

...give it your best shot.

How To Play

The Object:

The aim of Wyoming Cowboy is to reach 500 points. The first player to do so wins. If multiple players pass the 500 point mark in the same hand, the player with the highest score at the end of that hand wins.

The Setup:

For three or four players, take a normal deck of playing cards and remove the Jokers. (For more than four players, [see the FAQ.](#)) Take the Aces out and lay them, face up, off to the side by themselves; then shuffle the deck.

The Deal:

Choose a player to deal first, and have that player deal seven cards face down to each player. Place the remaining cards face down in the middle of the table (or floor, or wherever you are playing.) The player to the dealer's right should deal the next hand, and the player to the dealer's left takes the first turn in each hand. (In this way, the dealer in one hand will take the first turn in the next.)

The Play:

Before play begins, the dealer must choose the direction of the initial pass (left, right, or across in a standard, four-person game). All players must examine their cards and choose three to pass in the direction indicated. Each player must pass his/her three cards before looking at the cards passed to him/her.

After each player has passed and received three cards, play begins and moves clockwise (to the left) around the table, beginning with the player to the left of the dealer. On each turn, each player may take a single action (as described below), then discard, and then draw from the draw pile. No action may be taken after the discard. **ALWAYS DISCARD BEFORE DRAWING**; this is different from most card games and very important. Players may draw the top discarded card from the discard pile*.

The five possible actions from which a player may choose on every turn are:

1. *Nothing* - A player can simply discard and draw, taking no action if he/she so chooses.
2. *Show one Couple* - A couple is a King and Queen of the same suit. To show a couple, a player must physically take the couple out of his/her hand, show it to the other players (most importantly, to the scorekeeper), and then return it to his/her hand ([see scoring](#)).
3. *Pass two Cards* - A player may lay down a 9 on the discard pile and then state which direction everyone will pass (left, right, or across in a standard, four-person game). Each player passes two cards in the direction indicated before looking at the cards he/she receives. (The passer will receive two cards back from his/her left if he/she passed to the right.) The passer must then discard and draw as usual; his/her hand is reduced by one card by passing.
4. *Pull one Gun* - To pull a gun, a player removes the gun cards from his/her hand ([see guns](#)) and lays them, face up, on the table in front of him/her. A player may lay down only one gun per turn, but there is no limit on the total number of guns each player may lay down in a hand. Guns are not worth points in themselves, but once a gun is on the table, a player may use it to shoot cowboys in subsequent turns, and cowboys are worth points.
5. *Shoot* - On each turn in which a player elects to shoot, he/she may take one shot with each of the guns pulled out in previous turns. Shooting is what makes this game truly unique, and not a little complex. There is a detailed explanation of shooting on the [Guns & Shooting page](#). Basically, every gun you have on the table gives you an extra chance, per turn, to take other players' Cowboys or end the hand.

There are two special types of discards which can benefit a player and which, as they are discards, do not count as actions. They are:

1. *Discarding a 10* - 10's are worth ten points when discarded. In order to keep the ten points until the end of the hand, players should discard 10's on the table in front of them rather than in the discard pile. No player may take another player's 10's after they have been discarded onto the table.
2. *Discarding a 5** - 5's are valuable cards because they are required for the two most powerful guns. Thus, if a player discards a 5, he/she may draw two cards. This may be either the top two cards on the draw pile or the top card on the draw pile and the top discarded card on the discard pile.

One final discarding note: **6's may never be discarded** unless every other card in the player's hand (except other 6's) would count as positive points if the game ended immediately ([see cards](#)).

As the hand progresses, and players accumulate guns and collections ([see scoring](#)) the draw pile will grow smaller. It will also be depleted many times in the average hand. Each time this happens the dealer should simply take the discard pile (except for the top discarded card), shuffle it, and turn it over to become the new draw pile.

The Ending of a Hand:

Each hand can end in one of two ways:

1. When all the 10's and a .22 have been laid on the table, or
2. When all four aces have been distributed as protection for cowboys ([see shooting](#))

In case 1, the player who laid down the .22 or last 10 is credited with ending the hand. In case 2, the player who took the shot which caused the last cowboy to get protection is credited with ending the hand. Any player holding a 10 or a .22 in his/her hand at the end of the game is guilty of delaying the game.

As soon as one of the two cases above is met so that the hand is ended, all players lay down their hands for everyone to see, and each player's points ([see scoring](#)) are tallied up and added to his/her running total from any previous hands .

* A discrepancy exists between the guy who invented the game, Jeff, and my wife, Melissa, regarding discarding. The rules I have recorded here reflect, you guessed it, Melissa's preference. Jeff contends that drawing the top card from the discard pile constitutes an action, and may not be done if another action is taken that turn. Jeff also says discarding a five and drawing two cards to replace it is a distinct action. Melissa says these two rules are silly and unnecessarily restrictive. I've tried both ways and I think Melissa's way tends to be more fun. Feel free to decide for yourselves.

Scoring

| Positive Points | | Negative Points | |
|--|------|--|------|
| Ending a hand (see How to Play) | +30 | Delay of game (see How to Play) | -30 |
| 10's  | +10 | 6's  | -20 |
| Cowboy (individual kings)  | +25 | Harlot (individual queens)  | -25 |
| Couple (shacking up - king and queen of the same suit during a hand)*  | +25 | Marriage (king and queen of the same suit at the end of a hand)*  | -50 |
| Orphanage (good - all the jacks)  | +80 | 666 (evil - three sixes)  | -100 |
| Harem (all the queens)  | +100 | | |
| Family (ace, king, queen, jack of the same suit)  | +120 | | |
| Gang (all the kings)  | +150 | | |
| Posse (all the kings and aces)  | +200 | | |

* With the exception of Couples, all points are tallied at the end of the hand.

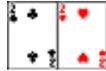
When a hand ends, the player who ended it gets the 30 points for ending, and each player tallies up the positive and negative points he/she has in his/her hand and on the board (as with 10's). Couples are different. On any turn, a player may show a couple (actually show a king and queen of the same suit to the other players) at which point the scorekeeper will write down 25 points and the suit of the couple. Each player may get one couple of each suit in each hand (up to 100 points). No player may get points for the same couple twice in a hand even if the couple seems to have separation anxiety and keeps getting back together in his/her hand. If a couple is still together at the end of the hand, they're married, and sadly, when a cowboy marries a harlot, its negative points.

Guns & Shooting

All About Guns

As play progresses, players will accumulate "guns" in their hands (combinations of cards outlined below). On any turn, a player may pull out ONE gun (assuming the player is not taking another action - [see How to Play](#)). To pull a gun, the player actually lays down the cards making up the gun (eg - a 3 and an 8) on the board in front of him/her. The total number of cards held in the player's hand will be reduced by the number of cards laid down. On any turn after a gun has been pulled (again, assuming the player is not taking another action) the player may shoot at another player with the gun. If the player has pulled multiple guns across previous turns, each gun may be fired each turn. Yes - you can shoot each gun you have on the table in each turn that you decide to shoot (though you don't have to).

.22



two 2's of any suit

- ⇒ Can shoot unprotected cowboys
- ⇒ Can backfire (getting you a 6 instead of a cowboy)
- ⇒ Can end a hand if pulled out after all the 10's have been played
- ⇒ Can cost you a delay of game if you are holding it when a hand ends

.38



a 3 and an 8 of any suit

- ⇒ Can shoot unprotected cowboys

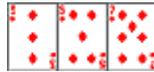
.357



a 3, a 5, and a 7 of any suit

- ⇒ Can shoot unprotected cowboys

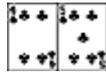
.357 quick draw



a 3, a 5, and a 7 in the same suit

- ⇒ Can shoot unprotected cowboys
- ⇒ Can shoot the gun out of another players hand (getting the gun for you)

.45



a 4 and a 5 in the same suit

- ⇒ Can shoot unprotected cowboys
- ⇒ Can shoot protected cowboys

All About Shooting

To shoot an **unprotected** cowboy (a king without an ace protecting it), the shooter declares which gun he/she will be using and asks another player (the victim) "Can I shoot you?" At this point, one of four things can happen.

1. **Backfire** - If the shooter is using a .22 and the victim is holding a 6, the victim can give the shooter the 6 (and the shooter must take it).
2. **Quick draw** - If the victim is holding .357 quick draw, he/she may immediately pull it out AND take the gun which the shooter is using. The victim may shoot with both guns on his/her next turn. (Once drawn quickly and laid on the board, it functions like a normal .357; it can shoot at unprotected cowboys but cannot be used as a quick draw again.)
3. **Nothing** - If the victim does not have an unprotected cowboy (and the two cases above do not apply) the victim just says "No". In this case, the shooter misses.
4. **Shot is Fired** - If, on the other hand, the victim does have an unprotected cowboy (and cases 1 and 2 above do not apply), then the shooter may flip over the top card from the draw pile (laying it on the discard pile) to determine whether or not the victim has been hit by the shot. It is the suit of this shot card which determines the accuracy of the shot.

- ⇒ Shot **Misses** - If the victim is holding an unprotected cowboy of the SAME suit as the shot, the shot misses, AND (as a reward for the nimble skill displayed in ducking a bullet) the cowboy receives a deputy's badge as protection (an ace of the same suit from the ace pile). Only a .45 can shoot a protected cowboy ([see below](#)).
- ⇒ Shot **Hits** - If the victim is holding one or more unprotected cowboys, all of which are of

DIFFERENT suits than the shot, the shot hits. The victim must hand over an unprotected cowboy to the shooter and may, if he/she desires, immediately draw a card from the draw pile to replace the cowboy. If the victim does not draw to replace the cowboy before the shooter discards and draws, the cowboy may not be replaced and the victim's hand is reduced by one card.

That sounds like a lot can happen if you open fire, I know, but cases 1 and 2 above are fairly uncommon. Typically it is a good thing to shoot - you'll either hit or miss.

To shoot a **protected** cowboy (a king with an ace protecting it), the shooter must be using a .45. All the above rules apply except that the shot must be the same suit as the protected cowboy in order to hit him. If the victim is holding a protected cowboy that is the same suit as the shot fired by a .45, the shot hits. The victim must hand over the protected cowboy and its ace (badge) to the shooter. The victim may then, if he/she desires, immediately draw one or two cards from the draw pile to replace the cowboy and badge. If the victim does not draw to replace before the shooter discards and draws, the cards may not be replaced and the victim's hand is reduced.

(Think about it for a second and it will all make sense. Any gun has a three in four chance of hitting an unprotected cowboy and a .45 has a one in four chance of hitting a protected king. Thus .45's and protection are both quite valuable.)

The only complication can arise when the victim is holding **both** protected and unprotected cowboys AND the shooter is using a .45. In this case, it is important to remember that a .45 is assumed to be aiming at protected cowboys. So, for example, if the victim is holding the protected king of hearts as well as the unprotected king of spades when a heart is turned over as the shot from a .45, the shooter will hit the king of hearts (the protected cowboy) rather than the (unprotected) king of spades. If the shot had been a club or diamond, the shot would ricochet, missing the protected king but hitting the (unprotected) king of spades (which is why you should never stand around near a gun fight).

NOTE - Although the shot cards are turned over on top of the discard pile, they can NOT be picked up by the next player. The next player may still pick up the last discarded card on the discard pile even if it lies beneath shot cards.

Cards

In Wyoming Cowboy, each card has significance. Here's a breakdown of the game card-by-card.



King
(Cowboy)

Worth **points** individually, as a group, as part of a family, or as part of a couple, cowboys can be shot from your hand by other players' guns. (You do not need to have a cowboy to shoot at another player - only a gun). Cowboys can receive the protection of aces, making it difficult for other players to shoot them (**see shooting**). The only time a cowboy can bring you negative points rather than positive is when he is still coupled up at the end of a hand, which is a marriage.



Queen
(Harlot)

The Queen can be good or bad. As part of a couple, harem, or family, a queen brings positive points. Alone or as part of a marriage (without children and protection), a queen brings negative points. (Rationale being that dance hall girls make fine company but poor wives.)



Jack
(Orphan)

By themselves, the orphans are harmless. As part of families or orphanages, they bring positive points.



Ten
(10 points)

10's are always worth 10 points when discarded (to the board in front of the discarding player, not to the discard pile). When all four 10's and a .22 (gun) have been played on the board, the hand ends. The player who ends a hand receives positive points. If a player is left holding a 10 because the hand was ended by the distribution of all four aces, the player is guilty of delaying the game and the 10 brings negative points rather than positive.



Nine
(Pass card)

A 9 may be simply discarded without any further action being taken. However, when a 9 is played on the discard pile, the discarder may call for each player to pass any two cards in any direction (left, right, or across; any card may be passed, including sixes.) When a player uses a 9 to pass, he/she must also discard after receiving his/her two cards, thus reducing the total number of cards in his/her hand by one.



Eight

An 8 can be used as part of a .38 (gun).



Seven

A 7 can be used as part of a .357 (gun).



Six
(Evil)

6's are evil - three 6's especially so (666). They are always negative points and you generally cannot discard them. You can play a 9 to pass 6's away, and you can discard a 6 only in the rare event that every other card in in your had would count as points if the game were to end immediately.



Five

5's are very valuable cards. They can be used as part of the two most powerful guns, the .45 and .357 quick draw. Since they are such valuable cards, if a 5 is discarded, the discarding player may draw two cards, thus increasing the total number of cards in his/her hand by one.



Four

A 4 can be used as part of a .45 (gun) when it is the same suit as the 5 with which it is paired.



Three

A 3 can be used as part of a .38 or .357 (guns).



Two

A 2 can be used as part of a .22 (the weakest gun). A player who is shot at by a .22 can give the shooter a 6 rather than giving up a cowboy or receiving protection (see shooting). When all four 10's and a .22 have been played on the board, the hand ends. The player who ends a hand receives positive points. If a player is left holding a .22 at the end of a hand, the player is guilty of delaying the game and the .22 brings negative points.



Ace
(Badge)

Aces are used in an unusual way. They protect cowboys of the same suit, making them more difficult for other players to shoot (see shooting). The four aces are kept in a separate pile by themselves during the game, and are only distributed when, due to bad shooting, a cowboy receives an ace as protection (again, see shooting). An ace can be passed with a cowboy, but once a cowboy has become protected, the ace can not be separated from the cowboy unless the cowboy is discarded, at which time the ace goes back to the ace pile and is available for distribution again. When all four aces have been distributed, the hand is over. The player who took the shot which caused the last ace to be distributed gets positive points for ending the game.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I play with more than four players?

I have played with as many as nine players, and it can be quite fun, but it can also drag. The best games are almost always with three or four players. To play with up to eight players you need two decks shuffled together. All the normal rules apply with a few addendums.

1. No player can score points for two of the same type collection per hand. (One player can't get credit for two orphanages; for families, and couples, that would mean only four - one of each suit.)
2. In each collection such as posses and harems, you must have one of each suit; you can't have a harem with two queens of diamonds.

The hands still end when all (eight) aces have been distributed or when all the 10's (eight of them) and a .22 have been laid on the table. In large games like this, scoring per hand tends to be higher, shooting can get more ferocious (with all the guns), and hands tend to last much longer.

How many cards can I pass at the beginning of the game?

You must pass three and can pass only three. You cannot look the cards you are receiving until you have passed.

How many cards can I pass when playing a nine?

During the game you can pass two and only two cards whenever 9's are used for passing and, again, you cannot look at the cards you are receiving until you have already passed.

What do I do when I am holding no more cards?

Well you can't draw because you can't discard. Hopefully (and most likely) you have several guns on the table, so you can blaze away when its your turn and hope to acquire some Cowboys. Alternately, you can wait until someone passes. When a pass occurs, you'll get two cards and the person to whom you should have passed just won't get any.

Can I discard cowboys?

Yes, help yourself crazy person.

Can I pass or discard a protected cowboy?

Yes. He's yours; you can do what you like with him. BUT, if you discard him, he loses protection; you must return the ace to the ace pile. If you pass him, you have to pass the ace with him.

Can you hold a harem and a marriage at the same time?

No. Get real; harem girls don't marry. You get credit for the cowboy and the harem in this case. Cowboys are different; if you have a full gang of cowboys and a queen, that's 150 points for the cowboys and negative 50 for the marriage. But, if you have less than four cowboys, the marriage is negative 50 and you get no positive point for the cowboy. Sorry; that's life. A solo cowboy is nullified by marriage.

Do you get points for a cowboy when he's married?

No. See above.

Can I have a posse and a family at the same time?

Yes. See above.

Can I have an orphanage and a family at the same time?

No! Please; how can a child in an orphanage also live with a family (unless she be the daughter of the orphanage managers in which case, ipso facto, she ain't an orphan)?

Do I have to draw after discarding?

Yes. You do not have to draw to replace your cowboys when they get shot (though you may), but you always have to draw after you discard.

Do I have to draw to replace a cowboy?

No. See above.

Must I discard after playing a 9?

Yes; that's the tradeoff. Pass with a 9, reduce the number of cards in your hand.

May I discard a queen on the same turn I show her as part of a couple?

Yes.

Must I discard after playing a 10?

No; the 10 counts as your discard even though it doesn't go in the discard pile.

When can I discard 6's?

You can discard 6's ONLY when every other card in your hand, excluding other 6's, would count for points if the game were to end immediately. If you have a couple, you have to discard one of those cards rather than the 6. If you have a 10, you should discard the 10. If you have three jacks, sorry, you have to discard a jack.

Can I pass harlots and 6's?

Yes; that's pretty much what passing is for.

Can I pass the same way twice?

Yep; you can pass wherever you like.

Do I turn a card face up on the discard pile at the beginning of the game?

No.

Can I ask a player if they have a cowboy before shooting them?

No. Asking is the same as shooting. If you ask, you've taken a shot; if they say "no", you've missed. If they say "yes" you can flip a shot card to see if your shot hit.

How does shooting work when I have both a protected and unprotected king?

If the shot comes from a .22, .357, or .38, just act like the protected kings don't exist. If the shot comes from a .45, assume that the shooter is aiming at the protected kings primarily. (Look at the last couple of paragraphs on the [shooting page](#) for more information.)

What constitutes an action?

Showing a couple, shooting, pulling a gun, or passing. (See the "[How to Play](#)" page for more.)

What do I do when the draw pile runs low?

Shuffle the discard pile and turn it over. Leave the top discarded card as the discard pile when you do so.

Can I pick up the shot? What about the card under the shot?

No and yes (assuming the card under it was discarded). You can always pick up the top discarded card. You can never pick up the shot.
