

Rummy Runners

by Nathan Morse

a game for 2–4 players, a Mystique deck and a hexpack (although it could also be played with a piecepack)

Equipment

- 1 Mystique deck from **nestorgames**
- 1 standard hexpack (suns, moons, arms, crowns)
- A few markers (e.g. coins, cubes) in as many colors as there are players

Setup

Each player chooses a color of markers to use to claim territory.

Note: The marker color has no correlation to anything else in this game.

Note: There is no “piece limit” to the markers. If you run out of markers, just find something else to use, as long as it’s clear which markers are whose.

Shuffle the hexpack, and set the hexes face-up in a vaguely circular layout. The specific shape of the board is not crucial, but every hex should have at least two adjacent two it.

Note: The tile color has no correlation to anything else in this game; however, its suit and number do.

Deal 6 cards to each player.

Play

Play goes clockwise around the table. On your turn, in this order:

1. You **may meld** a set.
2. You **must draw** a card.

Melding a set

Valid sets are as follows:

- **Group** of three or more of the **same number**, regardless of suit or color.
- **Flush** of three or more cards of the **same suit**, regardless of color or number.
- **Swatch** of three or more cards of the **same color**, regardless of number or suit.

You can either meld the entire set from your hand, or scavenge cards from someone else’s face-up sets to form yours, as long as you play at least one from your hand, and the scavenged cards complement your set.

When you meld a set, check all the cards in front of you. If you have two (or all three) colors of a suit-number combination whose space on the board hasn’t been claimed, you **claim the space**. Put one of your markers on that space on the board to claim it. It is possible to claim several spaces in a single meld. Claiming a space is permanent, so even if cards you used to claim a space are

scavenged, you retain ownership of that space.

Note that there is no hand limit, so you can choose to hoard cards, but the clock is ticking, and although you may be holding the necessary $\frac{2}{3}$ of the colors to control some spaces crucial to your plans, your opponents are likely to be claiming other spaces, vying for the win. Hoarders, remember that you can only meld one set per turn!

Claiming the Nulls

The null tile of a hexpack suit is automatically claimed by controlling more of the suit than the other players. If you control a majority of the other spaces in that suit, you claim the null immediately. Failure to monopolize control of a suit can jeopardize the space. Here are the specific cases:

- **Majority:** (can occur with 2–4 players) You have claimed three of the tiles 1–5, which is a **majority**. You **claim the null** immediately.
- **Deadlock:** (can occur with 3–4 players) Two players have each claimed two of the tiles 1–5, and a third player claims the last tile of the suit. This is a **deadlock**. Turn the null tile for that suit face-down. The **null is now a dead space** that cannot be claimed.
- **Plurality:** (can only occur with 4 players) You have claimed two of the tiles 1–5, and three other players have each claimed one. That is a **plurality**, because you control more than the others, and there are no more to claim directly. The other three players have worked together to prevent your majority. Turn the null tile for that suit face-down. The **null is now a dead space** that cannot be claimed.

Winning

If you claim **three spaces in a straight line**, or **any four contiguous spaces**, you win!

Variants

Controlled Zoning

Instead of a random board setup, deal all the hexpack tiles out, and in turn each player places 1 tile face-up, adjacent to two tiles (once two are out there) to form the board.

Border Disputes

When you claim a space using only $\frac{2}{3}$ of the colors (e.g. yellow and blue three of crowns), you place a marker on it, as usual; however, another player can steal the space by scavenging from you (e.g. a set of threes, including the red three of crowns, scavenging your threes of crowns). Once you claim a space using all three colors, flip the space face-down before putting your marker on it; it can no longer be stolen.

Note that stealing a space might give a player a majority in that suit, allowing her to claim the null; however, if the null has already been claimed or deadened, it is not re-evaluated.

The Hard Way

Normally, groups and flushes allow you to claim spaces on your very first meld. In this variant, the valid sets are replaced by the following:

- **Sequence** of five cards of **all consecutive numbers**, regardless of suit or color.
- **Suite** of four cards of **all different suits**, regardless of color or number.
- **Swatch** of three or more cards of the **same color**, regardless of number or suit.

Piecepack

If you don't have a hexpack, you can use a piecepack, instead. The only differences are as follows:

- **Setup:** Lay out the tiles randomly in a 4×6 rectangle (face-up, of course).
- **Winning:** The three spaces in a straight line can be orthogonal or diagonal; however, the four contiguous spaces must be contiguous orthogonally.



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