

Diplomat (Card Game)

Rules specification

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Diplomat is a logic and memory based card game for $n \geq 3$ players (ideally $n \leq 5$). Players take turns asking each other yes/no questions in an attempt to collect four-of-a-kinds.

Despite the simplicity of the rules, the game is quite difficult. It is similar to Canadian Fish, but without teams and more open-ended.

§1 Gameplay

§1.1 Setup

The n players should sit in a circle. Distribute all 52 cards as evenly as possible between the n players. Pick a player to move first.

§1.2 Turns and questioning

On a player's turn, he/she must ask an arbitrary yes-no question to any other player about the cards in their hand.¹ Examples of possible questions include:

- “Do you have the queen of spades?”
- “Do you have at least three black cards?”
- “Is the sum of the ranks of your non-face cards at least 50?”

The other player must answer truthfully.

Then, the turn passes counterclockwise, *unless* both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- (a) The question asked was a question of the form “do you have the card C ?”, for a particular card C (e.g. the queen of spades).
- (b) The answer to the question was “yes”.

If both (a) and (b) are true, then the questioned player instead reveals the card C from their hand and places it face-up on the table (this is called a *layout*), where it remains. Then, the player who asked the question takes another turn.

¹Formally, this is equivalent to specifying a set S of possible hands and asking whether the player's hand lies in S . This means questions about what the player knows such as “do you know who has the queen of spades?”, or questions using outside information such as “will you go to prom with me?”, are not permitted.

§1.3 Claiming ranks and winning

At any point on a player's turn, if all four cards of a given rank are either in his/her hand or laid out on the table, he/she may *claim* all four cards. Those four claimed cards are then removed from the game (typically left face-up in front of the claiming player).

The game ends when all 13 ranks have been claimed in this way. The player who claimed the most ranks wins.

§2 A few pointers

- On your turn, if you know the locations of all four cards of a given rank, then you can claim it by simply laying out all the cards one by one, before proceeding with the rest of your turn.
- You should be careful what you ask, since all responses are public! If you give away too much information through your questions then your opponents might claim cards before the turn gets back around to you.
- Unlike Fish, it is possible (and indeed not uncommon) to eventually claim ranks without being dealt any cards in those ranks (or having lost those cards to layouts).
- It is permitted to ask questions for which you already know the answer; e.g. asking whether a player has the queen of spades despite having it in your hand. This can be useful for misleading others.

§3 Variations

- If one has a red and black joker, they may add to form a deck of 52 cards, with an extra “joker” half-rank with only two cards (and worth half as much as the 13 standard ranks).
- If the number of cards is not divisible by the number of players, the remaining cards can be laid-out to begin with.
- It should be possible to play this game with teams.
- This game can take a very long time without moderation, so it may be advisable to add a chess clock or other timing mechanism to introduce an element of speed (see e.g. <http://everybo.dy.fi/gametimer/gametimer.html>).