

# **Marriage Royals**

## **(Three-Player Royals)**

### **Rules**

#### **Number of Players**

Three.

#### **Object of the Game**

To gain points by capturing cards in Battles or by melding matches of three or more cards. To further add points by strategic Marriages with other players.

#### **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, clockwise beginning with the player to the left. 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.

#### **Choosing Home Houses**

In the same order as the deal, each player declares a Home House (suit). Two or more players may choose the same Home House. Face cards from your Home House are your Royals.

## The Play

Players take turns as Attacker (lead player) in the same order as the deal. Each turn includes the following five parts:

**1) Draw** - Attacker draws one card, followed by each Defender clockwise. Attacker then draws a second card. Each player may draw either the top card of the Draw Stack, or the top card of the Discard Pile if it is in their Home House (suit). See also "Drawing the Discard Pile".

**2) Gift Exchange** - In each turn, following the draw, Attacker trades one card from their hand with each other player from their hands. The exchange is mandatory and made without discussion.

If you meld before your Gift Exchange, and your Enemies challenge, you must return the meld to your hand, and you cannot meld in that turn. See the exception to this rule in "Drawing from the Discard Pile".

If you start a Battle before your Gift Exchange, and you are challenged, the player who challenges automatically wins the Battle.

If a Gift Exchange is forgotten, but not challenged before discard, play continues without a Gift Exchange.

**3) Battle** – Attacker plays a card from their hand, followed by each Defender clockwise, playing in suit if possible. The highest card in suit wins. In a tie the winner is the first played.

A Sneak (two) in suit wins if an Ace is also played in suit. Otherwise, the Sneak loses to any other card in suit.

The victor chooses two of the cards played, and places them face up in their Spoils section on their left side. The remaining card is placed face-down in a Dead Pile where it is removed from play.

The principal objects of Battles are Royals (Home House K, Q, J) and Aces.

**4) Optional Plays** - Assassination, Ransoming or Changing Houses, all described below, may be performed any time during Attacker's turn, before or after the Gift Exchange. Melding, Marriage, Hostage Declaration and Redemption are permitted only after the Gift Exchange. All optional plays must be completed before the discard.

**5) 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 display before their turn begins (i.e., won in a previous Battle), they may meld matches of three or more cards with the same denomination, such as three tens. The cards are placed in Meld display on the player's right side, separated from Spoils. The three matched cards may include cards already in Meld or Spoils, but all cards remain in their original section. Further matching cards may be added to a Meld in later turns, provided that the total number continues to be three or more, and that at least one Royal is still present in Spoils.

Royals may not be melded. However, Royals in Spoils may be included in a meld match. 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 a trick.

**Drawing the Discard Pile** - If Attacker at the beginning of their turn has in Spoils two or more different Home House Royals (e.g. K & Q, but not 2 Q's), then they may draw a bundle of cards from the Discard Pile, instead of the usual two cards from the Draw Pile. The bottom card so drawn must be used immediately in a meld. (This is an exception to the rule against Melding before Gift Exchange). All cards above this card are placed in the hand.

Further melding may proceed after the Gift Exchange. The other players each draw their usual one card from the Draw Stack (or the new top of the Discard Pile), and play proceeds as usual.

**Assassination** - Aces taken in Battle are called "Assassins", and may be used to eliminate cards from another player's Spoils or Meld displays. Assassins can only be used if they are in Spoils before Attacker's turn begins. The Assassin eliminates any one card of the same suit, and both the Assassin and the victim card are placed in the Dead Pile.

Typical victims are Royals or other Assassins which threaten Royals. Assassination can also eliminate the third card of a melded triplet, thereby reducing the point values of the remaining cards. (See Scoring, below). Another target would be a spouse in a Marriage. (See Royal Marriage, below.)

You are allowed to assassinate cards in your own Meld or Spoils. Probably the only reason to do so would be to eliminate a Marriage that you do not want.

**Ransoming** - Attacker may Ransom cards from any player's Meld or from any position in the Discard Pile, by trading from their hand a card of equal denomination but different suit.

For example, if their Home House is Dogs, they may trade a Jack of Birds from their hand for a Jack of Dogs in one Defender's Meld or from the Discard Pile. They can save their new Jack of Dogs in their hand, or play it in hopes of winning a new Royal in Spoils.

Cards in Spoils may not be ransomed, except in the case of a Hostage. (See Below). The ransomed card need not be in the player's Home House. A player may ransom a card from their own Meld, but cannot trade it for a Home House Royal from their hand. More than one card may be ransomed in one turn.

Reasons for ransoming include: gaining a Royal in your hand to play in battle; changing Houses (see below); converting a Marriage (see below); forcing a Marriage (see below); and redeeming a Hostage (see below).

If a player ransoms a face card from your Meld, and replaces it with one of your Royals, you may ransom that Royal from your own Meld. As long as your Royal remains in Meld, it does not gain any privileges or enhance your score beyond its meld value. However, it can be a spouse in a Marriage, in which case it is moved to Spoils. (See below)

**Royal Marriage:** A Royal Marriage (hereafter called Marriage) is a Home House King or Queen together with the conjugal match of another suit, on the player's board at the same time. For example, if a player is Dogs, one Marriage would be a Queen of Dogs and a King of Birds in either Spoils or Meld.

Marriages play a key role in Marriage Royals; hence the name.

At least one player must have a Marriage on the board for one circle of play (i.e. one turn for each player) before the Round can end. (See below, Ending the Round). Thus, the player who creates the first Marriage is the first player eligible to go out, on their next turn.

The Home House Royal spouse (e.g. Queen of Dogs) will usually be in Spoils (i.e. taken in a battle). If it is in Meld (i.e., the result of a Ransom), it is moved to Spoils when Married. The second spouse (e.g. King of Birds) may be melded as part of a triplet.

For each Marriage, at the end of the game, each partner adds to their own score the sum of the positive scores of both partners, i.e. the score before subtracting the points left in the hand. In our example, the players with Dogs and Birds share their positive scores. The added scores do not include any extra scores earned with a full set of three Royals. (See Scoring).

When one of your Royals is party to a Marriage by another player, your Royal earns privileges as if it were on your own board. In our example, if you are Birds, you now have a Royal King. You may lay down Meld and you are eligible to go out. If you also have your Queen or Jack in Spoils, you can pick up a bundle from the Discard Pile. If it gives you all three Royals, you add a score. (See scoring).

If the second spouse in a Marriage is from an unoccupied House, only the first spouse earns extra points for its House owner(s). (i.e., they add a positive score to their total).

If both of the other players have the same House (e.g. Birds), the Marriage counts as two Marriages, one with each player.

Two players of the same House cannot enter into marriage (no incest).

Marriage is not optional (no cohabiting). In our example, the Queen of Dogs is married to the first King of a different suit which appears on their board. If two Kings become eligible at the same time, the player chooses one to be the spouse.

Each Royal may have only one spouse (no bigamy).

**Assassinating spouses, converting Marriages, and Forced Marriages:** A Marriage may be ended by assassinating one of the spouses with an Ace of the same suit already in spoils. (See above, Assassination.) Any player may do this during their turn, even the player who owns the Marriage or the other partner. If no other Marriages exist on the game board, the Round cannot end until another appears and lasts for three turns. The surviving spouse also loses all privileges that depend on the Marriage.

A Marriage may be converted by Ransoming the second spouse. In our example, a player with a King of Reptiles in their hand trades it for the King of Birds, thereby converting the Marriage to Dogs/Reptiles instead of Dogs/Birds. The spouse moved out (e.g. King of Birds) must be Meld, not Spoils. The converted Marriage is regarded as new, i.e. three more turns must pass before the game can end (unless other Marriages exist on the game board).

There is no limit to the number of times a Marriage can be converted. Also, a player may convert a Marriage he owns.

If the ransom results in two spouses of the player's Home House, it is no longer a Marriage. The new card is in Meld, so it can be ransomed by another player to convert

the Marriage again. Alternatively, the new Royal may become a spouse in a new Marriage.

A player may force a Marriage on another player by Ransoming: trading from their hand a King or Queen of the target player's House, for a card of the same denomination in the target player's Meld. An eligible spouse of another suit must be present on the target player's board. If cards of more than one suit are eligible, the Ransomer chooses one to be the spouse.

If a Home House Royal in Meld (i.e. due to Ransoming or Forced Marriage) becomes married, it remains in Meld until that player's turn, at which point they can either Ransom or Assassinate the Royal to end the Marriage, or move the Royal to their Spoils.

If the third player has a turn while the Royal is in Meld, they may also end this forced Marriage through Assassination or Ransoming.

The game may end when at least three turns have passed after the Forced Marriage was created or converted.

**Hostages:** If you have in Spoils a King or Queen (or Jack) that is identical to a spouse in someone's Marriage, you may declare such card a Hostage. A card may be declared a Hostage the turn it is captured in Battle or later. A Hostage temporarily nullifies the privileges and scoring results of the target Marriage. In our example, if you have a King of Birds or a Queen of Dogs in your Spoils, declaring it a Hostage removes all privileges and scoring related to that Marriage. Place the Hostage card near the middle of your board, where it is clearly differentiated. You cannot use a Hostage against a Marriage that you own. The Hostage declaration must be made during the player's turn, and may be revoked

during any subsequent turn. There is no limit to the number of repeats of this, but in a single turn a Hostage may only be declared or redeemed, not both.

The target of a Hostage cannot be ransomed, which would otherwise convert the Marriage to a new spousal House.

**Redemption:** A Hostage card is subject to Redemption by either enemy player. Attackers may Redeem a Hostage by Ransoming with an equal card of differing suit from their own hand. This is the only case in which a Spoils card may be ransomed. Redemption is legal in any attack turn, not just the turn following the Hostage Declaration. The incoming card is returned to Spoils.

**Changing Home Houses:** If you can accumulate three cards exactly alike (e.g., three tens of Reptiles), you may use them to change your Home House to the suit they represent (i.e., Reptiles).

The three cards may be 1) already in your Meld or Spoils, 2) in your hand, 3) drawn from the Draw Stack, 4) drawn from the top of the Discard Pile, 5) ransomed from the Discard Pile, or 6) ransomed from another player's Meld.

The three cards are placed in Spoils if they are Royals and in Meld if they are Tens or Nines. Aces are placed in Meld unless they are already in Spoils, where they remain. Royals of the new House in Meld before the turn began are moved to Spoils, where they immediately gain privileges.

No Royal from the prior Home House is needed in Spoils for any of these moves. An Attacker may change Houses before or after the Gift Exchange.

The player completes the Home House Change by placing one of the three cards in the Dead Pile.

You may “change” to your own Home House. For example, if you are Dogs and you have three Jacks of Dogs, you can place two in Spoils and toss one in the Dead Pile. This gives you Royals having the usual privileges in your next turn. (Or in the case of additional scores, in the same turn).

There is no limit to the number of times a player may change Houses.

### **Ending the Round**

Attacker may end the Round if they meet four requirements:

- 1) At least one 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.
- 3) Winning the Battle.
- 4) At least one Marriage on any player’s board for at least one circle of turns. Thus, the player who created or converted the first surviving Marriage is the first player who can end the Round, on their following turn.

Discarding is optional on the final turn.

If the Draw Stack runs out before any player ends the Round, play continues as usual. In each turn, each player may choose any card from the Discard Pile. When that runs out, continue to play without drawing. The Round then ends in the usual way, or when one player’s hand runs out of cards. (This last does not end the game if draw cards are still available.)

## **Scoring**

Cards in Meld and 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 of three or more (e.g., two sixes are 20 points, three sixes are 60 points). Cards left in a player's hand are subtracted, without doubling for matches. If the points in the hand are more than the points on the table, the score is negative ("in the hole"). The result of all this is your "natural" score.

Add another natural score for each complete set of Home House Royals (K, Q & J) in your Spoils or married on another player's Board. (i.e. double your score if you have one complete set, triple for two).

If your score is negative, the extra scores are also subtracted.

After all other scoring is done, for each marriage, add the natural score of each partner to both of their scores.

## **End of Game**

Scores for each Round are added. The game ends when:

- 1) One player passes 1066 (Battle of Hastings) or
- 2) One player drops below -333 (Battle of Issus),
- 3) Two players surrender.

High score wins.

# Adding More Players to Marriage Royals

It is possible to add more players to Marriage Royals, but you will need more cards in the deck.

We played one game with 5 players, by adding one suit. We created the extra suit with a permanent marker by adding squiggles to the face of a suit from another deck.

We made two changes to the rules:

- Each Attacker chooses only one of their four opponents for the gift exchange.
- The victor of a battle keeps three cards for their spoils, and puts the other two cards in the dead pile.

The single gift exchange creates an opportunity for a “friendship” between players. Suppose one player passes a gift of a Royals King to another. The second player can see that as a gesture of friendship, and may reciprocate with a friendly card on a later turn. Of course, this is also an opportunity for treachery, in a kind of “prisoner’s dilemma”. When is the most advantageous time to end the friendship?

One extra suit is not really enough. The deal alone uses 51 cards out of 125. In each turn, another 6 cards are drawn from the pile, so every round of turns uses 30 cards. After two rounds, only 14 cards are left in the draw pile. Even with the 11 cards in the discard pile, there are not enough for another round of 5 players.

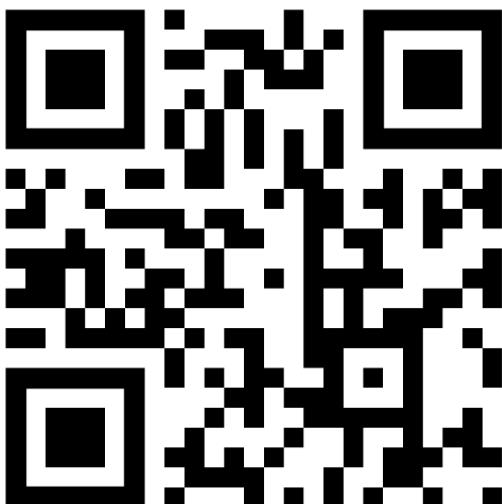
It would probably be best to play with 2 full decks.

Another option is to put the cards in the dead pile back in the game by shuffling and making them the draw pile. That is still not very many cards, and creates surprises such as reappearing Aces that you thought were finished.

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