

# Profiteer

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## **Abstract**

A variation on the card game *War*, *Profiteer* is a single-player game about influencing both sides of a war for your own benefit. The player uses their resources to prolong the war and add cards to their own deck. When the game is over, the player wins by holding at least half of the cards in their deck.

## Goal

The objective of the game is to have half the deck or more (26 cards) in the profiteer's hand before the game ends. You do this by using your resources to do two things:

1. Keep the number of cards on both sides exactly the same.
2. Causing a "War" where both sides draw cards of the same value. When the War is resolved, you get a cut of the cards that were put in play. See the Rules below for details.

## Rules

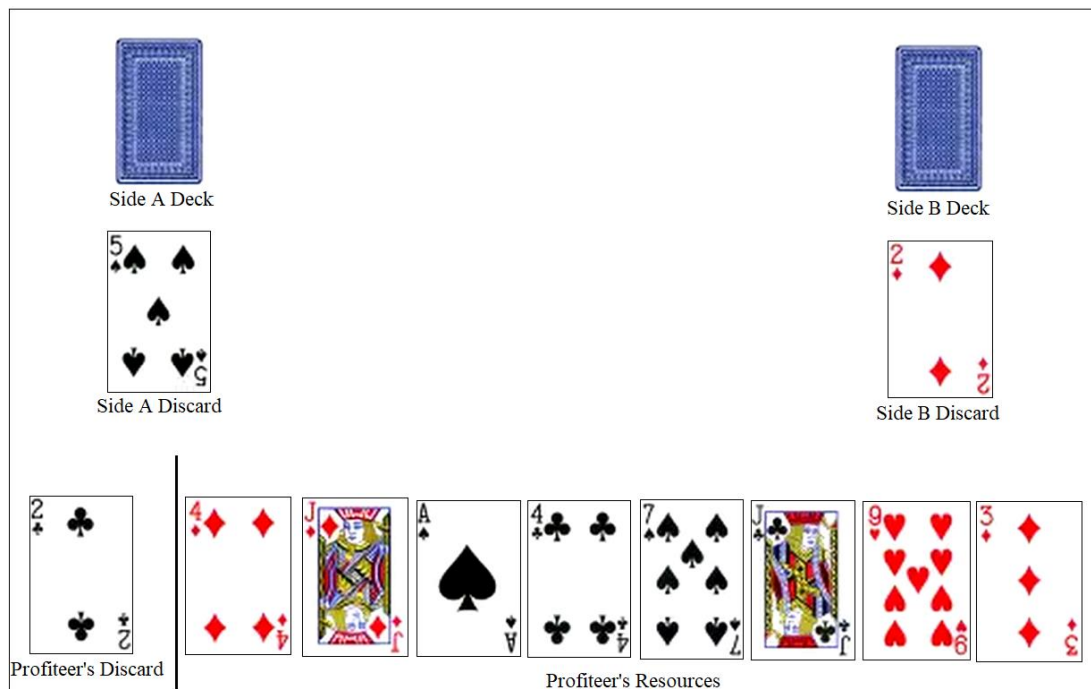
You will need a full deck of cards.

There are 3 stacks of cards in this game: Side A's cards, Side B's cards, and the Profiteer's (your) cards.

Instructions:

1. Shuffle the deck of cards. Draw the top 10 cards, take the 2 with the lowest values and shuffle them back into the deck. Set the rest out in front of you. These cards will be your resources.
2. Take the rest of the deck and divide it evenly into two piles. These are the resources of the two "sides" of the war.

Pictured below are how the cards should be laid out.



3. Side A and Side B turn up a card at the same time.
4. When the cards are turned up, you, the profiteer, have a chance to influence the outcome. If you choose, you can switch out one of the cards with a card from your resources. The card you give must be a higher value than the one you take. Put the card you take in the Profiteer's Discard pile.
5. Whether you trade a card or not, the outcome is decided the same way.
  - a. The side with the higher value card gets both and puts them in its respective discard pile.
  - b. If the value of the cards is the same, it is War. Each side turn one card face down and one card face up. The side with the higher value card takes all the cards that are face up. All the face down cards go to the profiteer's discard pile.
6. Repeat steps 3 through 5 until both sides' decks have been depleted. If there is currently a War and you need more cards, shuffle both sides' discard pile and play as normal until the War is resolved. Then move on to step 7.
7. Once the decks on both sides have been depleted, count both sides' decks separately.
  - a. If they have the same number of cards, the game continues. Move on to Step 8.
  - b. If they don't have the same number of cards, there is still a chance to continue the game. If you have enough cards left in your resource pile (not including the profiteer discard pile) to make up for the difference, you can give away cards to whichever deck needs them to even out the deck. Once both sides have the same number of cards, move on to Step 8.
  - c. If they don't have the same number of cards *and* you don't have enough resources to balance them out, the game is over. Move on to Step 9.
8. Shuffle both decks separately and place them facedown. Also, shuffle the Profiteer's discard pile and any leftover resources you have. Draw 10 cards from the top and put the 2 with the lowest value back in the discard pile and use those as the profiteer's resources. Go back to Step 3.
9. *Ending the game:* With the war over, count the number of cards you have in your profiteer's discard, including any cards leftover in your resource pile. If you have half the deck or more (at least 26 cards), congratulations! The war was very profitable for you and you have won the game. If you have less, you lose.

## Design Process

The inspiration for *Profiteer* came from a combination of outside limits and an analysis of the card game, *War*.

The first creative limit was due to geography. The designer was located far from American University, only commuting on days when he had class. He was also living alone at the time, leaving no option to consistently play with another person. Therefore, the choice was made very early in development to create a single-player game.

*War* is a card game where players pit two cards against each other, and the player with the higher value gets both cards. Rinse and repeat until one player has all the cards. In the case where both cards have the same value, players flip over one face down card and one face up. Whichever face up card is higher value wins, and that player gets all 6 cards. If the cards are the same value again, the players repeat the process until they draw cards of different values.

The issue with *War* is that the outcome is already decided once the cards are dealt. The players simply execute an algorithm with no input of their own. In that sense, the game does not actually need players. In order to create a need for player input, the first iteration of *Profiteer* system was designed.

In this early build, the player held 4 cards and when both sides of the war flipped over their cards, the player could switch out one of the cards with their own (as long as the player's card was of higher value), changing the outcome. The goal was to make sure that once both decks had been used up, both sides had the same number of cards in their discard piles. This added an element of resource management to the game. The player had to keep track of both sides' cards and deal out wins accordingly.

There were some major issues with the initial system. Firstly, with only four cards, the player had relatively little influence, leading to an outcome that still felt mostly random. Thus, the number of cards in the player's hand was increased to 8. To combat the possibility of drawing too many low value cards, a caveat was added that the player would initially draw 10 cards and would put the two with the lowest values back into the deck.

The second major issue was that the goal of the game was too simple. Keeping both decks even required very little thought on the part of the player. To fix this, the system was modified so that the player now had to hold at least half of the cards by the time the game ended. Now, keeping both decks even was a condition for *continuing* the game, rather than winning it. If both sides had the same number of cards, they would shuffle their cards separately and start again.

In order to add cards to their hand, the player would have to cause a War. In the original card game, War meant drawing one card face down and one card face up. Whichever side had the higher value would get all 6 cards in play, but in this new system, all face down cards would go to the profiteer instead. This added a new dimension to the game. The player now had several

considerations to make when trading a card. Causing a War would bring more cards into the player's hand, but it would also seriously shift the balance of cards between sides. The player would have to weigh the benefits of a War for them against the possibility of ending the game before they can get 26 cards.

One final modification was added. If the sides did not have the same number of cards, the player could donate any of their leftover resources to the side with less cards to make up for the difference. This was done to combat the scenario where the player couldn't keep an exact count of both sides. This also allowed the possibility for the player to make use of any low-value cards they may not want.

The final build of the game shows great promise. Reaching 26 cards before the game ends is difficult, but not impossible. Testing showed that the player could reach 24 cards with a surprising frequency. The maximum number gained so far was 40 cards.

