

How to Play the Game of 99

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The Game of 99 may be played by two, three, four or six players. Young or old, they will find it a fast and fascinating game.

The object of play is to occupy five squares next to one another on the playing board in a row, column, or diagonal before your opponents do. The right to occupy a square is earned by playing a card which contains the number of the square. There are one hundred cards which are marked “0 to 99,” “1 to 99,” “2 to 99,” and so on, all the way up to “98 to 99” and “99 to 99.” The card marked “0 to 99” allows you to occupy any square in the board, whereas the card marked “98 to 99” allows you to occupy only square number 98 or square number 99. On any one play, you may occupy only one square. You indicate that you have occupied a square by placing one of your markers in the hole in the square.

The Game of 99 for Two or Three Players

The deck is shuffled and each player chooses a card and displays it. The player with the lowest card will have the first draw. Each player chooses the peg color which will identify him throughout the game. Then the deck is reshuffled and placed face down on the table. The first player draws the first card from the top of the deck. The player to his left also draws a card and play continues around the table. Thereafter, at his turn, a player may PLAY, DRAW, OR DISCARD, but he may do only one of these in any one turn. If a player elects to PLAY, he announces “I PLAY,” and places a card from his hand face up on the table in front of him. Then he places one of his pegs in any square that the card allows. Once a player has occupied a square, no other player may occupy it during the course of

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the game. If a player has less than five cards in his hand at the beginning of his turn, he may elect to DRAW, rather than to play. To do so, he announces “I DRAW,” takes the top card from the deck and places it in his hand. At no time may a player hold more than five cards in his hand. If at the beginning of his turn, a player holds five cards, he may not draw, but must either play or discard. If a player elects to DISCARD without making a play, he announces “I DISCARD,” and places the card face up on the table in front of him. The decision to discard is rarely made except when you hold an unplayable card. For instance, if you hold card number 99 (which can only be played for the 99th square) when the 99th square is already occupied, it might be wise to use a turn to discard 99 in order to make room in your hand for a draw on the next turn. After a player has either played, drawn, or discarded (and remember, he may do only one of these), the turn is completed, and play passes to the player on his left. The first player to occupy five squares next to one another in a row, column or diagonal, wins the game.

Penalties

Playing out of turn: if a player plays out of turn his peg is removed from the square he has occupied, his card is left in the discard pile and he loses his turn. Discarding out of turn: if a player discards out of turn, his discard is left in the discard pile, and he loses his turn. Drawing out of turn: if a player draws out of turn, the card he has drawn is displayed to his opponents and then cut into the deck at random, and the player loses his turn. Illegal play: if a player occupies a square which has a smaller number than the value of the card played, the peg is removed from the board, the card is left in the discard pile and the player loses his turn. Illegal draw: if a player draws when he already has a full hand, the drawn card is displayed to his opponents and cut into the deck at random and the player loses his turn.

Some Playing Hints

Players will rapidly work out their own strategies, but the beginner will do well to keep the following hints in mind. Do not waste the low cards. The low-numbered squares are in the center of the board. It is unlikely that you will get many cards in the course of a game that will allow you to occupy the center squares, so don't waste the ones you get to play on the higher numbered squares. Try to play the high-numbered cards on the high-numbered squares. Try to get your opponent to waste his low-numbered cards. If you occupy squares

numbered 72, 58, 20, and 14, your opponent will have to play 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 card to block you on square number 4. Even if you don't have one of those cards yourself, it may be worth your while to force him to waste his low card blocking you instead of building his own pattern. Play so you have more than one opportunity to win. Try to occupy squares in blocks which will allow you to build in more than one direction. Don't run out of cards. Avoid playing the last two cards in your hand, unless you can win the hand by playing them. Otherwise, you may be unable to block your opponent.

A Word about Ties

Tie games occur very rarely. However, they are possible. A tie game occurs when every card in the deck has been played or discarded, but no one occupies five squares next to one another in a row, column, or diagonal. In the event of a tie, the pegs are removed, the deck is shuffled and play begins again.

Have fun playing the Game of 99!