

Battle Royals

Rules for Two Players

Battle Royals is an elaborate game of the Rummy family in which players must accumulate Royals (face cards) of a particular Home House (suit) by winning Battles (tricks), before they can acquire further points by melding matches of three or more cards.

Number of Players

Two

Object of the Game

To gain points by capturing cards in Battles or by melding matches of three or more cards.

The Pack

100 cards, four suits, three of each card 9 through Ace, and one of each card 2 through 8.

Rank of Cards in Battle

A (high), K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 (low). However, in a Battle a 2 (or "Sneak") beats an Ace of the same suit.

The Deal

Dealer gives ten cards to each player, alternately beginning with their Enemy. The remaining cards are placed face-down in a Draw Stack in the middle of the table, with the top card turned face-up to initiate a Discard Pile. Players alternate turns as Dealer.

Choosing Home Houses

Beginning with Dealer's Enemy, each player declares a Home House (suit). Both players may choose the same House. Dealer's Enemy may pass, giving first choice to Dealer. Dealer then chooses and also plays first. If Dealer then also passes, this forces a re-deal, with their Enemy dealing.

Face cards (K, Q, J) from a player's Home House are called Royals.

The Play

Players alternate turns as Attacker, beginning with the player who chose Home House first. Each turn includes the following:

- 1) Draw** – Attacker draws one card, Defender draws one card, and Attacker draws a second card. Players may draw either the top card of the draw stack, or the top card of the Discard Pile if it is from their Home House. See also “Drawing the Discard Pile”, below.
- 2) Battle** – Attacker leads a card from their hand and Defender plays a card from theirs, following suit if possible. Winning card must be in the leading suit, and Attacker wins a tie.
 - Note that a Sneak (2) beats an Ace but loses to any other card.
 - Winner places one of the cards face-up on the left side of their Board in a Spoils display.
 - The second card is placed face-down in a Dead Pile where it is removed from play.
 - The most important spoils of Battles are Royals (K, Q, J) and Aces.

- 3) Optional Plays** – Melding, Assassination, Ransoming or changing Home Houses, all described below, may be performed before or after the Battle, but must be completed before the discard. Each of these options requires special combinations of cards (see below).
- 4) Discard** – Attacker discards one card from their hand to the top of the Discard Pile, which is spread so that all cards are visible.

Optional Plays

Melding - If a player has at least one Royal present in Spoils before their turn begins (i.e., from a previous Battle), they may meld matches of three or more cards with the same denomination, such as three tens. Cards already in Spoils or Meld may be included, and further cards may be added in later turns, provided that the total number continues to be three or more, and that at least one Royal is present at the beginning of the turn. The melded cards are placed on the right side of the player's Board in a Meld display, but cards in Spoils remain there.

Home House Royals may not be melded, that is, they can only reach Spoils through winning a Battle. Face cards of other suits may be melded directly from the hand.

Melded cards may not be returned to a player's hand or played in Battle.

Melded Aces cannot be used as Assassins (See below, Assassination).

Drawing the Discard Pile - If Attacker at the beginning of their turn has in Spoils two or more different Royals from their own House (e.g., K & Q, but not 2 Q's), they may draw a bundle of cards from the Discard Pile, instead of the usual two cards from the Draw Stack. The bottom card of the

bundle must be used immediately in a Meld match. All cards above that card are placed in the hand, or may also be melded if matched. Defender draws the usual one card from the Draw Stack, and play proceeds as usual.

Assassination - Aces taken in Battles are called "Assassins", and may be used by Attacker to eliminate cards from Defender's Board. The Assassin must be in Spoils before the turn begins. The Assassin may eliminate any one card of the same suit from Defender's Board, and both the Assassin and the victim card are placed in the Dead Pile.

Typical victims of Assassination are Enemy Royals, and Assassins which threaten Home House Royals. Assassination can also eliminate the third card of a Meld match, thereby reducing the point values of the remaining cards (see below, Scoring).

Ransoming - Attacker may ransom a Royal of their House that their Enemy melded in the previous turn. The ransomer takes from their own hand a card of equal denomination but different suit, places it in their Enemy's Meld, takes their own Royal, and places it in their own hand.

For example, if Attacker is Dogs, they may trade a Jack of Birds from their hand for a Jack of Dogs in Defender's Meld, melded the previous turn. They then place the ransomed Jack back in their hand, where it may be saved or used to lead a Battle. Cards in Enemy Spoils may not be ransomed.

Changing Home Houses - If Attacker can accumulate three cards exactly alike (e.g., three tens of Reptiles), they may change their Home House to the suit they represent (i.e. Reptiles) by melding two of them, placing the third in

the Dead Pile, and declaring the Home House changed. The melding does not require the usual one Home House Royal in Spoils.

The three cards may be 1) already in Meld or Spoils, 2) taken from the hand, 3) drawn from the Draw Stack, 4) drawn from the top of the Discard Pile, as if the new suit were already the Home House, or 5) ransomed from Defender's Meld if melded the previous turn. These last two options are permitted only for the turn in which the House is changed.

Royals of the new Home House, if present in Spoils or in Meld before the turn begins, carry the usual privileges of Royals (i.e., melding, drawing the Discard Pile, or ending the Round, see below). All previously melded Royals of the new Home House, are now moved to Spoils. This includes cards from the triplet used to change suits.

Ending the Round - Attacker may end the Round if they meet three requirements:

- 1) at least one Home House Royal in Spoils before their turn begins,
- 2) no face cards (K, Q, J) of any suit left in their hand at the end of their turn, and
- 3) winning the Battle.

Discarding is optional on the final turn.

If the Draw Stack runs out before either player ends the Round, play continues as usual, with players skipping their draw unless they can legally draw from the Discard Pile.

The Round then ends in the usual way, or when one player's hand runs out of cards. (Running out of cards does not end the game if cards still remain in the Draw Stack.)

Scoring

Cards in Meld or Spoils are added, five points for 9, 10, J, Q, K, A, ten points for 2,3,4,5,6,7,8. Points are doubled for cards in matches (e.g., two sixes are 20 points, three sixes are 60 points). Cards left in a player's hand are subtracted from their score, without doubling for matches. If the points in the hand are more than the points on the Board, the score is negative ("in the hole").

Add another score for each complete set of Home House Royals (K, Q & J) in your Spoils. (i.e., double your score if you have one complete set, triple for two.) If the score is negative, the extra score is also subtracted.

Game

Scores for each Round are added until one player wins by surpassing a number agreed to before the game begins. The traditional winning score is 1066, the date of the Battle of Hastings.

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