

# How to play Gift Words

## QUICK START

The object of Gift Words is to use your hand of 12 cards to make words of three or more letters using cards of the same color. (Black cards may be used as any color.) Also score points, for yourself and one opponent, by adding letters to an old word. Each turn you:

1. Draw a card. Take it from the face-down stack, or from any discard pile. There will be a face-up discard pile in the center for each player.
2. (optional) Add one or more letters to an old word.
3. (optional) Make one new word.
4. Discard one card on top of your own discard pile.

Each word scores the sum of the letter values.

When a word is extended, the player adding the letters and the player who made the original word both score the letter value plus 2 points for each added card. Do not score double for adding to your own word.

## BASIC RULES

Gift Words is played with a deck of 96 cards. For most letters, there are 1, 2, or 3 cards in each of three colors. There is only one black card for each of the rare consonants, which can be used as any color.

Deal 12 cards to each player. The player on the dealer's left goes first. Take turns clockwise.

These are the phases of a turn:

1. **Draw one card.** Take the top card from the deck, or from any discard pile.
2. **Extend one word.** (optional)
  - a. Add one or more cards to a word on the table, including one of your own:
  - b. Added cards must be the same color as the existing word, or black.
  - c. You may add letters anywhere, but don't change the order of cards already played: CARE can become SCARE, CARVE, CARET, or SCARLET, but not CAPER
  - d. Both players score 2 points per card added, plus the points on the added cards.
3. **Make one word.** (optional)
  - a. Place the cards on the table in front of you, so other players can read it.
  - b. The word must use at least three cards
  - c. The cards must be the same color, except that black cards may be used as any color.
  - d. You may only make one new word per turn.
  - e. The "Qu" may be used as two letters, or as the "Q" by itself - either with a "U" from another card, or in the rare words where "Q" is not followed by "U".
  - f. Score the total of the points on the cards.
4. **Discard one card.** Place it face up on your side of the face-down stack, on top of your previous discards, if any.
  - a. Each player has his or her own discard pile.
  - b. Discarding is optional if you have three cards or fewer before discarding.

A round is over when someone finishes a turn with no cards, or after the turn in which the last card is drawn from the deck. You are allowed to go out without discarding. The player who goes out first receives a 5 point bonus.

The player to the dealer's left deals the next round. The winner is the player with the highest score after four rounds, or whatever number the players agree.

## **ADVANCED RULES**

In the advanced game, you must make four words to go out. You will sometimes draw replacement cards if you use more than three cards in a turn.

Play as in the basic game with these exceptions:

- 1) If you extend a word, draw a replacement card, from the stock or from any discard pile, for each card you added. Do this before making a new word.
- 2) If you use four or more cards to make a new word, draw a replacement card for each card over three that you played. . (This means you draw again before discarding. Seeing extra cards is a reward for making longer words.)
- 3) Replacement cards may be taken from the deck or any discard pile, including your own. If you need two or more, you may draw one and look at it before choosing where to draw the next.
- 4) You should always end your turn with 3, 6, 9, or 12 cards.

More words are made and changed in this variation. It can be more interesting, but it is more complicated. It will be easier to understand if you play the basic game first.

## **ACCEPTABLE WORDS**

All words must be single, unhyphenated English words found in whatever dictionary the players agree to use.

Anyone can ask to look up a word formed by adding to an old word. If the word is not acceptable, the player takes back the added card or cards. He or she may not extend another word this turn, but may play a new word if possible.

New words may be challenged. If the word is not acceptable, the player who made it must take the cards back, then discard a card without making another word this turn. (He or she keeps any points that were scored earlier for extending another word.) If the word is acceptable, the challenger may not make a new word on his or her next turn (but may still do the other parts of a turn: draw, extend a word, and discard.)

## **STRATEGY**

Going out first is not the only way to get high scores. Making valuable words can give you a higher score than the first person to go out, even after the 5-point bonus.

Longer words are useful. You score more for the extra letters, and can choose what pile or piles to use when drawing replacements.

It's usually good to make words that can be extended easily, unless another play makes it easier to use your remaining cards.

Be aware that the same cards can produce more than one word - ARC and CAR score the same, but there are many more ways to add to CAR.

# SAMPLE TURNS

This is an example of how the first few turns could be played with the advanced rules. After the fourth turn the board would look like the illustration on the next page.

Julie was dealt **I N P**, blue **G L R T**, and green **C M O N T**.

1. She draws a green **D** from the face-down deck.
2. She can't add to a word on the table because there are none.
3. She plays **PIN** and scores 5 points.
4. She discards a blue **G**.

Ken was dealt red **B O**, blue **A E I I W**, green **A D F L**, and black **K**.

1. He draws an blue **N** from the deck.
2. He uses his **K** to turn **PIN** into **PINK**. Ken and Julie each score 6 points. Ken needs a replacement card, and takes the **G** that Julie discarded.
3. He plays **WING** and scores 10 points. He needs another replacement, and draws a red **D**.
4. He discards his other blue **I**.

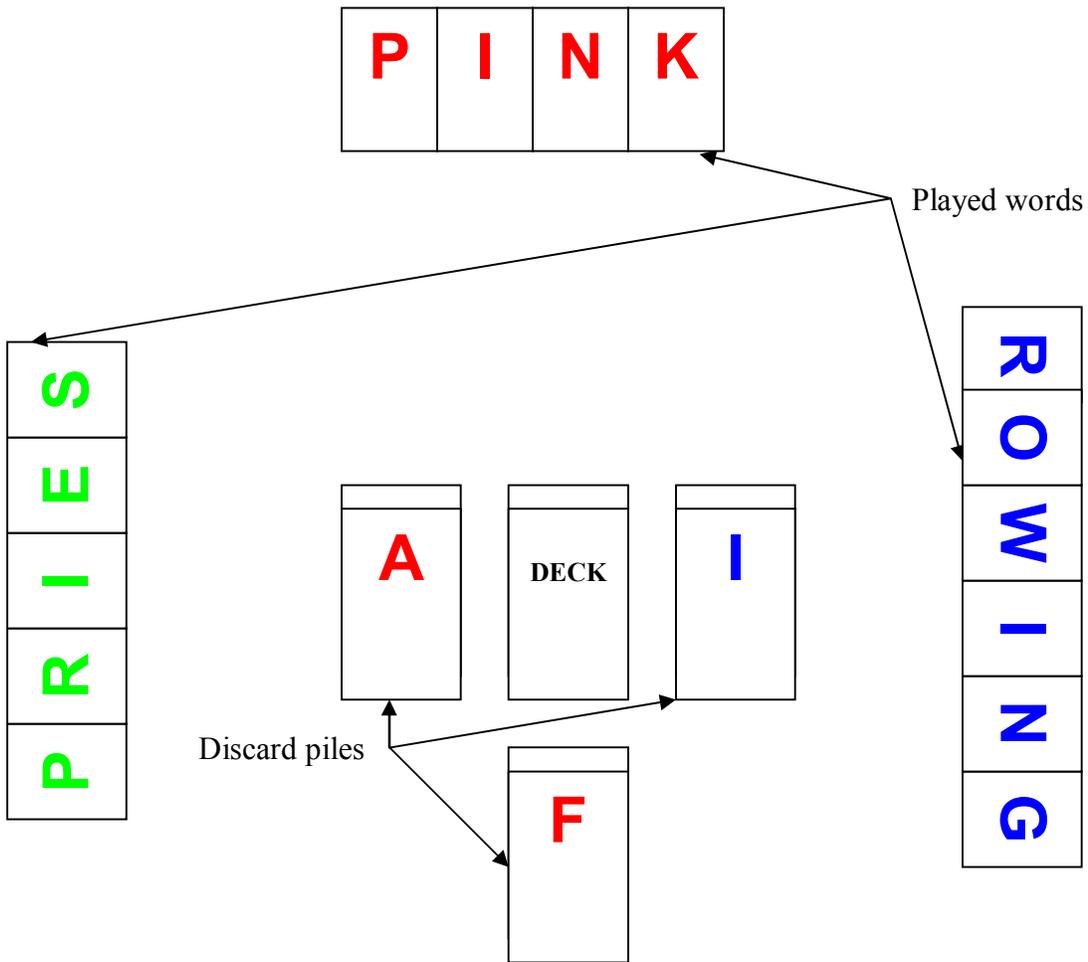
Linda was dealt red **C F G N S T**, blue **O M**, and green **E I I K**.

1. She draws a blue **R**.
2. She uses that **R** and the **O** from her hand to turn **WING** into **ROWING**. Linda and Ken each score 7 points. Linda needs two replacement cards, and draws a blue **H** and green **A**.
3. She can't make any words from the letters she has.
4. She discards a red **F**.

Matt was dealt red **A E P**, blue **D E F**, and green **E I R P S**, and black **X**.

1. He draws a blue **S**.
2. He can't add to either of the words on the table.
3. He plays **PRIES** for 9 points. He draws another red **A** and a blue **U** as replacements..
4. He discards one red **A**.

This is what the table would look like after the sample round on the previous page:



In a later turn, PRIES could become PRIEST, PRICES, or PRINCES, and ROWING could become THROWING. (GROWING is impossible because there is only one G of each color.)

# VARIATIONS

## 2-PLAYER RULES

Two players can play as in the regular game with these changes:

- 1) Start the first round by dealing cards to the center of the table until you can make two words of three or more letters. Shuffle any unused cards into the deck, then deal 12 cards to each player.
- 2) If you add to a word in the center, score the letters you add plus 2 points per card.
- 3) If you add to your own word, score only the added letters.
- 4) There is no score for adding to an opponent's word, but you may do it to manage your hand..
- 5) When a round ends, keep the three shortest words (made by any player) in the center to be extended in the next round.
- 6) The player who is behind may choose to go first or second in the next round. (If there is a tie, the player who started the previous round goes second this time.)

## COOPERATIVE RULES

In this variation two players cooperate to make their combined score as high as possible. Words are kept in front of the player who made them, but only the team score is kept.

Deal 12 cards to each player, plus a stockpile of 6 cards face down. Put the rest of the cards face down in the center as a bonus deck, and turn one card face-up next to it. This card will start the discard pile.

These are the phases of a turn:

- 1) Draw one card from your face-down stock or from the discard pile. If you take a discard, you must make or extend a word this turn; not necessarily with the card you picked up. (You can't use the discards just to exchange cards with your partner.)
- 2) Extend one word (optional). If you extend your partner's word, add the letter values of the entire word to your team score, If you extend your own word, add only the value of the added letter(s). In either case, take one card from the bonus deck in the center (not from your own stock) or the discard pile for each card you added.
- 3) Make one word (optional). Add the letter values to the team score, plus 5 points for each card over three. Take one card from the pile in the center (not from your own stock) or either discard pile for each card you added.
- 4) Discard one card.

The game is over after the turn when both players have drawn all cards from their stockpiles. If your hand is empty you can still draw from your stockpile and try to extend words. If discards have been picked up, it is possible for one player to have more than one card in the stock after the other has finished. That player can take more than one turn in a row, if necessary.

Try to make your combined score as high as possible. You may also choose to aim for a goal. Start with 100 points as a winning score. Increase the goal by 10 when you win, and decrease it by 10 when you lose. This way you will win about half of the time, with the goal gradually getting higher as you learn how to score more points.

# RULES FOR YOUNGER PLAYERS

Divide the cards into vowels (AEIOU) and consonants.

(You can give each player all of the cards in one color, plus one black card, and let them draw from their own stacks.)

Keep the Silent E cards separate.

Deal 2 vowels and 4 consonants to each player each turn

Do each of these once per turn, then discard any unused cards:

- 1) Make a new word using 3 or more cards, and put them in the middle of the table.
- 2) Change a word on the table to a new word, like changing BIG to DIG, BAG, or BIT, by putting one card over an old letter.
- 3) Add one or more cards and make a word on the table into a longer word, like PAT into SPAT, PART, or PATH.
- 4) Add a "silent E" to the end of any word (including a word you just made or changed) if it changes the sound of the word, like CAN to CANE, or STAR to STARE.

If you play a Silent E, score your other words first (see SCORING) then add 5 more points.

## **SIMPLE SCORING**

You score the total of the points on each card you played. (When you change or add to an old word, score the points on the cards you played, not the old cards.)

## **MATHEMATICAL SCORING**

A new word scores the sum of the points on the cards, multiplied by the number of cards.

A changed word scores the points on only the new card(s), multiplied by the number of cards in the new word.

Examples:

$C_3A_1T_2$  scores  $3 + 1 + 2 = 6$ , multiplied by 3 letters for a total of 18

Changing CAT to RAT scores 2 (for the R), multiplied by 3 letters for a total of 6.

Changing CAT to CHAT scores 3 (for the H), multiplied by 4 letters for a total of 12.

## **END OF A ROUND**

A round is over when the players have made:

8 words when 2 people are playing,

9 words when 3 people are playing, or

10 words when 4 or more people are playing.

## **ENDING THE GAME**

The game is over after each player has dealt one round.