

Cribbage Rules

Object

To be the first to score 121 points or over accumulated over several deals. Points are scored mainly for combinations of cards either occurring during the play or occurring in a player's hand or in the cards discarded before the play, which form the crib or box.

Cribbage is played on a Cribbage board with pegs. Cribbage uses a standard 52-card pack. Cards rank K (high) Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 A (low.)

Board and Pegs

The score is kept by means of a board and pegs. Starting at one end of the board -- usually to the left of the first dealer -- players peg their scores as they occur using their two pegs alternately: the forward peg shows the player's latest score, and the rear peg shows the previous score.

When a player scores, the rear peg is moved in front of the forward peg by the same number of holes as the score to show the new total. This enables scores to be easily checked and acts as a visible statement of the progress of the game. Players peg up on the outside of the board and back on the inside. The winner is the first to peg out by exceeding 120.

Deal

The first deal is determined randomly, and then alternates from hand to hand until the game is over. Six cards are dealt face down to each player.

Discard

Each player chooses two cards to discard facedown to form the crib. These four cards are set aside until the end of the hand. The crib will count for the dealer -- non-dealer will try to throw cards that are unlikely to make valuable combinations, but must balance this against keeping a good hand for himself. Dealer, on the other hand, may sometimes find it pays to place good cards in the box, especially if they cannot be used to best advantage in hand.

Start Card

Non-dealer cuts the stack of undealt cards, lifting the upper part without showing its bottom card. The dealer takes out the top card of the lower part, turns it face up and, after non-dealer replaces the upper part, places it face up on top of the pack. This turned up card is called the start card - it will count for combinations as part of both players' hands as well as of the dealer's box.

If the start card is a jack, the dealer immediately pegs 2 holes. This is called Two for his heels.

Play of the cards

Starting with the non-dealer, the players take turns to play single cards face up in front of them. In this stage of the game the total pip value of the cards played by both players must not exceed 31. The pip values of the cards are:

Ace = 1; 2 to 10 = face value; jack = 10; queen = 10; king = 10.

As each card is played, the running total is displayed. If a card is played which brings the total exactly to 31, the player pegs 2 claiming "Thirty one for two."

A player who cannot play without exceeding 31 does not play a card but says "Go," leaving his opponent to continue if possible, pegging for any further combinations made (see below). Bringing the total to exactly 31 pegs 2, but if neither player can lay a card without going over 31, then the last player to lay a card pegs "One for last."

The cards that have been played are turned over and a fresh round of play starts with the unplayed cards in exactly the same way - the player who did not make Thirty one for two or One for last having to play first. Play continues until both players' cards are exhausted. (It is often worth keeping low cards in hand for this phase of the game, especially when there is a strong possibility of being able to peg out before one's opponent.) In the last round of play, when both players run out of cards, the player of the last card will peg "one for last" if the total is less than 31 or "31 for 2" if it is exactly 31.

Please note: it is never possible to score "one for last" and "31 for 2" at the same time. They are alternatives. If you make exactly 31 for two points you do not get an additional "one for last".

Scoring during the play

A player who makes any of the following scores during the play pegs them immediately.

15: If you play a card which brings the total to 15 you peg 2 claiming "Fifteen two."

31: As mentioned above, if you play a card which brings the total to exactly 31 you peg 2.

Pair: If you play a card of the same rank as the previous card (e.g. a king after a king) you peg 2 for a pair. Note that, for example, a 10 and a queen do NOT make a pair even though they are both worth ten points.

Pair Royal: If immediately after a pair a third card of the same rank is played, the player of the third card scores 6 for pair royal.

Double Pair Royal: Four cards of the same rank, played in immediate succession. The player of the fourth card scores 12.

Run: A run or sequence is a set of 3 or more cards of consecutive ranks (irrespective of suit) - such as 9-10-jack or 2-3-5-4. Note that ace is low so, for example, ace-king-queen is not a run. The player of a card which completes a run scores for the run; the score is equal to the number of cards in the run. The cards do not have to be played in order, but no other cards must intervene.

Example: cards are played in the following order:

4-2-3-5-6. The player of the 3 scores 3 for a run, then the player of the 5 scores 4, and the player of the 6 scores 5.

Another example: 4-2-3-4-3. The player of the first 3 scores 3 for the run 4-2-3. Then the player of the second 4 scores 3 for the run 2-3-4. The player of the second 3 scores nothing because the 3 does not complete a run.

Last Card: If neither player manages to make the total exactly 31, whoever played the last card pegs 1.

Note that to score for pair, pair royal, double pair royal or run, the cards must have been played consecutively during a single round of play. If one player had to say "go" while the combination was being formed, the combination is still valid, but if both players are unable to play, causing a new round of play to be started from zero, all combinations are started afresh.

Example 1: Player A has 10, 10, 9, 6; player B has 7, 6, 5, 4.

A plays 9, B plays 6 (scoring fifteen two), A plays 6 (scoring two for a pair), B plays 5. The total is now 26; A has to say "go", so B plays 4, scoring three for a run, plus one for last. The A begins again with 10, B plays 7, and A plays the other 10, scoring one for last.

Example 2: Player A has 10, 8, 7, 5; player B has 7, 6, 5, 4. A plays 8, B plays 7 (scoring fifteen two), A plays 7 (scoring two for a pair), B plays 6. The total is now 28; neither can play, so B scores one for last. If A now begins again with a 5, A does not score for a run, because the 7 and 6 were played in the previous round of play (before the total was reset to zero).

The Show

Players now score for combinations of cards held in hand. First the non-dealer's hand is exposed, and scored. The start card also counts as part of the hand when scoring combinations. All valid scores from the following list are counted.

15: Any combination of cards adding up to 15 pips scores 2 points. For example king, jack, five, five would count 8 points (four fifteens as the king and the jack can each be paired with either five.) You would say Fifteen two, fifteen four, fifteen six, fifteen eight. In this case you would also peg Two for the pair (of fives), making 10.

Pair: A pair of cards of the same rank score 2 points. Three cards of the same rank contain 3 different pairs and thus score a total of 6 points for pair royal. Four of a kind contain 6 pairs and so score 12 points.

Run: Three cards of consecutive rank (irrespective of suit), such as ace-2-3, score 3 points for a run. A hand such as 6-7-7-8 contains two runs of 3 (as well as two fifteens and a pair) and so would score 12 altogether. A run of four cards, such as 9-10-J-Q scores 4 points, and a run of five cards scores 5.

Flush: If all four cards of the hand are the same suit, 4 points are scored for flush. If the start card is the same suit as well, the flush is worth 5 points. There is no score for having 3 hand cards and the start all the same suit. Note also that there is no score for flush during the play - it only counts in the show.

One For His Nob: If the hand contains the jack of the same suit as the start card, you peg One for his nob.

Nineteen: It is impossible to score nineteen in hand or in box. Nineteen is proverbially used as a term to indicate a worthless hand.

Note that when scoring a hand, the same card may be counted and scored as part of several different combinations. For example if your hand is 7 8 8 K and the start card is a 9 you score Fifteen 2, fifteen 4, and a pair is 6, and a run is 9 and a run is 12. 12 holes to peg, with each of your 8s forming part of a fifteen, a pair and a run.

After non-dealer's hand has been shown and the score pegged, dealer's hand is shown, scored and pegged in the same way. Finally the dealer exposes the four cards of the crib and scores them with the start card. The scoring is the same as for the players' hands except that a flush in the crib only scores if all four crib cards and the start card are of the same suit. If that happens the flush scores 5.

Winning the game

As soon as someone reaches or passes 121, that player wins the game. This can happen at any stage - during the play or the show, or even by dealer scoring two for his heels. It is not necessary to reach 121 exactly - you can peg out by scoring 2 more when you were on 120 and still win.