

Acorns



As autumn's first cool breeze rustles through the tree branches, the Squirrels begin their preparations for winter. Working together in pairs, they stash some acorns away in their trees, while eating others that will sprout too soon. The best-prepared Squirrels will be the strongest at the start of spring, ready to prosper in the new year.

GAME OBJECTIVE

Go out first.

PLAYERS

4

EQUIPMENT

4 packs of playing cards

RANKING

(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (high)

Acorns is a shared-deck, fixed-partnership climbing game where you are trying to be the first team to shed your entire deck.

These rules are organized as follows:

- Setup
- Play
- Scoring
- Continuing the Game
- Winning the Game

Setup

1. Players choose their partners. These partnerships remained fixed for the entire game.
2. Partners sit across the table from one another, with one opponent on their left and the other on their right.
3. Provide each team with their own deck of 54 cards, made up of 6 copies of the following ranks:
(low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (high)

The card backs for each team's deck should be different so it's easy to tell which deck belongs to which team.

Play

A game of *Acorns* is played over several deals. Each deal consists of the following:

- Dealing the Cards
- Determining the Starter
- Playing a Deal
- Ending a Deal

DEALING THE CARDS

1. Each team selects one of its players to be the dealer.
2. The dealer shuffles their team's deck and deals 12 cards, face-down, to themselves and their partner.
3. The dealer places the undealt deck in a position where both partners can reach it. This is the team's **draw deck**.

DETERMINING THE STARTER

For the first round, pick a Starter. To determine the Starter in subsequent rounds, see "Continuing the game."

PLAYING A DEAL

Each deal is played over a number of rounds. Each round consists of the following:

- Starting a Round
 - Combinations
- Continuing a Round
 - Playing a Higher-Ranking Combination
 - Passing & Stashing
- Winter Arrives
- Ending a Round
- Catching the Wind: Starting the Next Round

STARTING A ROUND

The Starter leads the first round by playing an opening card combination face up in front of themselves. This opening combination begins the Starter's **card pile** for the round. The Starter plays all subsequent combinations on top of their card pile.

Each player has their own card pile on which they play all their combinations. Don't mix card piles between players.

COMBINATIONS

There are two kinds of combinations: **ordinary** and **bomb**. There are three types of ordinary combinations: **set**, **run**, and **stair**:

- Ordinary:
 - **Set**: 1, 2, or 3 cards of the same rank
 - **Run**: 2-6 cards of consecutive rank
 - **Stair**: 2 or 3 Sets of 2 with consecutive ranks
- **Bomb**: 4, 5, or 6 cards of the same rank

CONTINUING A ROUND

After a player leads a combination, play proceeds clockwise with each player either:

- Playing a higher-ranking combination than the last played combination
- Passing and optionally stashing

PLAYING A HIGHER-RANKING COMBINATION

A combination is higher ranking than another combination if all the following are true:

- It's the exact same type
- Has the exact same number of cards
- Has higher-ranking cards

Examples:

Last-played combination	All possible higher-ranking combinations
7	8 or 9
6-6	7-7, 8-8, or 9-9
4-5-6-7	5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8-9

Bombs are the only exception to this rule. You can play a bomb, in turn-order, to beat any ordinary combination.

If the last-played combination is a bomb, then to beat it, you must play a bomb with either the following:

- Same number of cards but higher-ranked cards
- Greater number of cards; for example, all 5-card bombs beat all 4-card bombs.

Note: You may lead a bomb.

PASSING & STASHING

If you cannot or are unwilling to play a higher-ranking combination, you must pass. If you pass, you may still play a higher-ranking combination later in the same round.

When you pass, you may optionally stash one card by placing it FACE-UP in front of your partner. This is the start of your partner's stash pile. If there are 1 or more cards in your partner's stash pile, then place your stashed card on top of it.

DRAWING

After each turn, if you have fewer than 12 cards in your hand, draw cards until you have 12 cards again. Start drawing cards from the top of your stash pile. Once your stash pile is empty, draw from your team's draw deck until it's empty.

Note: You may never have more than 12 cards in your hand.

WINTER ARRIVES

Immediately after the round when either team draws the last card from their draw deck, **nobody may stash cards** for the remainder of the deal.

ENDING A ROUND

A round ends as soon as all players but one have passed in succession or all players on one team have gone out.

A player **goes out** when they have played their last card and there are no cards remaining in their team's draw deck.

CATCHING THE WIND: STARTING THE NEXT ROUND

When the round ends, whoever played the highest combination is the round winner. The card piles are cleared away. The round winner does one of the following:

- Leads to start the next round.
- Gives the lead to their partner by saying, "Partner, you lead."
 - Partners cannot discuss who should lead. The choice is the round winner's to make on their own.

Partners MAY NOT discuss who should lead.

ENDING THE DEAL

The deal ends immediately after ANY **two players have gone out**.

Scoring

The first-player-out scores **2 victory points (VP)**.

The second-player-out scores **1VP**.

Continuing the Game

After players have recorded the scoring, they begin a new deal.

The new Starter is the next player *on the team with the fewest points* in turn order from the previous Starter. If there is a tie, then—among the tied players—the new Starter is from the team that did NOT start the previous deal.

Winning the Game

If your team has scored 4 VP or more, you win!

Two Players

In the two-player game, there are no partners. Each player has their own deck of 54 cards to shed. As in a four-player game, you begin each deal with 12 cards in hand. The remainder of the rules are the same but with the following changes:

- **Each player has a personal stash pile.** When you pass, you may optionally stash one (1) card onto your stash pile FACE DOWN. You do NOT draw cards from your stash pile. Cards remain in your stash pile until your draw deck is empty; at which point, your stash pile becomes your new draw deck.
- Do not shuffle your stash pile.
- Once either player replaces their depleted deck with their stash, Winter Arrives.
- As in a four-player game, you cannot stash cards after Winter Arrives.
- The deal ends immediately after one player has gone out.
- The player that goes out scores **1 VP**. The other player scores nothing.
- If you score **2 VP**, you win!

The Team

Designer: Jonathan Cox & Sean Ross

Writing: Jonathan Cox, Raymond Gallardo, & Sean Ross

Playtesters: Ben B. Bee Benson, Shreesh Bhat, Josh Bodah, Clay Dibble, Nahvid Etedali, Haze, Daniel Kenel, Carol LaGrow, Bert Trobaugh, Srinivas Vasudevan, Daniel G. View, Peter Winckles.

Special thanks to Jessica Longhurst.

Acorns v1.10.1

Last Updated 20/04/2023

Originally Published 20/02/2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.