the Game

Getting Started: Shuffle the deck and *burn* (discard) five cards, facedown, into the middle of the table. This is the start of the discard pile. Each time you reshuffle, you will burn five cards again. (This makes it harder to count the cards.)

To start each round, deal one card faceup to each player. The player with the lowest card will go first.

Ties for Low Card: If there is a tie for lowest card at the start of the round, deal an extra card to the tied players, and use those cards to break the tie. (You might have to repeat this.) If any player catches a pair in this step, you discard the paired card and deal a replacement. You can’t lose by catching a pair on the deal.

On Each Turn: On your turn, you have two choices: You may *hit* (take a card), or *fold*. If you catch a pair, or fold, the round is over and you score points. If not, play passes to the left.

Pairing Up: When you hit, you’re hoping not to get a pair (any two cards of the same rank). If you pair up, you score that many points. For example, if you catch a pair of 8’s, you score 8 points. Keep one of those cards, faceup, to track your score.

Folding: You can surrender (fold) instead of taking a card. When you do this, you take *the lowest card in play* and keep it for points. You may choose this card from all players’ stacks, not just your own.

Folding can be better than hitting, depending on the odds of catching a pair, but it’s up to you to decide when to do it.

Ending the Round: As soon as one person pairs up or folds, the round is over. Discard all the cards in play, facedown into the middle, and start another round.

Players keep their scoring cards aside, faceup. These cards will not return to the deck until the game is over.

Reshuffling: When the deck runs out, reshuffle the discards. Pause the game, shuffle, and resume where you left off. (Remember to burn five cards off every new deck.)

Using a Cut Card: This deck includes one blank card, or “cut card.” Keep this card on the bottom of the deck, where it prevents players from seeing the bottom card. When you reach the end of the deck, you can use the cut card to mark where play was interrupted. Place it back on the bottom after you shuffle.

Losing the Game: There is no winner, just one loser. The game ends when one player reaches the target score (see the Target Scores chart on the left). For example, in a 4-player game, the loser is the first player to score 16 points.

Keep Playing! We hope you’ll enjoy playing Pairs. Please visit playpairs.com for more games. 

Variation: Continuous

Continuous Pairs is nearly the same as basic Pairs, except that when a player pairs up or folds, *only that player’s cards are discarded*. Everyone else keeps their cards, and that player is still in, currently with an empty stack. This game is basically one long round, instead of several short ones.

Here are a couple of rules clarifications for Continuous:

- 1: When you fold, you may take *any card in play*.
- 2: When you have no cards, you must *always hit*.

Continuous Pairs can be a great change of pace. Try it out!

About the Princess Deck:

Nate Taylor illustrated the *Princess and Mr. Whiffle* deck for the 2014 Pairs Kickstarter project, based on the not-for-children children's book of the same name, by **Patrick Rothfuss** and **Nate Taylor** (Subterranean Press). This rules sheet includes the rules for *Kitty*, a Pairs game with many variations, based loosely on the 12 Days card game by **James Ernest** and **Mike Selinker** (Gamesmith).

Game Variant: Kitty

There are several ways to play Kitty, but we'll start with the core four-player version. The basic goal of Kitty is to score points by winning bids and collecting sets of cards.

Players: 4

You Need: A Pairs deck.

To Begin: Shuffle the deck and deal a "kitty" of 7 cards, face-down in the middle of the table. Deal out the remainder of the deck to all players.

On Each Round: The game will play in seven rounds, one for each card in the kitty. To start each round, turn over the top card of the kitty. This card is the "target."

Pass: First, each player chooses one card from his hand and passes it to the left.

Play: Next, each player plays a *bid* card, facedown. When all four bid cards are played, reveal them.

Capture: The player who played the *lowest* bid will take the target, adding it to his hand. Exception: If the lowest bids are *tied*, they are ignored, and the *next lowest card* wins the target.


If there are no unpaired cards, *no one takes the target*.

Exception: *The 1 works differently. Although it is guaranteed to win the target, when you take a card with the 1, you must give the target card to another player.*

After the capture, all four bid cards are discarded (removed from play). If all bids are tied, the target is also discarded.

You will play seven rounds, and then score the game.

Scoring: The player with the most cards in each rank scores the value of that rank. For example, whoever has the most 8's scores 8 points. If there is a tie for most cards, both players score the full amount. The highest score wins.

Long-Form Scoring: Kitty can be played as single hands, or you can keep score over several games. If you want to keep score over a longer stretch, play to 100 points. 

Variations on Kitty

Players: 3 to 6

You Need: A Pairs deck.

Depending on which variant rules you choose, you can play Kitty with any number of players from 3 to 6. For example, changing to "soft" lets you play with more people without running too low on cards.

Soft: The 7-round game described in the basic rules is the "hard" version. To play "soft," each target after the first consists of *two cards*, rather than one, so there are only four rounds total (1-2-2-2).

In the soft game, the lowest card in each round chooses *one* target card, and the second lowest card takes the *remaining* target card. Ties are still ignored, and unclaimed cards are still discarded.


Number of Players: Kitty (hard or soft) can be played by as few as 3 players, or as many as 6. The kitty is always 7 cards. In the 5-player game, another 3 cards must be removed from play *unseen* (this makes the starting hands come out even).

In the 5- and 6-player game, it's better to play by the "soft" rules, playing only 4 rounds instead of 7. If you play the hard way, your hands can get very small!

Partners: Four or six players can play Kitty in teams of two. You're not allowed to communicate with your partner about the cards in your hand, but you can infer what your partner has (or needs) by how she plays.

In Partners, if you take a card with the 1, you must give it to another team (you can still decide which player). At the end, teammates' hands are combined for scoring.

Gambling: To play Kitty for wagers, choose a coin value (such as a penny) for each point. When scoring, the winner collects from each player the *difference* between their scores.

For example, if the winner has 19 points, he would get 4 coins from a player with 15 points, and 6 from a player with 13. 

Credits

Pairs was designed by **James Ernest** and **Paul Peterson**, with help from **Joshua Howard** and **Joe Kisenwether**. *Princess* deck by **Nate Taylor**. Playtesters include Adam Sheridan, Ahna Blake, Bob De Dea, Boyan Radakovich, Carol Monahan, Cathy Saxton, Daniel Solis, Debbie Mischo, Don Flinspach, Hal Mangold, Jeremy Holcomb, John Mischo, Jonathan Fingold, Kenneth Hite, Mike Selinker, Nathan Clarenburg, Nora Miller, Owen Jungemann, Rick Fish, Shawn Carnes, Tom Saxton, and many others. Edited by Carol Monahan, Cathy Saxton, Christopher Dare, and Mike Selinker. Made possible through **Kickstarter!**

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For more rules, variants, alternate decks, and more, please visit us at: www.playpairs.com