

HOW TO PLAY CRIBBAGE

For two to four players, aged 10+.



***Note:** While this article covers the basics of how to play cribbage, the best way to learn the subtleties of the game is with someone who already knows how to play.*

Object of Game

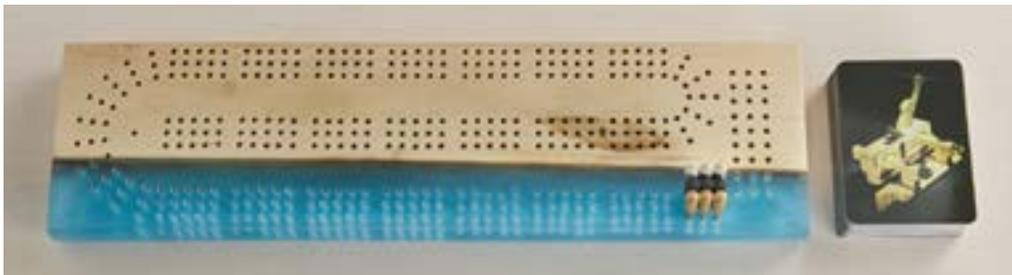
The object of the game is to be the first player to score 121 points.

The Game Set-Up

You will need a standard deck of 52 cards and a cribbage board (with pegs).

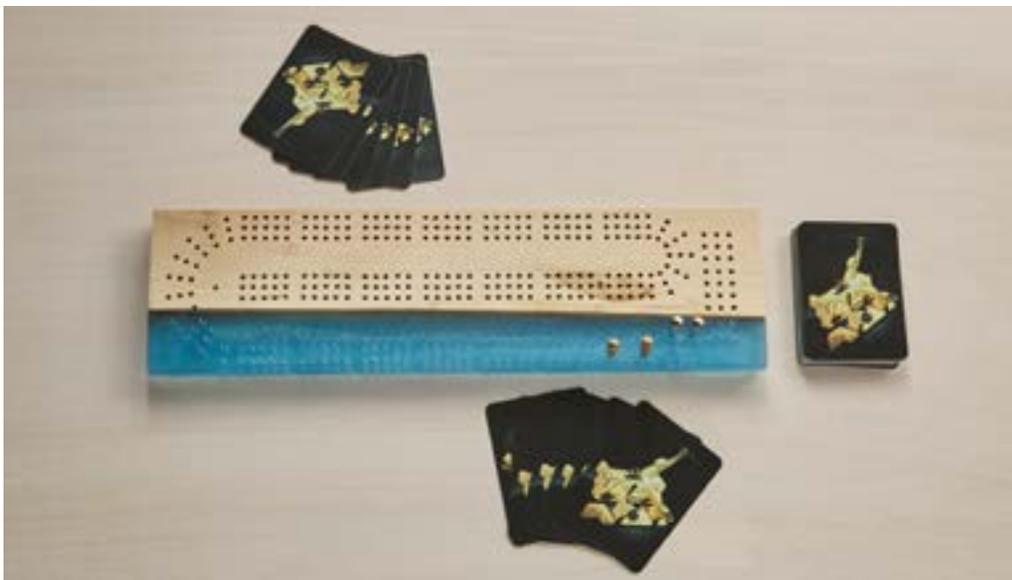
Cards are their numeric value up to ten. The ace counts as one. Face cards (jack, queen and king) have a value of ten.

Place the cribbage board between the players.



Pegs help to keep of a record of each player's points on the cribbage board. Each player takes two pegs of the same color to indicate their score on their track.

A player marks their first score by moving one peg from the start, counting one hole for each point. That player marks their next score by placing their second peg that number of points beyond the first peg to show their new score. This greatly reduces computing errors.



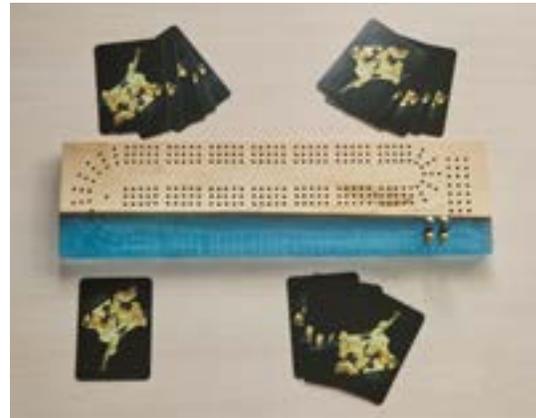
The Deal

Shuffle the deck. Set the full deck of cards face down on a table. Each player cuts a card from the same deck. The player who cuts the lowest card deals the first hand. The player to the left of the dealer deals the next hand.

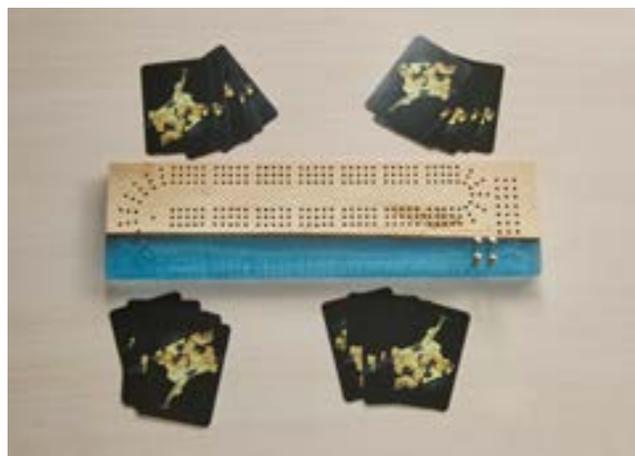
- Two-player game: The dealer deals six cards face down to each player.
- Three-player game: The dealer deals five cards face down to each player and then one card off to the side.
- Four-player game: The dealer deals five cards face down to each player.



Two-player game



Three-player game



Four-player game

The Crib

Each player looks at their cards and decides which four cards they will keep in their hand. For a six-card deal, each player discards two cards (face down); for a five-card deal, each player discards one card (face down).

Tip: *Players should keep the combination of cards that will get them the most points. For example, a player's hand consists of a 4, 4, 5, 6, 9 and a queen. By discarding the 9 and the queen, that player would obtain the most points out of that hand.*



Place the discarded cards face down in a pile in front of the dealer. This four-card pile becomes the “crib”. The dealer will count these for extra points at the end of the hand.



The Cut or Starter Card

The player to the left of the dealer cuts the remaining cards in the deck. The dealer draws the top card from the deck and lays this “cut”, or starter card, face up on top of the remaining deck, where it will come into play later in the game. All the players will use this card as a wild fifth card to count points at the end of a hand.



If the cut card is a jack, then the dealer immediately scores 2 points.

The Play

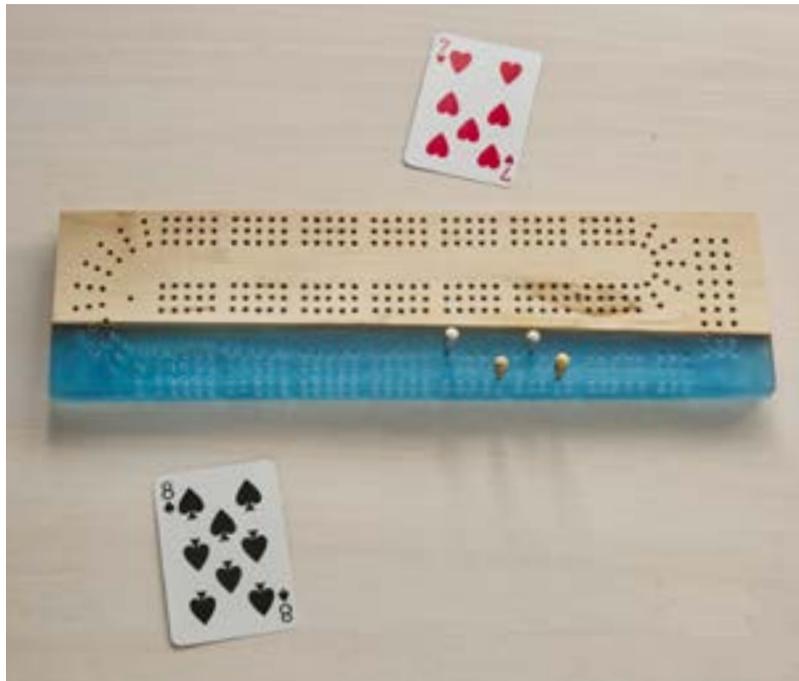
The player to the left of the dealer lays one of their cards face up on the table and announces the face value of that card.

Tip: Typically, a player starts with the highest card in their hand.

The player to the left of that first player then lays one of their cards face up on the table and announces the running total of the cards.

Each player keeps their cards separate from the others. As the players take their turn to lay a card, they announce the running total until the running total reaches 31 without going over or when no player can lay down a card.

If their card plus the laid card equals 15, then that player gets 2 points.



If their card has the same value as the previous card (e.g., a 7 laid after a 7), then that player gets 2 points. However, if a player lays a queen after a king, that player doesn't get 2 points, even if queens and kings are worth 10.

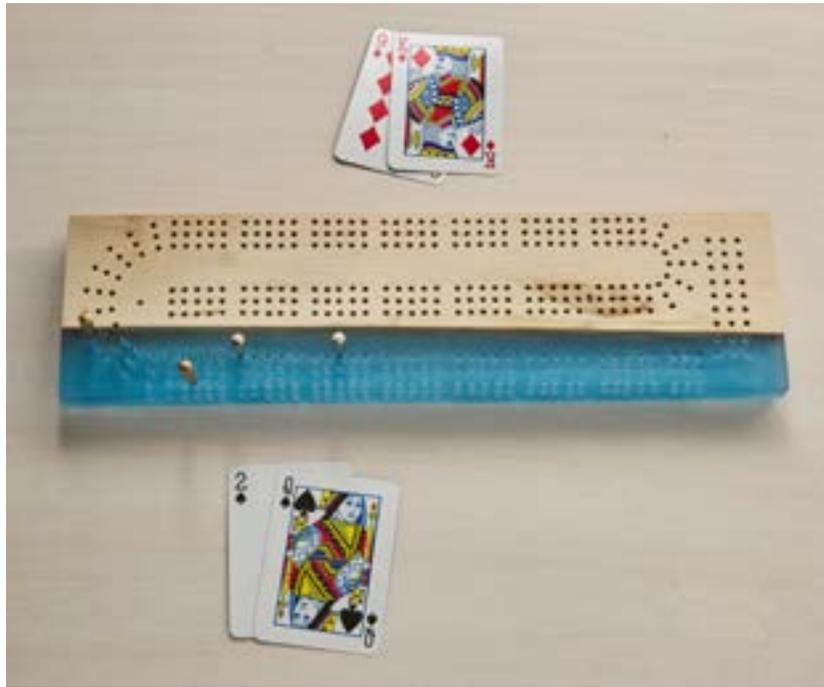


If one player lays a 7, then the next player lays a 6, then the other player lays an 8, this particular run would also result in the player saying "21 for three" and then peg 3 points on the board.



The Go

The play stops when a player cannot lay down another card without exceeding 31.



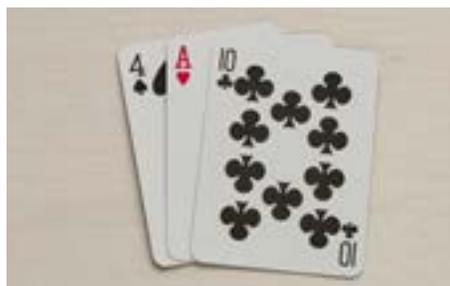
When a player cannot add another card without going over 31, that player says “go”. At this time, the last player who laid a card can lay as many cards as they can without going over 31 and pegs 1 point. If the total reaches exactly 31, then that player earns 2 points (1 point for the go and 1 point for reaching exactly 31).

For a game with 3 or 4 players, the game continues with the next player until one reaches a number as close to 31 as possible, even if using multiple cards. The next player must then play a card if they can. One player can thus play several cards without the other being able to play. If no one can play without exceeding 31, the last player to put down a card wins 1 point.

The player who couldn’t go lays another card from their hand, face up on the table, and the counting starts over from zero.

Pegging

Any cards that add up to 15, peg 2 points.



Pairs (two of the same rank), peg 2 points.



Three-of-a-kind, peg 6 points



Run of three (i.e., three consecutive cards, but not necessarily in order), peg 3 points. For a run of four, peg 4 points, etc.

For example, player 1 lays a 4, player 2 lays a 6 and the next player lays a 5, that player now pegs 3 points for completing a run of three. Should the next player lay a 3 or a 7, then that player would peg 4 points for making a run of four.



Flushes (four or more of the same suit), peg 4 points.

Note: A flush cannot happen during the play of the cards. It occurs only when the hands and the crib are counted.



Counting the Hands

The play ends once all the cards in a hand have been laid. At this time, players count their points.

The player to the left of the dealer will count their hand first and proceed around back to the dealer.

A player needs to determine all the different ways that their cards can add up to 15. If a player has any 15s, then they need to say "15 for 2". If they have more than one combination that adds up to 15, then they proceed to say "15 for 4", and so on until they finish counting their combinations of 15.

A player also needs to determine if they have any pairs, runs, or three-of-a-kinds.

For example, to count a hand that consists of a 4, 4, 5, 6, the player would first say "15 for 2" (e.g., 6, 5, 4 = 15), "15 for 4" (e.g., 6, 5, other 4 = 15), "15 for 6" (e.g., 9, 6 = 15), two runs of three and a pair, for a total of 14 points. The player would peg 14 holes on the board.



The cut card is used to help a player get more points in their hand.

After the dealer has counted their main hand, the dealer proceeds to count the "crib" (e.g., all of the cards that were discarded at the beginning of the hand) for more points.



If, for example, the crib consisted of a king, a king, a queen and a 2, then the dealer would get another 2 points for the pair of kings.



The Game

The player to the left of the dealer from the last round deals the next hand.

The first player to reach 121 points wins the game.

