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Royals

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.

After learning to play Royals, players are encouraged to try Marriage Royals (three-player) and Alliance Royals (four-player with teams).

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, the equivalent of a 52-card Poker deck plus a 48-card Pinochle deck. Thus there are 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 her opponent. 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 opponent, each player declares a Home House (suit). Both players may choose the same House. Dealer's opponent may pass, giving first choice to Dealer. Dealer then chooses and also plays first. Dealer may also decide to force a re-deal, with his opponent dealing.

Face cards 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 this is from their Home House. See also "Drawing the Discard Pile", below.

2) Battle - Attacker leads a card from his hand and Defender plays a card from hers, 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 her Board in a Spoils display. The second card is placed face-down in a Dead Pile where it is removed from play.

The principle objects 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 his hand to the top of the Discard Pile, which is spread so that all cards are visible.

Melding - If a player has at least one Royal present in Spoils before her turn begins (i.e., from a previous Battle), she 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 still present. 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 his turn has in Spoils two or more different Royals from his own Home House (e.g. K & Q, but not 2 Q's), then he may draw all or part of the Discard Pile instead of the usual two cards from the Draw Stack. The bottom card so drawn must be used immediately in a Meld match. All cards on top of this 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 opponent's 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 from Defender's Meld a card from her hand of equal denomination but different suit, but only if the Royal was melded the previous turn.

For example, if Attacker is Hearts, she may trade a Jack of Clubs from her hand for a Jack of Hearts in Defender's Meld, melded the previous turn. She then places the ransomed Royal back in her hand, where it may be saved or used to lead a Battle. Cards in Spoils may not be ransomed.

Changing Home Houses - If Attacker can accumulate three cards exactly alike (e.g., three tens of Spades), he may use them to change his Home House to the suit they represent (i.e., Spades) by melding two of them, placing the third in the Dead Pile, and declaring the Home House changed. This 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 Meld before the turn begins, carry the usual privileges of Royals (i.e. melding, drawing the Discard Pile, or ending the hand, see below). If they are in Meld, they are now moved to Spoils.

Ending the Hand - Attacker may end the hand if she meets three requirements:

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

Discarding is optional on the final turn.

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

The hand then ends in the usual way, or when one player's hand runs out of cards. (This last 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 his score, without doubling for matches. If the points in the hand are more than the points in 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 hand 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.