

## **Alliance Royals**

Royals is an elaborate game of the Rummy family in which players must accumulate Royals (face cards) of their own Family (suit) by winning Battles (tricks), before they can acquire further points by melding matches of three or more cards. Combinations of Royals gain further privileges and score enhancements.

Standard Royals is a two-player game. Learning to play standard Royals first will help in learning Alliance Royals. Alliance Royals is one of the most complicated card games in the world.

**Number of Players** – Four, in two Alliances of two players each.

**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 trick a 2 (or “Sneak”) beats an Ace of the same suit.

**The Deal** - Dealer gives ten cards to each player, clockwise beginning with his Enemy to the left. 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.

**Choosing Suits** – In the same order as the deal, each player declares a Home Suit. Two or more players may choose the same suit. Allies may not discuss which suits to pick.

Face cards from your Home Suit are your Royals.

**The Play** - Players take turns as Attacker (lead player) in the same order as the deal. Each turn includes the following five parts:

**1) Draw** - Attacker draws one card, followed by each player clockwise. Attacker then draws a second card. You may draw either the top card of the Draw Stack, or the top card of the Discard Pile if this is from your home suit. See also "Drawing the Discard Pile", below.

**2) Gift Exchange** - In each turn, following the draw, Attacker and Ally pass one card to each other from their hands. The exchange is mandatory and made without discussion.

If you meld before your Gift Exchange, and your Enemies challenge, you must return the meld to your hand, and you cannot meld in that turn. See the exception to this rule in “Drawing from the Discard Pile”.

If you start a Battle before your Gift Exchange, and your Enemies challenge before you and your Ally both choose your cards, your enemies automatically win the Battle.

If a Gift Exchange is forgotten, but not challenged before discard, play continues without a Gift Exchange.

**3) Battle** – Attacker plays a card from his hand, followed by each player clockwise, playing “in Family” (same suit) if possible. The highest Family card wins. In a tie the winner is the first played.

A Family Sneak (two) wins if a Family Ace is also played. Otherwise, the Sneak loses to any other Family card.

The winning team Shares the Spoils. Victor chooses one of the cards played, and her Ally chooses another. The chosen cards are “Spoils” and placed face up on the table in each player’s Spoils display (numeric cards may be placed in the Meld display instead). The remaining two cards are placed face-down in a "Dead Pile" where they are removed from play.

The principle objects of Battles are Royals (Home Suit K, Q, J) and Aces.

**4) Optional Plays** - Assassination, Ransoming or Changing Suits, all described below, may be performed any time during Attacker’s turn, before or after the Gift Exchange. Melding, Arranged Marriage, and Hostage Declaration are permitted only after the Gift Exchange. All optional plays must be completed before the discard.

**5) Discard** – Attacker discards one card from his hand to the top of the Discard Pile, which is spread so that all cards are visible.

### Optional Plays

**Melding** - If a player has at least one Royal present in her Spoils display before her turn begins (i.e., won in a previous Battle), she may meld matches of three or more cards with the same denomination, such as three tens. The cards are placed in her Meld display, separated from Spoils. The three matched cards may include cards already in Meld or Spoils, but all cards remain in their original section. Further matching cards may be added to a Meld in later turns, provided that the total number continues to be three or more, and that at least one Royal is still present in Spoils.

Royals may not be melded. However, Royals in Spoils may be included in a meld match. 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 a trick.

**Drawing the Discard Pile** - If Attacker at the beginning of his turn has in Spoils two or more different Royals from his own suit (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 Pile. The bottom card so drawn must be used immediately in a Meld. (This is an exception to the rule against Melding before Gift Exchange). All cards on top of this card are placed in the hand. Further melding may proceed after the Gift Exchange. The other players each draw their usual one card from the Draw Pile (or the new top of the Discard Pile), and play proceeds as usual.

**Assassination** - Aces taken in Battle are called "Assassins", and may be used to eliminate cards from another player’s Spoils or Meld displays. Assassins can only be used if they are in Spoils before Attacker’s turn begins. The Assassin eliminates any one card of the same suit, and both the Assassin and the Victim card are placed in the Dead Pile.

Typical Victims are Royals or other Assassins which threaten Royals. Assassination can also eliminate the third card of a melded triplet, thereby reducing the point values of the remaining cards (see "Scoring", below).

You are allowed to assassinate cards in your Ally’s Meld or Spoils. For example, if your Ally has a Marriage (see below), and your scores are likely to be negative, you can assassinate one of the Royal spouses to prevent additional negative scoring. But you cannot assassinate your own cards.

**Ransoming** - Attacker may "Ransom" a Royal from another player's Meld with a card from her hand of equal denomination but different suit, but only if the Royal was melded during the previous round of turns.

For example, if Attacker is hearts, she may trade a jack of clubs from her hand for a jack of hearts that another player has melded since her last turn. She then places the ransomed Royal back in her hand, where it may be saved or used in Battle. Cards in Spoils may not be ransomed.

If a player ransoms a face card from your Meld, and replaces it with one of your Royals, you may ransom that Royal from your own Meld during your next turn. If your Royal remains in Meld after this one opportunity, it does not gain any privileges or enhance your score beyond its meld value.

**Changing Home Suits** - If you can accumulate three cards exactly alike (e.g., three tens of spades), you may use them to change your Home Suit to the suit they represent (i.e., spades).

The three cards may be 1) already in Meld or Spoils, 2) in your Hand, 3) drawn from the Draw Pile, 4) drawn from the top of the Discard Pile, as if the new suit is already your Home Suit, or 5) ransomed from another player's Meld display if melded the previous turn. These last two options are permitted only for the turn in which the suit is changed.

The three cards are placed in Spoils if they are Royals, and in Meld if they are Tens or Nines. Aces are placed in Meld unless they are already in Spoils, where they remain. Royals of the new suit in Meld before the turn began are moved to Spoils, where they immediately gain privileges.

No Royal from the prior suit is needed in Spoils for any of these moves. An Attacker may change suits before or after the Gift Exchange.

The player completes the Home Suit Change by placing one of the three cards in the Dead Pile.

You may "change" to your own suit. For example, if you are hearts and you have three jacks of hearts, you can place two in Spoils and toss one in the dead pile. New Royals give you the typical privileges in your next turn. (In the case of additional scores, in the same turn).

You may change suits when it is not your turn if the top card of the Discard Pile finishes a set of three. You may also ransom one of the three in the same move. You must immediately display the three cards, toss one in the Dead Pile, and place the remaining two in Spoils. If they are not assassinated before your next turn, they give you the usual privileges.

**Royal Marriage:** If a player has in Spoils a Royal King or Queen, together with the conjugal match from Ally's suit, that is a Marriage.

A Marriage adds a score to each Ally. (See explanation under scoring).

A Married Royal in your Ally's Spoils display counts as your Royal to earn privileges. With one, you can lay down Meld and you can use it to go out. If you also have a different Royal in your own Spoils, you can pick up part of the discard pile. If it gives you all three Royals, you add a score. (See scoring).

If one spouse is assassinated, the other loses the privileges of Marriage.

If you and your Ally have the same suit, you cannot have marriages.

**Arranged Marriage and Betrothal:** If your Ally wins his Royal King or Queen in a Battle and places it in his Spoils, in your next turn you may trade your own Royal King or Queen from your hand for that matching Royal in your Ally's Spoils (like Ransoming). The trade does not need to result in a Marriage (if not, it is a Betrothal). The arranging player must first ask for and receive permission for the exchange, but no extra discussion is allowed. A player who arranges a Marriage must wait for her next turn before using the new Royal to gain privileges.

**Hostages:** If you have in Spoils an enemy King or Queen, you may declare such card a Hostage. A

Hostage nullifies the privileges and scoring results of one identical card that is Married or Betrothed. (A player's own Royals cannot be nullified, only his Ally's Royals). The Hostage Declaration must be made during the declaring player's turn, and may be revoked during any subsequent turn.

**Redemption:** A Hostage card is subject to redemption by either enemy player. Attackers may redeem a Hostage by trading a king or queen of differing suit from their own hand. Redemption is legal in any turn, not just the turn following the Hostage Declaration.

**Ending the Hand** – Attacker may end the Hand if she meets three requirements:

- 1) At least one 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.
- 3) Winning the Battle.

Discarding is optional on the final turn.

If the Draw Stack runs out before any 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 pile.)

**Scoring** - Cards in Meld and 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 of three or more (e.g., two sixes are 20 points, three sixes are 60 points). Cards left in a player's hand are subtracted, without doubling for matches. If the points in the Hand are more than the points on the table, the score is negative ("in the hole").

Add another complete score for each of the following:

Each complete set of your Royals (K, Q & J) in Spoils or married in your Ally's Spoils.

Each marriage in your Spoils or your Ally's Spoils.

For example, if you have all three Royals, and your Ally has a marriage, your score is tripled.

If your score is negative, the extra scores are also subtracted.

**End of Game** - Scores for each hand are added. The game ends when 1) The combined score of one Alliance passes 1066 (Battle of Hastings) or 2) The combined score of one Alliance drops below -333 (Battle of Issus), or 3) One Alliance surrenders. High score wins.