

# Dou dizhu

***Dou dizhu*** (simplified Chinese: 斗地主; traditional Chinese: 鬥地主; pinyin: *dòu dīzhǔ*; Jyutping: *dau<sup>3</sup> dei<sup>6</sup> zyu<sup>2</sup>*; literally: 'fighting the landlord') is a card game in the genre of shedding and gambling. It is one of the most popular card games played in China.

*Dou dizhu* is described as easy to learn but hard to master, requiring mathematical and strategic thinking as well as carefully planned execution. Suits are irrelevant in playing *dou dizhu*. Players can easily play the game with a set of *dou dizhu* playing cards, without the suits printed on the cards. Less popular variations of the game do exist in China, such as four-player and five-player *dou dizhu* played with two packs of cards.

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## Dou dizhu



<b>Origin</b>	Chinese
<b>Alternative names</b>	Landlord, fighting the landlord; <i>dau dei zyu</i>
<b>Type</b>	Shedding-type card game
<b>Players</b>	3
<b>Cards</b>	54; 17 for each of the two "peasants" and 20 for the "landlord"
<b>Deck</b>	Anglo-American
<b>Play</b>	Counterclockwise
<b>Playing time</b>	Around 5 minutes
<b>Random chance</b>	Easy
<b>Related games</b>	
Big two, president, winner	

## History

The class struggle during the Cultural Revolution in China encouraged peasants to take up arms against the landlords who were among the Five Black Categories and Stinking Old Ninth, hence the name *dou dizhu*. China's Generation Y, who are among one of the most enthusiastic player groups, has no personal experience of the historical class struggle. Nowadays, the name of the game carries no negativeconnotation. The actual place of origin for the game is inHubei Province.

## Objective

*Dou dizhu* is played among three people with one pack of cards, including the two differentiated jokers. The game starts with players bidding for the "landlord" (地主) position. Those who lose the bid or don't bid enter the game as the "peasants" (农民) team competing against the landlord. The objective of the game is to be the first player to have no cards left.

## Game play

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A shuffled pack of 54 cards is dealt to three players. Each player is dealt 17 cards, with the last three leftover cards detained on the playing desk, face down.

All players first review and appraise their own cards without showing their cards to the other players. Then, players take turns to bid for the landlord position by telling the other players the risk stake they are willing to accept.

There are three kinds of risk stakes, 1, 2, and 3, with 1 being the lowest and 3 being the highest. Generally, the more confident a player is in the strength of one's cards, the higher the risk stakes one is willing to bid. In most of the online game rooms, the first bidder is chosen randomly by the system. In reality, players usually make up their own rules as to who gets to bid first. For example, some rules stipulate that the player who gets hearts three is the first bidder. If hearts three is in the "kitty" cards, the first bidder will be the one who gets hearts four and so on.

A player may accept the prior player's bid by passing their turn to bid or one may try to outbid the prior player as long as the prior player did not bet 3 as the risk stake. The highest bidder takes the landlord position; the remaining players enter the Farmer team competing against the landlord. The three leftover wild cards are then revealed to all players before being dealt to the landlord.

The landlord wins if he or she has no cards left. The peasant team wins if either of the peasants have no cards left.

## Features of the game

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The rules are not complicated; basic knowledge of poker hand rankings helps players get started. However, many of *Dou Dizhu*'s rules are different from Poker and Big Two.

There is an element of luck involved, but what counts is not only luck but also skill of playing and strategy. Poor players with great hands may be defeated by skillful players with poor cards.

## Rules

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A few fundamental and exceptive rules are essential for understanding the game play of the game. Some rules are structured differently from the other popular card games. Players who have prior experience with other card games, such as poker, and Big Two, often prejudice the rules.

- **Individual cards are ranked** Colored Joker > Black & White Joker > 2 > Ace (A) > King (K) > Queen (Q) > Jack (J) > 10 > 9 > 8 > 7 > 6 > 5 > 4 > 3.
- **Suits are irrelevant** Players can play the game with all the suits erased from the cards.

## The Rocket and the Bomb

The **Rocket** and the **Bomb** are groups of cards that work differently in terms of game play.

Special Category	Description	Example	Special Note
<b><i>Rocket</i></b>	Colored Joker and black-and-white Joker	Colored Joker + black-and-white Joker	It can beat everything in the game.
<b><i>Bomb</i></b>	4 cards of the same rank	3-3-3-3 (the lowest ranking Bomb) 2-2-2-2 (the highest ranking Bomb)	It can beat any other category and individual card except <i>Rocket</i> or another Bomb with a higher or equal rank.

## Category of hands

The game uses the concept of hands, similar to the hands in poker, except there are more variations and not necessarily consisted of only five cards.

- **Compare only the same Category** A player can only beat the prior hand using of the same Category but not the others. Note that this means that the ordering of the rows in the following table is not relevant to gameplay
- **Compare only the Chains with the same length** Beat the prior hand using the same number of cards is a basic doctrine which only the Rocket and the Bomb may violate. For example, although both 9-10-J-Q-K and 3-4-5-6-7-8-9 are *Single Chains*, 9-10-J-Q-K cannot beat 3-4-5-6-7-8-9, nor vice versa.
- **Compare the rank in the Primal cards only** The Kicker's rank is irrelevant to the comparison unless a variation with 2+ decks is being played.
- **Jokers and 2 are non-consecutive cards** Colored Joker, black-and-white Joker, and 2 cannot be used in any of the Primal cards of the Chains since they are not traditionally considered as the consecutive cards sequentially next to the Ace. Examples of illegal *Chain*: 2-3-4-5-6, 2-2-2-3-3-3 w/ A-A-7-7, K-A-2 + B&W Joker + Colored Joker

Category			Description	Example	
<i>Primal</i>	with (+) kicker	Chain		Lowest rank and/or shortest chain	Highest rank and/or longest chain possible
<i>Solo</i>	—	—	Any single card	3	Colored joker
<i>Solo</i>	—	<b>Chain</b>	≥ Five consecutive individual cards	3-4-5-6-7	3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-J-Q-K-A
<i>Pair</i>	—	—	Two matching cards of equal rank	3-3	2-2
<i>Pair</i>	—	<b>Sisters</b>	≥ Three consecutive pairs	3-3-4-4-5-5	5-5-6-6-7-7-8-8-9-9-10-10-J-J-Q-Q-K-K-A-A
<i>Trio</i>	—	—	Three-of-a-kind: Three individual cards of the same rank	3-3-3	2-2-2
<i>Airplane</i>	—	<b>Chain</b>	≥ Two consecutive trios	3-3-3-4-4-4	9-9-9-10-10-10-J-J-J-Q-Q-Q-K-K-K-A-A-A
<i>Trio</i>	<b>Solo</b>	—	Three cards of the same rank with a solo as the kicker	3-3-3 + 4	2-2-2 + colored joker
<i>Trio</i>	<b>Solo</b>	<b>Airplane</b>	≥ Two consecutive trios with each carries a distinct individual card as the kicker	3-3-3-4-4-4 + 5-6	10-10-10-J-J-J-Q-Q-Q-K-K-K-A-A-A + 7-8-9-2-colored joker
<i>Trio</i>	<b>Pair</b>	—	Full house: Three cards of the same rank with a pair as the kicker	3-3-3 + 4-4	2-2-2 + A-A
<i>Trio</i>	<b>Pair</b>	<b>Chain</b>	≥ Two consecutive trios with each carrying a pair as the kicker	3-3-3-4-4-4 + 5-5-6-6	J-J-J-Q-Q-Q-K-K-K-A-A-A + 8-8-9-9-10-10-2-2
Bomb			Four-of-a-kind, with a kicker. Four cards of the same rank without the kicker is called a bomb, which defies category rules, even beats four <i>with</i> a kicker.	3-3-3-3	2-2-2-2
<i>Four</i>	<b>Dual solo</b>	—	Four-of-a-kind with two distinct individual cards	3-3-3-3 + 4 + 5	2-2-2-2 + A +

			as the kicker		colored joker
<b>Four</b>	<b>Dual pair</b>	—	Four-of-a-kind with two sets of pair as the kicker	3-3-3-3 + 4-4 + 5-5	2-2-2-2 + K-K + A-A

The longest chain possible column is only applicable to a hand with twenty cards, which the landlord possesses after seizing the three leftover wild cards.

## Chinese name literal translations

'Individual card': 单牌

'Hook': 钩 – the jack; the Chinese name is based on the shape of "J"

'Circle': 圈 – the queen, named for the shape of "Q"

'K' – The King

'Tip', 'spear'; or 'pointy': 尖 or 枪, respectively – the ace, named for the shape of "A"

'King', 'ruler': 王 – the joker, named for its dominant position in the game

'One pair': 一对 – two cards of the same rank

'Chain': 顺子 or 单顺 – five or more consecutively numbered cards

'Pairs chain': 连对 or 双顺 – three or more consecutive pairs

'Trio with single card': 三带一 – trio, with an individual card as kicker

'Trio with pair': 三带二 or 三带一对 – trio, with a pair as kicker

'Airplane': 飞机 or 三顺 – two or more consecutive trios

'Airplane with small wings': 飞机带小翼 – two or more consecutive trios, with additional cards with the same amount of trios as kicker

'Airplane with large wings': 飞机带大翼 – two or more consecutive trios, with pairs with the same amount of trios as kicker

'Four with two single cards': 四带二 – four-of-a-kind, with two individual cards as kicker

'Four with two pairs': 四带两对 – four-of-a-kind, with two pairs as kicker

'Space shuttle': 航天飞机 – two or more consecutive four-of-a-kind

'Space shuttle with small wings': 航天飞机带小翼 – two or more consecutive four-of-a-kind, with additional cards including the same amount of four-of-a-kind as kicker

'Space shuttle with large wings': 航天飞机带大翼 – two or more consecutive four-of-a-kind, with pairs with the same amount of four-of-a-kind as kicker

'Bomb': 炸弹 – four cards of the same rank

'Rocket', 'Nuke', 'King Bomb': 核弹, 火箭, 王炸, respectively – colored joker with black-and-white joker cards

## Illegal play with the kicker

Beginners and players who are familiar with other card games with similar but different rules of hand formation and superiority often misinterpret some of the rules that involve the kicker causing illegal play

Illegal play	Example	Correction
<b>Rank of the kicker = rank of the primal cards</b>	Trio chain + solo is <del>3-3-3-4-4-4-3-K</del>	When one is using any kicker attached to primal cards, the kicker cards cannot be the same card rank of any primal cards used.
<b>Dual solo = pair</b>	Four + dual solo <del>3-3-3-3-J-J</del>	Dual solo must consist of two cards with different ranks, such as J-K. Otherwise, it is counted as pair which is different.
<b>Dual pair = four of a kind</b>	Four-of-a-kind + dual pair. <del>3-3-3-3-J-J-J-J</del>	Dual pair must consist of two sets of pairs of different ranks, such as 3-3-7-7, not four-of-a-kind.
<b>Rocket = kicker cards</b>	Four + dual solo <del>3-3-3-3+ colored joker + black and white joker.</del>	Only one of the jokers can be used as a kicker card in a single or dual solo kicker.

## Scoring rules

The basic mechanism is a betting one; the winner (or winners) take(s) money (points, whatever) from the loser or losers. Moreover, the game may be seen as a pair of bets, each one between one of the peasants and the landlord. If the landlord wins, (s)he collects money from each of the peasants, and if the landlord loses, (s)he pays money to each of the peasants.

The bidding (one, two, or three) determines the initial stake, and gameplay can trigger two different categories of multiplier:

- **Rocket and/or bomb.** Each rocket and bomb dealt by each player doubles the score in a round.
- **No deals played** a.k.a. **spring.** If the peasants do not deal any card in a round, or the landlord only deal the card once with cards left in hand in a round, the final score will be double. In the former situation, the landlord wins score while the peasants lose, else the peasants win score.

## Example

Consider a round involving players A, B, and C. A passes, B bids 1, C passes, A bids 2, and B and C pass. A is now the landlord, for a base stake of 2 units. Gameplay proceeds, and turns out to include one bomb and a rocket, but all players get to play multiple times. In the end, player C goes out first. The stake is therefore multiplied by 4 (two for each rocket or bomb), so the landlord A must pay 8 units to both of the peasants, B and C.

## Basic strategy

- **A player can deal with an unrelated or useless card by making it the kicker card<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **Rocket and bomb are the ultimate weapons in the game** if they either is in one's hand, one should make full use of it when time comes. If players do not possess high confidence in winning, they may think twice about dealing a rocket or bomb, because once the dealt, the risk stake of the round will be doubled (players will either win or lose double) with each rocket or bomb dealt.
- **Peasants must co-operate to fight against the landlord** For example, since the two peasants come after one another, the first peasant might play a low single card if the second peasant has a sole card left.
- **Bid high for landlord with the best hand** If a player has the best hand, bidding high for the position of landlord enables him to win a bigger pot.

## Variations

### Four-player

The four-player version of *dou dizhu* is played mainly in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, including Shanghai. It uses a double deck, including two red and two black jokers – 108 cards altogether. Each player takes 25 cards and 8 cards are left over for the landlord, who plays alone from a hand of 33 cards against the other three players in partnership.

The combinations that can be played differ from those in the three-player game (listed above), as follows:

- Single card attachments are not permitted
- Nor are there four-with-a-kicker categories
- Bomb: four- or five-of-a-kind
- Rocket: six-of-a-kind
- Missile: seven-of-a-kind
- Sky explosion: eight-of-a-kind
- Nuke: four jokers (the greatest hand in four-player *dou dizhu*, can beat anything. If the landlord have the four jokers, he or she could claim for having them. Once claimed for the 4 jokers on hand, the 4 jokers could be used separately. By doing this, the landlord could also choose winning without playing. )

## With wild cards

Another variation of *dou dizhu* is the edition with wild cards. Like the original settings, after the determination of the landlord, four-of-a-kind will be randomly selected as wild cards. Those can be used to stand for any other cards, except jokers.

Some games even feature two sets of wild cards. The first set would be drawn before the bid for the landlord, then another one would then be drawn out.

## Tournaments

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In 2005, 117,931 people participated in the *dou dizhu* online tournament held by GICQ, an online game development and operation company in China.

In 2006, another *dou dizhu* online tournament, held by VNet.cn, attracted 200,000 players.

In September 2007, YunNanHong held a traditional, offline competition of *dou dizhu* in Kunming, China, where over a hundred players competed for the first prize.

*Dou dizhu* tournaments are held in Chinese cities every year, the winners not only receive high prize but also become popular experts in *dou dizhu*.

## Popularity

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*Dou dizhu* was once just a provincial game in China, originating in the Huangshan District<sup>[2]</sup> and Anhui<sup>[3]</sup>. Thanks to the debut of *dou dizhu* online, the game has become more widespread and is now a national game in China. its popularity increased substantially, with players on one system doubling in two years, from around 50,000 players in December 2002 to 100,000 in 2004<sup>[4]</sup> and 17,900,000 players being the loyal fans of the casual game while *dou dizhu* leading the core place in 2005.<sup>[5]</sup> There are almost 1 million concurrent *dou dizhu* players on the Tencent QQ game platform alone.<sup>[6]</sup> It is more popular than other Chinese card games like Chinese poker, winner, and big two.

Year	Popularity in China	Source
2002	50,000 players	GICQ(ourgame.com)
2004	100,000 players	GICQ(ourgame.com)
2005	17,900,000 players being the loyal fans of the casual game while <i>dou dizhu</i> leading the core place.	Chinese Online Game Research Report in 2005 made by iResearch
2006	+1,000,000 online player play it concurrently	Tencent QQ game platform in China
2008	roughly 1,450,000 online players per hour in Tencent QQ game platform	Tencent QQ game platform in China
2008	roughly 76,000 online players per hour in GICQ	GICQ

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## External links

[Broken Link] \*<http://www.chinagames.net/mygames/cardgames/landlord/>

- [Rules of the game](#) at the [Wayback Machine](#) (archived 2015-11-27)

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