

Cribbage Rules

A step-by-step guide
to playing cribbage



Ready to Play?

Did you know that Cribbage was created after the English game “Noddy”? Cribbage was invented in the 1600s by a man named Sir John Suckling, who was a wealthy English poet. Today Noddy has disappeared, but Cribbage is still the game to play!

The game of Cribbage provides the players with anticipation of the luck of the deal and plenty of opportunities to show their skills in discarding and playing.

A Cribbage board in the game is used for scoring instead of using a pencil and paper. A standard cribbage board has holes to accommodate pegs. The Cribbage board helps speed up scoring in this fast-moving game, pegging reduces the chances of errors in scoring.

What do you need to play Cribbage?

- Cribbage Board
- One 52-card deck of playing cards (no jokers)
- 3 sets of 3 pegs (using 2 pegs for each player)

What is the object of the game?

The object of the game is to go around the tracks/rows the same way a horse goes around an oval in a horse race, completing the course before your opponent does. The first person (or set of partners) to reach 121 points by counting a combination of cards during playing wins.

How many players can play Cribbage?

Cribbage can be played with 2 or 3 players. Can also be played with four people and play two against two as partners (partners must be seated across from each other at the table). But Cribbage is basically best played by two people. The suggested age of players is 10 years old and older.

What is the Rank of Cards?

K (high), Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, A. All face cards are counted as 10 points, and all other cards are at their face value. The aces however are worth only 1 point.

How to Peg

Keep score by using one of your pegs to jump over the other peg that is leading, the number of points you scored.

HOW TO PLAY

Cribbage

The Deal

To decide who is the starting dealer, both players (or partners) cut the deck and whoever draws the lowest card is the first dealer (if it is a tie then re-cut). The dealer alternates for each hand in the game (or clockwise if playing more than 2 people).

The Crib

For each hand in cribbage, the dealer shuffles the full deck and deals six cards face-down, one at a time, to all players and puts the rest of the deck in the middle of the playing surface.

Each player picks up the six cards they were dealt and discards two cards face-down from the six. Those four cards that were discarded go into "the crib", forming another hand of four cards that the dealer gets to score. (However, the four cards in the crib play no part in the first part of the game in which the cards are played out.) The dealer now has two hands with which to score points but is not allowed to look at the crib until it is time to count at the end of the hand and puts the crib aside for now. (If playing a 3-player game, the dealer only deals 5 cards to all players and puts one card in the crib and each player must put in 1 card into the crib. If playing with 4 players, the dealer deals 5 cards to each player and then each player puts in 1 card in the crib.)

After the crib is put away, the player to the left of the dealer cuts the deck of cards. The dealer turns up the top card of the lower packet and places it face up on top of the deck. This card is called the "starter." If the starter is a jack, it is called "His Heels," and the dealer pegs (scores) 2 points immediately. The starter is not used in the play phase of Cribbage but is used later for making various card combinations that score points when counting the hands.

Getting Started

After the starter is turned face up, the player to the left lays one of their cards face up on table and players play a card going clockwise around the table so the players hands are exposed card by card, alternately except for a "Go," as noted below. Each player needs to keep their cards separate from those of their opponent and just placed them in a pile in front of them.

As each person plays, they announce a running total by the addition of the last card to all those previously played. (Example: One player begins with a four, saying "Four." The next person (clockwise) plays a nine, saying "Thirteen".)

"GO"

During play, the running total of cards can never go past 31. If a player cannot add another card without going over 31, he or she needs to say "Go" and the player next to play pegs 1 on the board. After gaining the Go, the opponent must first lay down any additional cards (or 1 card if playing more than 2 players and continues to the players around the table until it totals 31 or no one can play) he can without exceeding 31. The last player to play a card after everyone has passed gets 1 point to peg. When a player reaches exactly 31, he/she will peg two instead of one for Go.

The player who called Go will then lead the next series of plays, with the count starting at zero. The lead may not be combined with any cards previously played to form a scoring combination; the Go has interrupted the sequence. The person who plays the last card pegs one for Go, plus one extra if the card brings the count to exactly 31.

Where do I order a Custom Cribbage Board?

- ✓ The team at The Original Workshop has standard and deluxe Cribbage Boards available to order.
 - ✓ The custom Cribbage Boards can make a great gift for someone special or treat yourself!
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Cribbage Pegging Rules

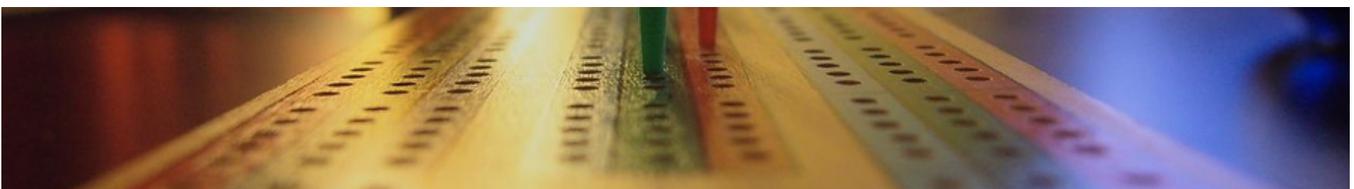
Since the object of the game is the first person/partners to reach 121 points by pegging, besides the pegging for the Go, here are scores for different hand combinations:

- Fifteen: Peg 2 for adding a card making a count total of 15.
- Pair: Peg 2 for adding a card of the same rank as the card just played
 - (Note that face cards pair only by actual rank: jack with jack, but not jack with queen.)
- Triplet: Peg 6 for adding the third card of the same rank.
- Four: (also called "Double Pair" or "Double Pair Royal") Peg 12 for adding the fourth card of the same rank.
- Run (Sequence): For adding a card that forms, with those just played:
 - Peg 3 for a sequence of three
 - Peg 4 for a sequence of four
 - Peg 5 for a sequence of five (Peg one point more for each extra card of a sequence. Note that runs are independent of suits but go strictly by rank; to illustrate: 9, 10, J, or J, 9, 10 is a run but 9, 10, Q is not.)
 - It is important to keep track of the order in which cards are played to determine whether what looks like a sequence or a run has been interrupted by a "foreign card." Example: Cards are played in this order: 8, 7, 7, 6. The dealer pegs 2 for 15, and the opponent pegs 2 for pair, but the dealer cannot peg for run because of the extra seven (foreign card) that has been played. Example: Cards are played in this order: 9, 6, 8, 7. The dealer pegs 2 for fifteen when he or she plays the six and pegs 4 for run when he plays the seven (the 6, 7, 8, 9 sequence). The cards were not played in sequential order, but they form a true run with no foreign card.

Counting The Player's Hand

Counting hands can be one of the more difficult tasks in Cribbage. By following this simple systematic approach outlined below, it can be done very easily.

When the play ends, the player's hands are counted in order: non-dealer's hands in clockwise order (first), dealer's hand (second), and then the crib (third). This order is important as the game gets towards the end, one of the players may "count out" and win before the dealer has a chance to count, even though the dealer's total would have exceeded that of the opponents. The starter card is considered to be a part of each hand so that all hands in counting comprise five cards (or less if playing more than 2 people). The basic scoring formations are as follows:



Counting The Player's Hand - cont'd

- Peg 2 for each combination of any number of cards that totals 15
- Peg 2 for each pair of cards of the same rank
 - A triplet counts 6.
 - Four of a kind counts 12.
- Each combination of three or more cards in sequence, peg 1 for each card in the sequence
 - A run of three, with one card duplicated (double run), counts 8.
 - A run of four, with one card duplicated, counts 10.
 - A run of three, with one card triplicated (triple run), counts 15.
 - A run of three, with two different cards duplicated, counts 16.
 - Note that the ace is always low and cannot form a sequence with a king. Further, a flush cannot happen during the play of the cards; it occurs only when the hands and the crib are counted.
- Peg 4 for four cards of the same suit in hand 4 (excluding the crib, and the starter).
- Four cards in hand or crib of the same 5 suit as the starter.
- There is no count for four-flush in the crib that is not of the same suit as the starter.
- His Nobs - Peg 1 for the jack of the same suit as the starter in hand or crib.

Example of Counting a Hand

A hand (including the starter) comprised of 8, 7, 7, 6, 2 scores 8 points for four combinations that total 15: the 8 with one 7, and the 8 with the other 7; the 6, 2 with each of the two 7s. The same hand also scores 2 for a pair, and 6 for two runs of three (8, 7, 6 using each of the two 7s). The total score is 16. An experienced player computes the hand thus: "Fifteen 2, fifteen 4, fifteen 6, fifteen 8, and 8 for a double run is 16."

Perfect Score of Hand

The 29 is the highest possible score in cribbage, calculated from points awarded for various pairs and combinations of cards in a player's hand. A perfect score requires having a jack card and all the four 5's, one of which is the starter card being the same suit as the jack.

Optional Counting Rule

Every player must count their hand (and their crib when they have it) aloud and announce the total. If the player overlooks any score, any of the opponents can say "Muggins" and then score the overlooked points. For experienced players, the Muggins rule is always in effect and adds even more suspense to the game.

GAME OVER

The game is done when 1 player reaches 121, whether by pegging or counting their hand. If the player who “goes out” by the count of his hand the Cribbage game will immediately end and the other players (including the dealer and his crib) can not score their hands.

If a player wins the game before one of the players has reached 61, they are called “lurched” and therefore the winner will score 2 game wins instead of one. A popular variation of the game that is played to 121 is called a “skunk” (double game) for the winner if the losing player does not pass the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark (91 points or more), and it is called a “double skunk” (quadruple game) if the losing player does not pass the halfway mark (61 or more).



Hints on Strategy

Crib

What card(s) should you throw into the crib and what should you hold in your hand? This question usually troubles all people who are learning to play cribbage. Here are some tips to help you.

- ✓ Always avoid breaking up runs as runs are the key to scoring big hands.
- ✓ If you are the dealer, throw cards that are connected such as a 7 and 8 or 2 and 3 to increase the chances for a run in the crib for more points.
- ✓ If you are not the dealer, try throwing cards in the crib that are far apart and unrelated, such as a king and 6. This combination yields no chance for a run.
- ✓ Stay away from throwing 5s in the crib if you are not the dealer since any card with a value of ten will give a fifteen.

Playing Hand

- ✓ The 5 card would be the worst lead card as there are too many ten-cards that the other players can make the count 15 and peg points.
 - ✓ Do not lead with an ace or a deuce as these cards should be saved until later in the hand to help make a 15, a Go, or a 31.
 - ✓ A great lead is a four card because this card cannot be used to make a 15.
 - ✓ It is recommended that during playing try not to make a count of 21, as the next player can play many of the 10-cards and make 31 to peg 2 points.
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Closing Thoughts

Cribbage is an excellent game and well worth learning. The game has many loyal followers and Cribbage loyalists have handed down the compassion for the game from generation to generation. You can play Cribbage anywhere with a standard deck of cards and a cribbage board. At The Original Workshop, we can custom design your cribbage board and you can enjoy the game for years to come!

Follow these Cribbage Rules to help you play and win!



Need a Cribbage Board?

*Order your custom standard or deluxe Cribbage Board
from The Original Workshop.*

