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Instructions

The basic game

1. Five cards are dealt to each player, or seven if there are only two players.

2. The player whose turn it is to play asks another player for his/her cards of a particular rank. For example, "Jill, give me your fours". A player may only ask for a rank of which he/she already holds at least one card. The recipient of the request must then hand over all cards of that rank. If the call was successful, the same player has another turn. If the player who was asked has no cards of that rank, he/she says "Go fish" (or simply "Fish"), and the asking player draws the top card from the pack. The turn then passes to the player who was asked.

3. When one player has all four cards of a given rank, they form a book, and the cards are placed face up on the table. The game ends when all thirteen books are formed, and the player who won the most books wins.

4. If the player whose turn it is has no cards left in hand, but the game is not over, he/she simply draws the top card from the pack and the turn passes.

Variations

There are a number of variations of these basic rules:

• Players form pairs instead of books of four. It follows that only one card is ever handed over in each call, and every successful call completes a pair.

• Extra conditions are added under which a player's turn continues. For example, if the card fished from the pack matches the rank that was asked for, or if it completes a book.

• With three or more players, all players must respond to each call. A player draws a card from the pack only if no opponent has a card of the requested rank, and then the turn passes clockwise.

• Players ask for a specific card instead of a rank. A player must still have at least one card of the named rank in order to ask, and must expose that card when asking.

Strategy

The strategy is pretty straightforward. If, when fishing, you draw a rank you don't have, you should ask for it on your next turn. Otherwise, rotate among the ranks you already hold. In the harder variants, proper strategy requires remembering who has what. Unlike many card games, Go Fish is very much dependent on the honor system; lying about the contents of one's hand is hard to prevent.

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