

Pairs

Version 1.3, 10-21-13

Designed by James Ernest and Paul Peterson

With Joshua Howard and Joe Kisenwether

Introduction: "Pairs" is a pub-style press-your-luck game featuring a nonstandard deck of cards. It's a "triangular" deck with 1 x 1, 2 x 2, 3 x 3, and so on, up to 10x10. There is also one cut card with the Pairs logo.

Players: 2-6

Playing Time: 3-5 minutes per hand

The Deck: The Pairs deck contains 55 cards: 1 x 1, 2 x 2, 3 x 3, and so on, up to 10 x 10. You can make this deck by combining cards from three poker decks, or you can download the print-and-play deck from us. You can also find a similar deck in games like The Great Dalmuti and 12 Days.

Summary of Play: Pairs can be played as either a forfeit game (in which there is one loser) or a gambling game (in which winners and losers exchange points or money). The rules are the same except for the endgame.

A game is played over several *hands*, each of which has a single loser. In each hand, players will take turns drawing cards, until one player either *folds* or catches a *pair*. The loser of each hand scores points (and points are bad). When one player reaches a certain point total, the game is over, and that player loses.

The target point totals, based on the number of players, are:

Number of Players:	2	3	4	5	6+
Ending Point Total*:	31	21	16	13	11

*The formula: take 60 points, divide by players, and add one.

Note on Dealing: One player may deal for the whole game, or the role of dealer may pass left. Dealer position doesn't matter, since the position of the starting player is always random.

Starting the Game: Shuffle the deck and "burn" (discard) 5 cards face down. You will always burn five cards after each shuffle, and then you can deal to the bottom of the deck.

Starting the Hand: Deal one card face up to each player. The player who receives the *single lowest card* will go first.

Ties for Low Card: If there is a tie for lowest card, deal an *additional* card to each of the tied players, and repeat this until there is a single lowest card among them. If any player catches a pair during this step, *discard* the paired card and deal a replacement.

Each Turn: When it is your turn to act, you have two choices: You may "hit" (take another card), or fold. If you catch a pair or fold, the hand is over. If not, the hand continues, with play always passing to the left.

Catching a Pair: If your new card matches any of your other cards, you lose the hand. Keep the matching card for points. For example, if you end up with a pair of 8s, you keep one 8.

Folding: You can choose to end the hand instead of hitting. In this case, take the *lowest card in play* and keep it for points. (You can take the lowest card on the table, not just the lowest card in your stack.) Folding is often safer than hitting, but it's up to each player to figure that out.

After the Hand: As soon as one person is out, the hand is over. Discard all the cards in play, turning them face down into the middle of the table, and deal another hand. Players keep their scoring cards face up on the table; these cards are *not* shuffled back into the deck until the end of the game.

Reshuffling: Deal until the deck runs completely out of cards, and then reshuffle the discards, and resume play. Always burn five cards off every fresh deck; this keeps anyone from knowing exactly which cards are left at the end.

Cards that have been scored are *not* returned to the deck until the end of the game.

Using a Cut Card: If you have a blank card, you can use it as a “cut card.” Place it on the bottom of the deck after you shuffle, where it prevents you from flashing the bottom card of the deck. Also, when you reach the end of the deck, deal the cut card to the active player, to help mark where the play was interrupted. (Our print-and-play sheet includes one cut card with the game logo.)

Winning: The game is over when one player accumulates the target score or more. That player is the loser. What happens next depends on which variant you are playing.

Forfeit Rules: In the “forfeit” version of this game, only the identity of the loser matters, and there is never a tie for loser. The loser must pay a forfeit such as taking a drink, dancing a jig, singing a song, and so on.

Gambling Rules: In the “gambling” version, players win and lose points (tracked with chips). There are several possible ways to do this:

Downspear Rules: The loser pays one coin to every player.

Norland Rules: The loser pays one coin to the winner(s) only. The winner is the player with the lowest score. If there are multiple winners, the loser pays a coin to each.

Cutchfeld Rules: The loser pays his *score* to the winner. For example, if the scores are 17, 10, 8, 7, and 2, the player with 17 points pays 17 coins to the player with 2 points. Everyone else pays nothing. If there is a tie for winner, those players split the loser’s payment, with any odd coins remaining in the pot for the next hand. (This is the most common variation; see also the Five Card Straight rule below.)

Five Card Catch: In Cutchfield they also play with the “Five Card Catch.” If a player accumulates any five cards without losing, that player immediately wins the *game*. In this case, all other players pay their score to the winner.

Background: *“Pairs” is a traditional pub game played by the Pleegds and Splemms on the docks of Avratanis, the bustling port on the eastern coast of Grumpletania. The whimsical art of this game, featuring fruits and vegetable icons, plays on the similarity between the words “Pear” and “Pair.” Also, traditional rules such as the infamous “kill card” have been removed to make the game more strategic and less punishing. If only Bonder Hartlins, harbormaster of Avratanis, could see to what depths this renowned game has sunk, he would throw himself before a stampede of dimpledumps.*

True Background: *Actually, “Pairs” was invented in 2013 by James Ernest and Paul Peterson, and developed by Joshua Howard, Joe Kisenwether, and many insightful and well-mannered Cheapass Games Guinea Pigs. A full-on deluxe version with ten lovely pieces of pub-flavored character art is coming from Cheapass Games one day soon, but for now you get fruit and vegetable clip art. Enjoy!*

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