



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 Professor Elemental Deck:

The Professor Elemental Pairs deck, by **Cheyenne Wright**, is based on the exploits of chap-hop artist and time-traveling eccentric **Professor Elemental**. You can learn more about this amazing character at professorelemental.com.

Game Variant: Venture

Venture is a bidding game for 3-8 players. Taking cards is usually bad, so the object is to take as few cards as you can, sometimes by conspiring with other players. But trust no one! Players don't have to tell the truth about what cards they play.

Players: 3 to 8

You Need: A Pairs deck.

Summary: Players will play several rounds, playing cards to capture other cards. Each card you capture is one *negative* point (regardless of its rank), unless you capture a *full set* (all the cards in one rank). Full sets are worth positive points.

To Begin: Shuffle the deck and deal a stack of cards facedown in the center of the table. This stack is the “slug.” The number of cards in the slug depends on the number of players.

3p: 4 Cards	4p: 3 Cards	5p: 5 Cards
6p: 7 Cards	7p: 6 Cards	8p: 7 Cards

Next, deal the remainder of the deck out to all players. After removing the slug, the cards should divide evenly.

Turn the slug faceup in the center. This will be the *pool* of cards for the first round.

On Each Round: Each player chooses one card from his hand, and plays it facedown as a *bid*. Players are welcome to talk about what bids they are playing, in an effort to confuse or conspire with each other. (*Don't overlook this rule; table talk can make or break this game.*) When all players are ready, reveal these cards, and execute them in order *from low to high*.

Capturing: Bid cards will “fire,” starting with the lowest card and going up. When cards fire, they capture other cards on the table, *including other bid cards*. If multiple bids of the same rank are played, those cards “misfire” and can't capture anything. (This is generally good, since capturing cards is bad.)

In general, cards “capture down,” meaning that they pick up smaller cards. So, for example, a 7 will take all cards lower than 7. However, the lowest card is different. It fires first, and captures all cards of the *highest rank on the table*. (Remember that this includes the pool and the bid cards.)

Set aside the cards you capture, faceup. Uncaptured cards will remain on the table as the pool for the next round.

Play until your hands are empty. Then it's time to score.

Scoring: Each card you capture is worth *one negative* point. However, if you collect a full set (that is, all the cards of the same rank) those cards are worth 1 point each. Also, the cards that remain in the center *can be scored by anyone*, so if you collect eight 9's and the last 9 is left in the middle, you score 9 points. The player with the highest score wins.

An Example Game:

In this 5-player game, the slug is 4, 5, 6, 8, 10.

On the first round, the bids are 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The 2 fires first, and captures the 10. Moving up the ranks, the 3 is next and captures the 2. The 4 captures the 3, and the 5 captures both 4's. The 6 catches both 5's. This leaves a pool of 6, 6, 8.

On the second round, the bids are 5, 5, 7, 9, and 9. The 5's would normally target the 9, but they misfire because they are matched. Next, the 7 fires, and captures all the 5's and 6's. Finally, the 9's are matched, and capture nothing. This leaves a pool of 7, 8, 9, 9.

Example Scoring: A player has captured a total of 11 cards, including all of the 5's. The six non-matched cards total 6 negative points, and the five 5's are worth a total of +5, for a final score of -1 point. (Scores are often negative.)

Optional Rule: Drafting

After the deal, but before the slug is revealed, players can tailor their hands using a simple drafting system.

From your starting hand, keep three cards, and pass the rest to the left. Set aside the cards you keep, and repeat this until there are no cards left to pass.

Drafting works only if you have a feel for the strategy. It lets you tailor your hand and get a glimpse of what others have.

Credits

Pairs was designed by **James Ernest** and **Paul Peterson**, with help from **Joshua Howard** and **Joe Kisenwether**. Professor Elemental artwork by **Cheyenne Wright**, based on the works of **Professor Elemental (Paul Alborough)**. *Venture* designed by James Ernest and Daniel Solis. Playtesters include Adam Sheridan, Ahna Blake, Alec Nelson, Ashley Humphries, Ben Reinhardt, Bob De Dea, Boyan Radakovich, Carol Monahan, Cathy Saxton, Daniel Solis, Debbie Mischo, Don Flinspach, Hal Mangold, Jed Humphries, Jeremy Holcomb, John Mischo, Jonathan Fingold, Kenneth Hite, Mike Selinker, Nathan Clarenburg, Nora Miller, Owen Jungemann, Rick Fish, Ruth Boyack, Shawn Carnes, Terry Murray, Tom Gurganus, 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:

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