

Eleusis

Objective

Players take turns playing cards to a central row. The dealer (rule-maker) declares each play as "valid" or "invalid" based on the secret rule. The goal is to be the first to correctly guess the rule or earn the most points by making valid plays.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3–8 people. One player acts as the dealer.
 2. **Deck:** Two standard 52-card decks (no jokers).
 3. **Dealer's Role:** The dealer secretly creates a rule for valid card plays (e.g., "Alternate colors" or "Prime numbers only").
 - Rules must be **consistent, non-arbitrary**, and possible to follow with the deck.
 4. **Starting Cards:** Deal 14 cards to each player (adjust based on group size).
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Gameplay

The game is played by creating a row of cards in sequence. At the start of the game the dealer (known as "God") invents a secret constraint for how these cards must progress: for example, "each card played must be higher than the last, unless the last card was a face card, in which case any numeral card may be played".

Two decks of cards are shuffled and 14 cards dealt to each player except the dealer. One card is dealt face-up to start the row and a random player chosen

to start.

On a player's turn they must add one or more cards from their hand to the row (max 4), in sequence. The dealer judges this play: if the entire play fits the dealer's rule, the cards are left in place as part of the row. Otherwise, they are removed from the row and "sidelined", as to be put below the card that they attempted to follow, and the player is dealt a number of penalty cards equal to twice the number of cards they attempted to play that turn. If the play had multiple cards and only some were incorrect, the entire play is declared invalid, without the dealer specifying the invalid cards.

One player may elect to be a "prophet". A player who believes they have worked out the rule may request to become one at the end of their turn, if there is not already a prophet among the players, by placing a black marker on the card they just played. The prophet puts down their hand and skips their turns during their time as prophet. The prophet takes on the role of judging valid and invalid moves; if the dealer catches them making a mistake, the prophet is overthrown and receives five penalty cards (with the player who made the play receiving no penalty cards for that turn, if the play was invalid). An overthrown prophet takes their hand back up, takes all black markers off the row, and becomes a regular player again.

If at any time a player thinks they cannot play a legitimate card, they may declare a "no play", and show their hand to everybody. If the dealer confirms that no cards in that hand can be played, the player discards the hand and draws a new hand four cards smaller. If the player's call was incorrect, the dealer plays the correct card for them and gives the player five penalty cards.

A white marker is placed on each tenth card played, and a black marker on each tenth card after a prophet's marker. After the fourth black or white marker is placed, any invalid plays result in that player being eliminated from the game, and their hand remains intact for scoring. If both white and black markers are present, the black markers take precedence.

A round ends when a player empties their hand, or when all players (excluding the prophet, if any) have been eliminated. Players score 1 point for each card in the hand of the player with most cards, minus the number of cards in their

own hand. If a player has an empty hand they gain a further 4 points. If there is a prophet at the end of the game, they receive an additional 1 point for each card in the row following their first black marker, and 2 points for each sidelined card following that marker.

The dealer's score equals the highest score of any player, unless there was an active prophet. If there is a prophet, count the cards (right and wrong) played up to and including the card with the prophet marker and double this number. Dealer's score is the smaller of the high count and the doubled card total. The winner is determined by the total of all rounds, and if the game ended before all players have had a chance to deal, every player who has never dealt get 10 more points in compensation.

Example Rules

1. **Simple:**

- "Alternate between red and black cards."
- "Each card must be higher than the previous one."

2. **Complex:**

- "Prime numbers only (2, 3, 5, 7, J=11)."
 - "Each card must be either one rank higher or two ranks lower than the previous."
 - "Alternate suits in the order ♥ → ♣ → ♦ → ♠."
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Tips for the Dealer

- Test your rule beforehand to ensure it's solvable.
 - Avoid overly broad rules (e.g., "All red cards") or rules requiring memorization.
 - Start with a simple pattern to help players learn the game.
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Variation: Eleusis Express

A streamlined version where:

- The dealer writes the rule secretly before the game.
- Players have 3 lives (invalid plays cost a life).
- The first to guess the rule wins.

Eleusis is a fantastic game for logic lovers and makes a great party challenge! □

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