

Crazy Eights

This page is partly based on a contribution from Szu Kay Wong

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Introduction and Alternative Names

Crazy Eights is a game for two or more players, in which the object is to get rid of the cards in your hand onto a discard pile by matching the number or suit of the previous discard.

There is a huge number of variations of this game, and many alternative names. It is sometimes called Crates, Switch, Swedish Rummy, Last One or Rockaway. In Germany it is Mau-Mau; in Switzerland it is Tschausepp; in the Netherlands it is Pesten. Some British players call it Black Jack, which is unfortunate as it can lead to confusion with the well-known American banking card game [Blackjack](#).

Basic Game

The basic game of Crazy Eights uses a standard 52 card pack, or two such packs shuffled together if there are a lot of players. The dealer deals (singly) five cards to each player (seven each if there are only two players). The undealt stock is placed face down on the table, and the top card of the stock is turned face up and placed beside the stock to start the discard pile.

Starting with the player to dealer's left, and continuing clockwise, each player in turn must either play a legal card face up on top of the discard pile, or draw a card from the undealt stock. The following plays are legal:

1. if the top card of the discard pile is not an eight, you may play any card which matches the rank or suit of the previous card (for example if the top card was the king of hearts you could play any king or any heart);

2. an eight may be played on any card, and the player of the eight must nominate a suit, which must be played next;
3. if an eight is on top of the pile, you may play any card of the suit nominated by the person who played the eight.

The first player who gets rid of all their cards wins, and the other players score penalty points according to the cards they have left in their hands - 50 for an eight, 10 for a picture, and spot cards at face value (one point for an ace, two for a two and so on).

Variations

Crazy Eights is one of the easiest games to elaborate by adding variations, and is rarely played in its basic form. There are variations in the number of cards dealt, the rules about drawing cards and the scoring system. Usually, special meanings are given to particular cards; when played these cards affect the sequence of play, or have other effects.

Drawing Cards

In the normal game, you may always use your turn to draw a card. However, some people play that you may only draw if you are unable to play - if you can play you must.

Some allow the drawn card to be played immediately if it is a legal play.

Some allow more than one card to be drawn - either up to a fixed number of cards, after which if you still cannot (or will not) play the turn passes to the next player. Others require you to continue drawing until you can play.

Last Card

There may be a rule that you must alert the other players when you have just one card left. If you fail to do so you must draw cards (usually two) from the stock as a penalty.

Cards requiring special actions

Change suit

Traditionally an eight can be played at any time and the player can nominate any suit. Some play that you can only play an eight that matches (either the same suit or another eight). Some play that you can play an eight at any time but cannot nominate another suit - the next player must match the suit of the eight you played or play another eight. Szu Kay Wong suggests that you can play an eight at any time, but can only nominate a different suit if the eight matches the rank or suit of the previous card. Some players use jacks or aces rather than eights as the cards which have the power to change suit.

Skip

Some play that when a queen (or some other designated rank) is played, the next player in rotation misses a turn, and the turn passes to the following player.

Reverse direction

Some play that when an ace (or some other designated rank) is played, the direction of play reverses, becoming anticlockwise if it had been clockwise, or vice versa.

Draw cards

Some play that when a two is played the next player must either draw two cards or play another two. If several consecutive twos have been played the next player must either play another two or draw two cards for each two in the sequence.

Other variations

See the following pages on this site:

- [Crates](#), described by Richard Hussong.
- [Spoons](#), described by Bruce McCosar.
- [Last One](#), contributed by Mark Alexander.
- [Bartok](#), in which the rules are modified during the game.
- [Mao](#), in which the rules may not be discussed.

More pages with rules of Crazy Eights variants:

- Jose M. Carrillo-Muniz describes [Ocho Locos](#), a version of Crazy Eights played in Puerto Rico.
- Justin Tuijl describes [Jack Change](#), another variation.
- Jean-François Bustarret's site has rules of [Huit Américain](#) in French.
- The site Cribbage.ca has a description of a French Canadian variation known simply as [Huit](#) (eight).

Several [Crazy Eights variants](#) contributed by readers are listed in the Invented Games section of this site.

There have been many [commercial](#) versions of eights, designed to be played with specially produced packs of cards. Probably the best known of these is [Uno](#), for which there are also many [invented variations](#).

Crazy Eights software

The collection [Hoyle® Card Games \(2007\)](#) for Windows includes a Crazy Eights program, along with many other popular card games.

You can download Laurent Pellenc's [Crazy Eights Program](#) for Windows from his page.

[Mike's Cards](#) includes a Crazy Eights program for Macintosh and Windows computers.

You can play an online version of Pestén, the Dutch equivalent of Crazy Eights, on the [Game Square site](#).

The Crazy Eights Deluxe program is available from [Blackgames.net](#)

The Dutch version of Crazy Eights, known as Pestén, can be played online at [Game Desire](#)

Both [Game Desire](#) and [Kurnik Online Games](#) offer the similar Polish game known as Makao (which is known at Kurnik as Switch).

The Hungarian version of Makao can be played online against computer or human opponents at [Rummy Network](#), the English edition of the Hungarian [UltiNet](#) site.

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