

Playing Card Generator User Guide

Guide for Playing Card Generator version 2.0 (CardCreate2).

Introduction

A while back I was looking for software that would create images representing playing cards. I found a bash script that would generate cards with images on them using the 'convert' command line utility from ImageMagick. It was not what I wanted but it did motivate me to write some C++ software to generate a bash script which itself could generate each card the way I wanted. This software gave more control and flexibility for creating playing card images. I called this software 'cardgen'.

I then re-wrote it in java to be independent of the 'convert' command and use a GUI instead of command line parameters. To differentiate this java version, I called it 'CardCreate'. Then, having learned JavaFX I rewrote it again calling it 'CardCreate2'.

To compose the playing cards, 'CardCreate2' (like 'cardgen') uses separate .png image files for the faces of the court cards, the indices and the pips. These images are kept in separate directories, with a sub-directory for each style. This allows for different decks of cards to be generated from different combinations of styles of these component parts. We will see examples of this later. The intention is that 'CardCreate2' can be used to quickly prototype decks without having to create every card individually.

Installing the software

System requirements

The system requirements for using 'CardCreate2' are:

- Java Development Kit
- Maven
- git
- tar utility

To get started we first need a java runtime environment installed. To check if java is installed launch a terminal/console and run '**java -version**'. You should see something like the following:

```
$ java -version
java version "15.0.1" 2020-10-20
Java(TM) SE Runtime Environment (build 15.0.1+9-18)
Java HotSpot(TM) 64-Bit Server VM (build 15.0.1+9-18, mixed mode, sharing)
```

If not, go to the Oracle web site (<https://www.java.com/en/download/>) and install the version appropriate to your operating system.

Similarly check if maven is installed:

```
$ mvn --version
Apache Maven 3.6.3 (cecedd343002696d0abb50b32b541b8a6ba2883f)
Maven home: K:\apache-maven-3.6.3
Java version: 15.0.1, vendor: Oracle Corporation, runtime: C:\Program
Files\Java\jdk-15.0.1
```

Default locale: en_CA, platform encoding: Cp1252
OS name: "windows 10", version: "10.0", arch: "amd64", family: "windows"

If maven is not installed go to the Apache web site (<https://maven.apache.org/install.html>) and follow the instructions.

In the following examples the tar utility is used to extract the tar file, but most file explorers will extract the files also and can be used if preferred.

Clone and Build the 'CardCreate2' application

For the following commands we will use '/cygdrive/k/Users/Phil/Work/Playing Cards' as a parent directory, there we will clone 'CardCreate2':

```
$ cd '/cygdrive/k/Users/Phil/Work/Playing Cards'
$ git clone https://github.com/PhilLockett/CardCreate2.git
```

Set up the 'CardWork' environment

The 'CardCreate2' package comes with java software and a 'CardWork' environment in which to use it. This environment provides some basic images to get you started. This set up process is only required once. For the following commands we will use '/cygdrive/k/Users/Phil/Work/Playing Cards' as a parent directory, there we will copy 'CardWork.tar.gz' into it, then execute the following commands:

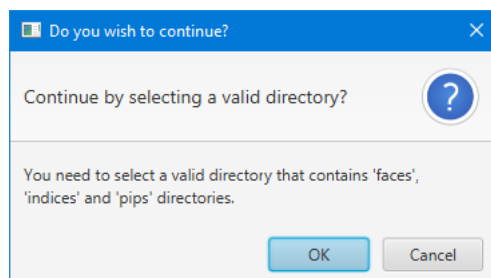
```
$ cd '/cygdrive/k/Users/Phil/Work/Playing Cards'
$ cp ./CardCreate2/CardWork.tar.gz .
$ tar xzf CardWork.tar.gz
$ cd CardWork/
$ ./setup.sh
```

Running 'CardCreate2'

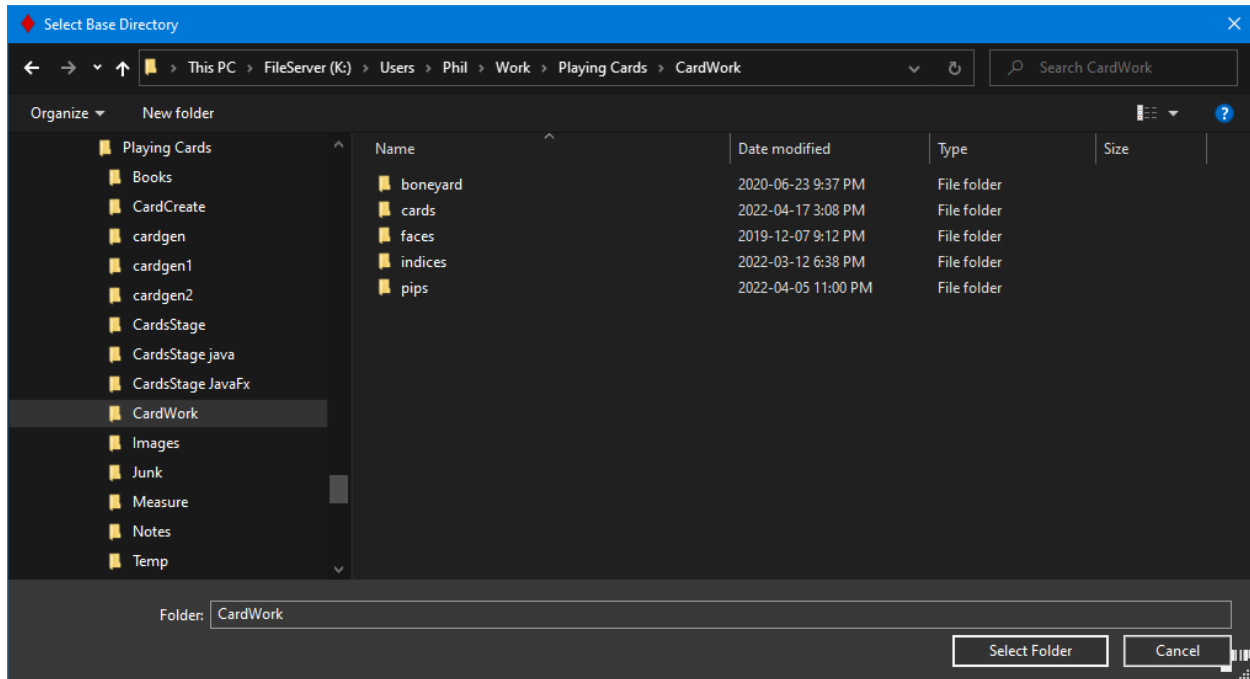
To run 'CardCreate2' change to the 'CardCreate2' directory and execute the maven command:

```
$ cd '/cygdrive/k/Users/Phil/Work/Playing Cards/CardCreate2'
$ mvn clean javafx:run
```

When launching for the first time, the following 'continue' dialogue will be shown:



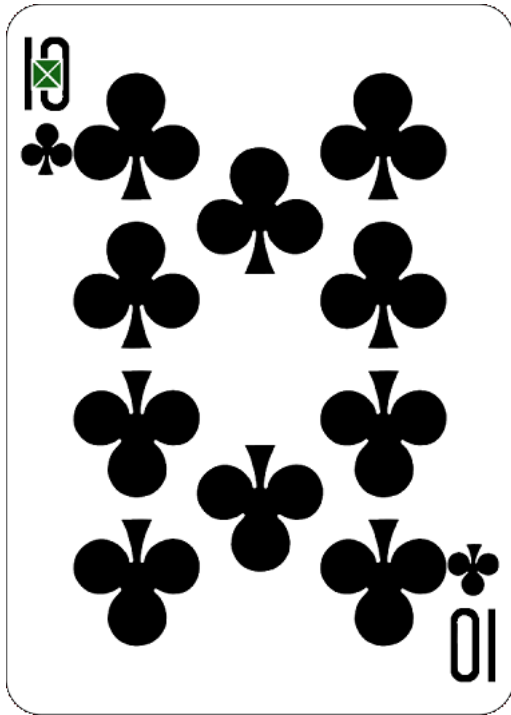
Selecting 'Cancel' will shut down the application. Selecting 'OK' will launch the following directory selection dialogue which allows you to navigate to a directory that contains subdirectories 'faces', 'indices' and 'pips' such as the one created above in the 'CardWork' directory:



If 'Cancel' is selected at this point, or a directory which does not contain the necessary subdirectories is opened, you are returned to the 'continue' dialogue, where you can 'Cancel'.

If a valid directory is opened, the 'Playing Card Generator' application and the card 'Sample' window will be launched:

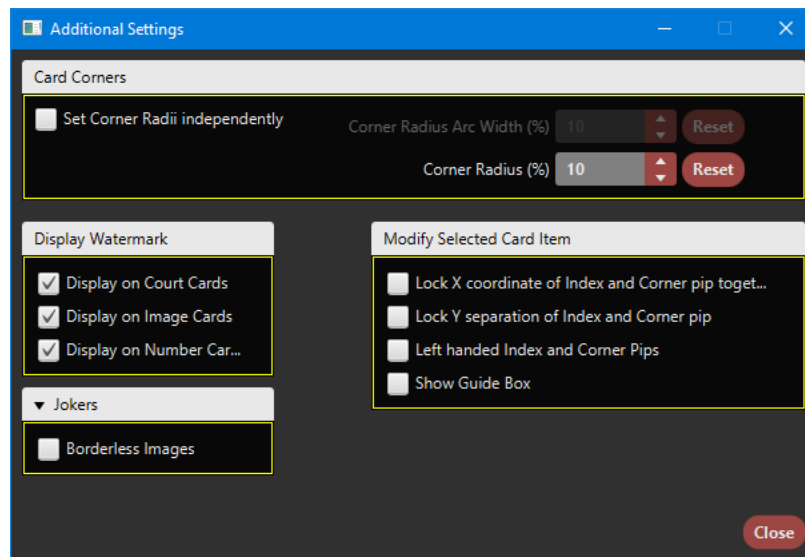




Note that now a 'Base' directory has been selected, it is not necessary to select one again and subsequent 'CardCreate2' application launches will automatically use the directory already selected. However, other valid directories can be selected using the 'Browse...' button, and these directories can then be selected using the pull-down.

The card composition takes place in the 'CardWork' directory. This 'CardWork' directory can be named as needed, but the subdirectories it contains should not be renamed as 'CardCreate2' has them hardcoded and looks for them explicitly.

Additionally, there are a few other options that can be set by clicking on the small icon at the bottom right of the main control panel. This launches the 'Additional Settings' window.



'CardWork' Environment breakdown

The 'CardWork' directory provides the following subdirectories:

- boneyard
- faces
- indices
- pips

The 'boneyard' contains additional image files used for generating default Jokers. The 'CJoker.png' and 'DJoker.png' images files should be copied into the selected 'indices' directory as required.

The 'faces' directory contains subdirectories of images used for the face cards. Typically, these are the court cards plus the ace of spades image. The only difference between style 1 and 2 is the colour of the ace of spades. The Rouen subdirectory is a reimagining of an old-style deck of cards but with added ace of spades and jokers.

The 'indices' directory contains subdirectories of images used for the card's indices. The only difference between style 1 and 2 is the colour of the club indices, black has been changed to white. Subdirectory 3 contains four sets of indices. Typically, a deck only uses red and black indices, but this example uses different colours for each suit. If images for the spades indices is not found, clubs will be used for the spade cards. Similarly, if indices for hearts are not found, indices for diamonds will be used.

The 'pips' directory contains subdirectories of images used for the card's pips. The only difference between style 1 and 2 is the colour of the club and spade pips, black has been changed to white. Subdirectory 3 contains only four pip images. These are used for both the standard pips and the corner pips. Optionally you could add a set of small pips which will be used as the corner pips.

All of these images are used to compose cards by resizing and positioning them. It should be noted that if the selected 'faces' subdirectory contains an image for a card, the image is used, otherwise the standard pips arrangement is used.

Anatomy of a Playing Card

'CardCreate2' composes playing cards from five items and allows the position and size to be modified, but in a manor consistent with all individual instances of the item e.g. changing the position and size of the index changes both the top-left and bottom-right index. The five items are:

- Indices
- Corner Pip
- Standard Pip
- Face Image
- Face Pip

All image files must be .png files and it is highly recommended to use transparent backgrounds.

Indices

The index is the letter or number that appears in the two corners of the card. Images representing the indices are found in the 'indices' directory. The images are all .png files and use transparency as the background. The naming convention uses the initial letter of the suit followed by the index it represents. Obviously, 'C' represents Clubs, 'D' for diamonds, 'H' for hearts and 'S' for Spades. However, if the images for the Spades are not found, Clubs will be used because they are usually the same colour. Similarly, if indices for Hearts are not found, indices for diamonds will be used. This save unnecessary repetition, but also allows for Hearts to be a different colour to Diamonds and Clubs to be a different colour to Spades. Example:



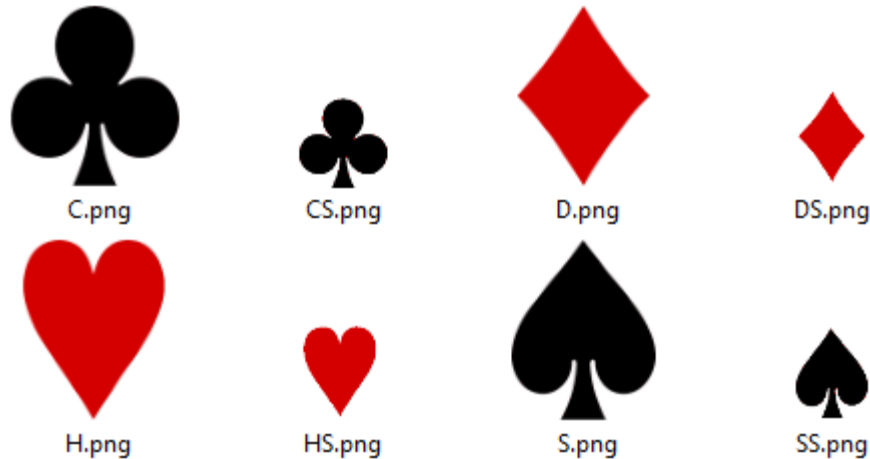
There is only one control for the Jokers which is to control whether a border is used for the image or not, which is found on the 'Additional Settings' window. This also relies on joker image being placed in the 'faces' directory as desired.

The Joker can be augmented with the joker text placed in the 'indices' directory. A sample of the Joker text is available in the 'boneyard' directory and should be copied and renamed as needed. This text is added to the corners of the generated joker cards.

The file naming convention is also based on the initial letter of the suit followed by 'Joker'. All images are .png files and use transparency as the background.

Corner Pip

The Corner pip is the suit symbol displayed underneath the index. Images representing the Corner pips are found in the 'indices' directory. Like the indices, the pip images are all .png files and use transparency as the background. The naming convention uses the initial letter of the suit. These are used for the standard pip, the corner pip and the face pip on the court cards. Optionally an additional set of images can be provided named using the suit initial followed by an 'S' (for small) used specifically for the corner pip. This allows for the option to have simpler suit signs for the smaller corner pip and more complex designs for the others. If the smaller image is available it is used, if not the standard pip image is used.

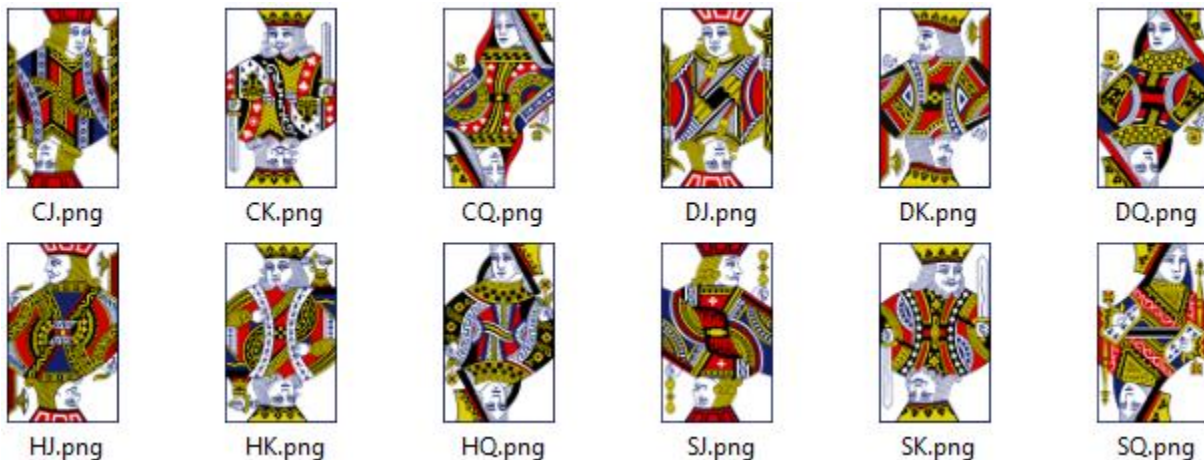


Standard Pip

The Standard pip is the suit symbol displayed in the centre of the numeral cards (Aces through 10s). Like the Corner pips, the images representing the Standard pips are found in the 'indices' directory and are all .png files and use transparency as the background. The naming convention uses the initial letter of the suit.

Face Image

The Face image is the image that appears in the centre of the card. Images representing the faces are found in the 'faces' directory. The images are all .png files and use transparency as the background. The naming convention uses the initial letter of the suit followed by the index it represents.



Typically, these images represent the court cards, but may also include an image for any other card, such as the ace of spades (SA.png). Notice these court card face images do not include the suit symbol which is controlled by the Face pip item and is overlaid on the face image.

Face images are not restricted to the court cards and ace of spades. Any card can be represented by a face image using the naming convention of the initial letter of the suit followed by the index. Joker images can also be provided, using the naming convention of the initial letter of the suit followed by 'Joker'. Simply create images for CJoker.png, DJoker.png, HJoker.png and SJoker.png as needed.

Face Pip

The Face pip is the suit symbol displayed in the corner of the face image of the court cards (Jacks, Queens and Kings) and can use the same image files as the Standard pips with the naming convention of the initial letter of the suit. Optionally an additional set of images can be provided named using the suit initial followed by an 'F' (for face) used specifically for the face pip. This allows for the option to have alternate suit signs for the court card faces. If the face pip image is available it is used, if not the standard pip image is used.

The Face pip item is overlaid on top of the face image of the court cards, but only if 'Display Face Pip' is checked in the 'Display Card Items' panel (demonstrated below).

'CardCreate2' Controls

'CardCreate2' uses two pop-up windows, the main control window titled 'Playing Card Generator' and the card representation window titled 'Sample', which also provides some control. Between them they provide the following control options:

- Input Directories
- Output Directory
- Card Size
- Background Colour
- Display Card Items
- Select Card Item
- Modify Selected Card Item (%)
- Sample Navigation
- Generate
- Sample Controls
- Additional Settings

Input Directories

The 'Input Directories' control section contains the 'Base' directory combo-box which was initially populated during the set-up performed above. The 'Base' directory must contain the three subdirectories; 'faces', 'indices' and 'pips' which themselves must each contain at least one subdirectory. Other valid 'Base' directories can subsequently be selected by using the 'Browse...' button which launches a directory selection dialogue. The 'Base' directory combo-box keeps all the selected 'Base' directories and switches between them using the pull-down button. These 'Base' directories are persisted between sessions.

The 'faces', 'indices' and 'pips' combo-boxes are populated using the subdirectories found in their corresponding directory. The 'CardWork.tar.gz' package provides some example images to use. The 'faces' directory contains '1', '2' and 'Rouen' subdirectories. The 'indices' directory contains '1', '2', '3' and 'Rouen' subdirectories. Finally, the 'pips' directory contains '1', '2', '3' and 'Rouen' subdirectories also.

Each of these styles can be selected, independently, for the 'faces', 'indices' and 'pips' images used to compose the card.

Output Directory

By default, the cards are generated in a subdirectory under the 'cards' directory with the same name as the faces directory. So, if the selected 'faces' directory is '1', the 'Output Directory' is '1' and the cards are generated in the '...\cards\1' subdirectory.

However, the 'Output Directory' can be set manually by clicking the 'Manual' button and entering the name of the directory to use in the text box. Do not use spaces in the name. For example, If the name 'test' is entered the output will be found in '...\cards\test'. The 'Manual' button is a toggle button, so clicking it again will revert to using the name of the selected 'faces' directory once more.

Card Size

Playing cards are usually made in two standard sizes, Poker size being 2½ by 3½ inches and Bridge size being 2¼ by 3½ inches. By default, the card size is selected as Poker with pixel values of 380 and 532. The 'Card height' can be adjusted using the spinner and the 'Card width' is automatically adjusted to maintain the aspect ratio. If Bridge size cards are selected, the 'Card width' is automatically adjusted to maintain the aspect ratio for Bridge cards. If 'Free' is selected, the card width and height can be adjusted independently.

The 'Reset' buttons return the pixel count to the default values.

Background Colour

The 'Background Colour' is used for the background colour of the card. The default 'Background Colour' is white, represented by 'rgb(255, 255, 255)' in the read-only text box. This is a standard notation for representing colours with red, green and blue values in the range 0 to 255. The colour can be changed by clicking the 'Select...' button which launches a standard colour selector dialogue.

Display Card Items

The 'Anatomy of a Playing Card' section above lists the five card items as 'Indices', 'Corner Pip', 'Standard Pip', 'Face Image' and 'Face Pip'. The 'Display Card Items' control section allows you to select which of the five card items you want displayed on the cards.

Note that the 'Face Pip' images are only ever displayed on the court cards and that 'Standard Pips' are only displayed if a corresponding face image file is not found in the 'faces' directory.

Select Card Item

The 'Select Card Item' control allows you to select which card item you want to modify using either the 'Modify Selected Card Item' control or the 'Sample' window.

The 'Change Face Pip' radio button can only be selected if 'Sample' is showing a court card. The 'Change Face Boarder' or 'Change Standard Pip' radio button is selectable based on whether 'Sample' is showing a card with a face image or standard number card pips.

Additionally, if the check box in the 'Display Card Items' section is unchecked the corresponding radio button will not be available at all.

Modify Selected Card Item (%)

The 'Modify Selected Card Item (%)' control section allows the selected card item to be moved or resized. This can also be done using the 'Sample Controls' in the 'Sample' window, but these controls provide a more precise way of doing this.

The spinner values are percentages (%) and take 0.05% steps.

The 'Height (%)' value is the height of the selected card item as a % of card.

The 'X Centre (%)' value is the X value of centre of the selected card item as a % of card width.

The 'Y Centre (%)' value is the Y value of centre of the selected card item as a % of card height.

When the 'Select Card Item' is changed the values on the spinners are updated to those for the item, for example the default value for the height of the corner pip is 7.5% whereas the default value for the height of the standard pip is 18.5%.

The 'Reset' buttons return the current value on the spinner to the default value for the 'Select Card Item'.

When the 'Select Card Item' is the 'Face Boarder', you are not changing the position, but the X and Y boarders instead and the height is no longer applicable. The face image is always centrally positioned.

The 'Keep Image Aspect Ratio' check box only applies to face images. When this is selected the image is proportionally drawn. When the check box is unselected, the image is stretched to fit within the X and Y boarders.

Sample Navigation


The 'Sample Navigation' control allows you to step through each of the cards which are displayed in the 'Sample' window. However, Jokers are not displayed.

Generate

The big blue button in the top right corner is the 'Generate' button. Clicking the 'Generate' button will create the cards in the 'Output' directory, based on the current selections.



Sample Controls

The 'Sample' window also provides some controls for resizing and positioning card items. A small green box  indicates which card item has been selected for modification and is also used as a handle. Note that the 'Modify Selected Card Item' control is updated to reflect any changes.

Mouse Controls

- Clicking in the sample window, but not on the handle, will cycle through the available card items.
- Dragging the handle with the mouse moves each instance of the current card item.
- Scrolling up or down with the mouse wheel will increase or decrease the size of each instance of the current of the card item.
- Clicking in the sample window, but not on the handle, while holding down the control key will increase the size of the card item.

- Clicking in the sample window, but not on the handle, while holding down the alt key will decrease the size of the card item.

Keyboard Controls

With the focus on the 'Sample' window the following key presses can be used to modify the card items:

- The tab key will cycle through the available card items to indicate the currently selected.
- The cursor keys move each instance of the currently selected card item.
- The + and - keys will change the size of each instance of the current card item appropriately.

Additionally, with the focus on the 'Sample' window, the Sample window can be moved by holding down the Shift key and using the cursor keys.

Additional Settings

Clicking on the small icon at the bottom right of the main control window launched the Additional settings window. This window can be closed using the 'Close' button. Clicking the 'X' in the top right will close the entire application.

Card Corners

The 'Corner Radius (%)' value adjusts the rounded corners as a % of card height (default: 10 i.e., 10% of the configured card height). Typically, this is sufficient, however, the Arc Width radius and Arc Height radius can be set independently if the checkbox is selected.

Display Watermark

If a 'Watermark.png' file is found in the 'Face' style directory, it is displayed behind all other images on all the playing cards (but not the jokers). However, that may not be desired, so these checkboxes can limit which cards have the watermark.

Modify Selected Card Item

The 'Lock X coordinate of Index and Corner pip together' checkbox makes the index image and the corner pip image stay vertically aligned with each other.

The 'Lock Y separation of Index and Corner pip' checkbox makes the index image and the corner pip image stay the same vertical distance apart.

The 'Left handed Index and Corner pips' checkbox displays the indices and corner pips in all four corners of the card which is beneficial to left handed players.

The 'Show Guide Box' helps indicate the card items being modified and is especially useful for modifying face images when the aspect ratio is maintained. When this is selected a box is drawn centrally on the 'Sample' window.

Jokers

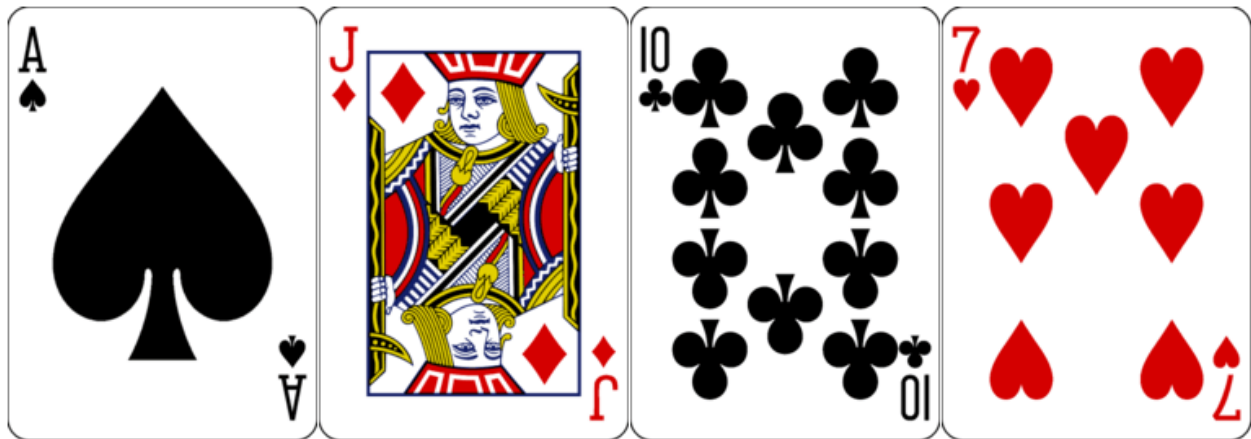
The 'Borderless Images' causes the Joker images to be displayed without a border to allow for a full card display.

Generate Decks using the 'CardWork' environment

Generate the Default deck

The following example uses the default parameters. After launching and clicking the Generate button, 'CardCreate2' uses default values, which means using images from directories 'faces\1', 'indices\1' and 'pips\1' and generates card images in the output directory 'cards\1'.

Sample output:



The following examples demonstrate how some of the controls are used.

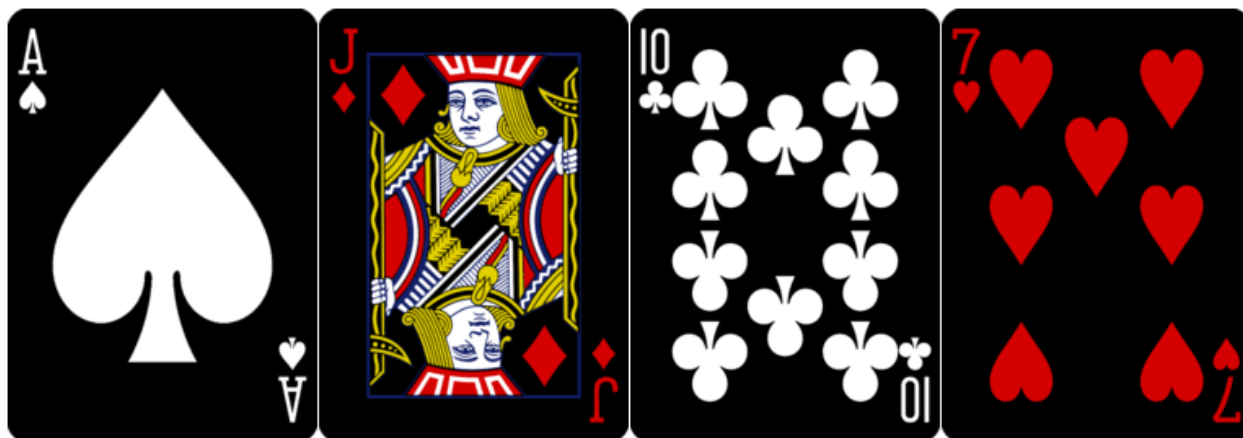
Generate the Black deck

This example shows how to specify non default styles. Here we set the style for 'Face', 'Index' and 'pip' as '2' using the choice-boxes of the input directories. Also, the background colour has been set to black and the output directory has automatically changed to 'cards\2' corresponding to the 'Face' selection. This example shows the advantage of using transparency in the .png files, the black 'Background Colour' shows through the component images.

For this example, I set the following non default values:

- 'Face', 'Index' and 'Pip' styles to '2'
- 'Background Colour' to Black

Sample output:



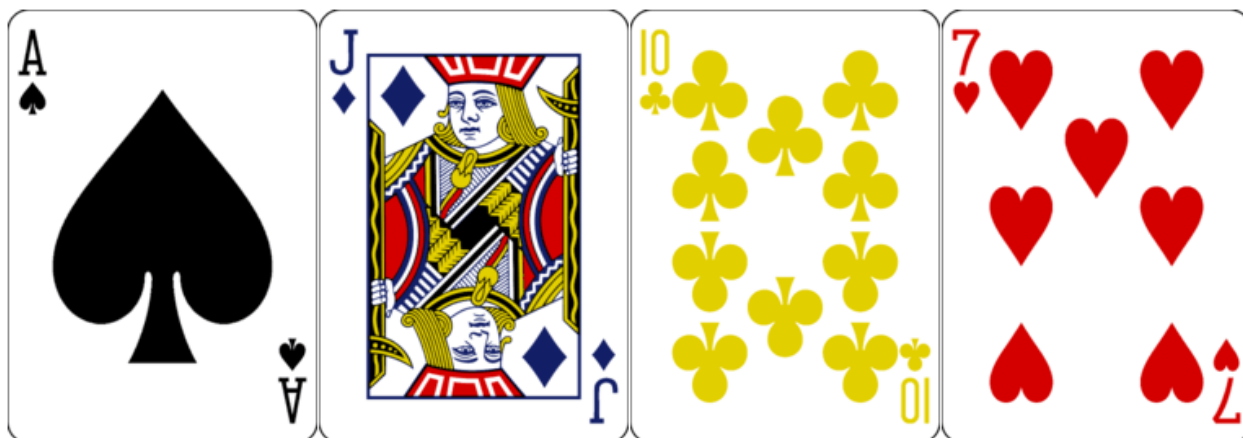
Generate the 4-colour deck

This example uses 'Index' and 'Pip' style '3', but the default 'Face' style of '1'. However, this means that the output, by default, would be generated in the 'cards\1' directory, overwriting the contents. To avoid that we specify output to 'cards\3' by clicking the 'Manual' button and entering '3' in the now editable text box. This example illustrates the advantage of removing the pips from the standard court faces and adding them during generation so they match the pips used for the rest of the suit without the need to edit the court images.

For this example, I set the following non default values:

- 'Index' and 'Pip' styles to '3'
- Manually set the output directory (to '3' for example)

Sample output:



Generate the Rouen deck

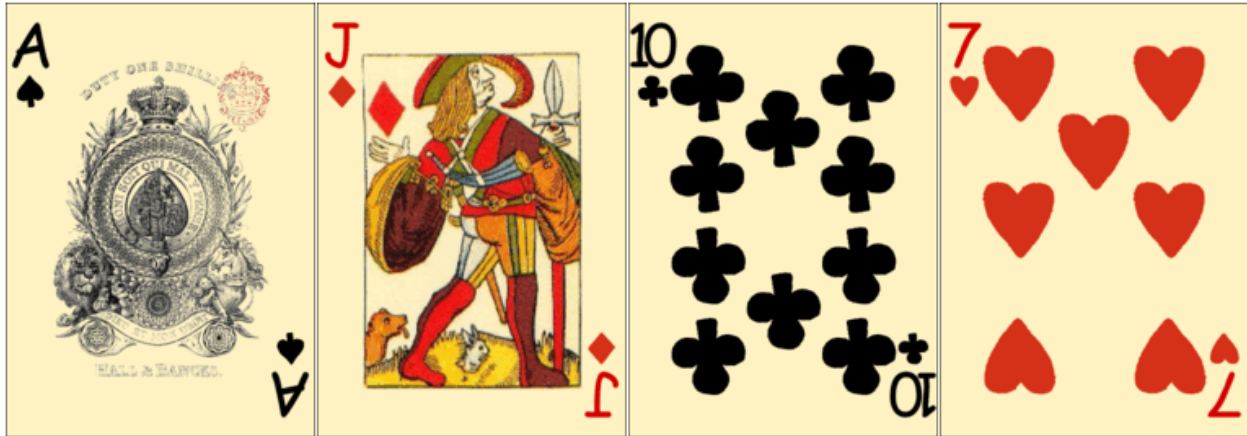
This example uses custom 'Face', 'Index' and 'Pip' styles to create a simulation of a Rouen deck. In this case the court card images are full length with individually placed pips, so we need to disable the generation of the pips on the court cards.

For this example, I set the following non default values:

- 'Face', 'Index' and 'Pip' styles to 'Rouen'

- 'Background Colour' to an RGB of 254, 242, 194)
- 'Corner Radius' to 0%
- Unselect 'Display Face Pip'

Sample output:



Generate Jumbo index

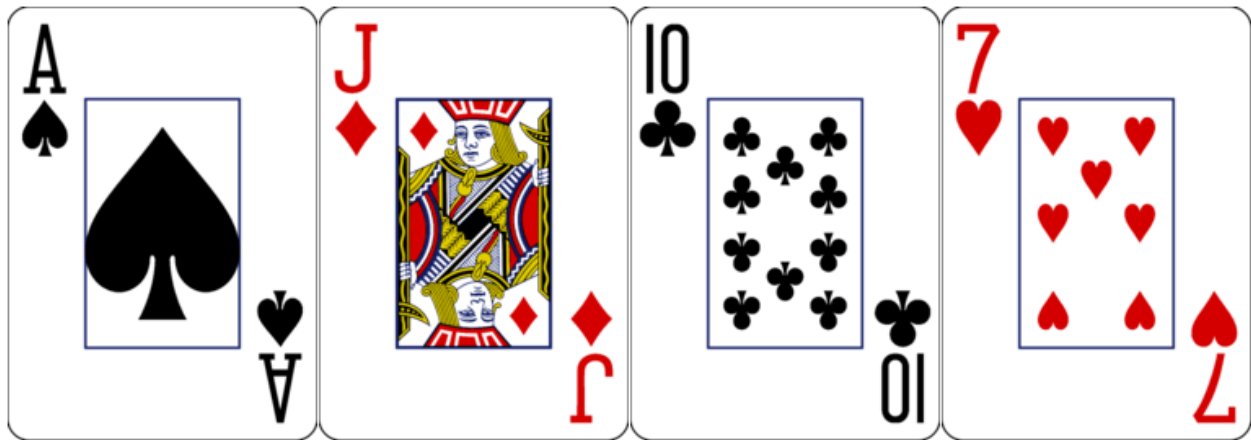
In this example we use standard 'Face', 'Index' and 'Pip' styles, but modify several settings to adjust the size and position of the images to create an approximation of Jumbo index cards. We have also copied 'JumboWatermark.png' into the 'faces/1' directory and renamed it to 'Watermark.png'. This will create and boarder in the background for all cards in this example, however the watermark is simply an image that is displayed in the background of all cards and could be any design you like.

Here is a breakdown of the values used in the 'Modify Selected Card Item (%)' for each of the card items:

	Indices	Corner Pip	Standard Pip	Face Boarder	Face Pip
Height	16	13	9		9
X Centre	12	12	36	25	33.9
Y Centre	12	28	30	10.1	28.7

Additionally, to avoid overwriting the generated card deck in 'cards/1', manually set the output directory (to 'Jumbo' for example)

Sample output:



Generate the bridge size deck

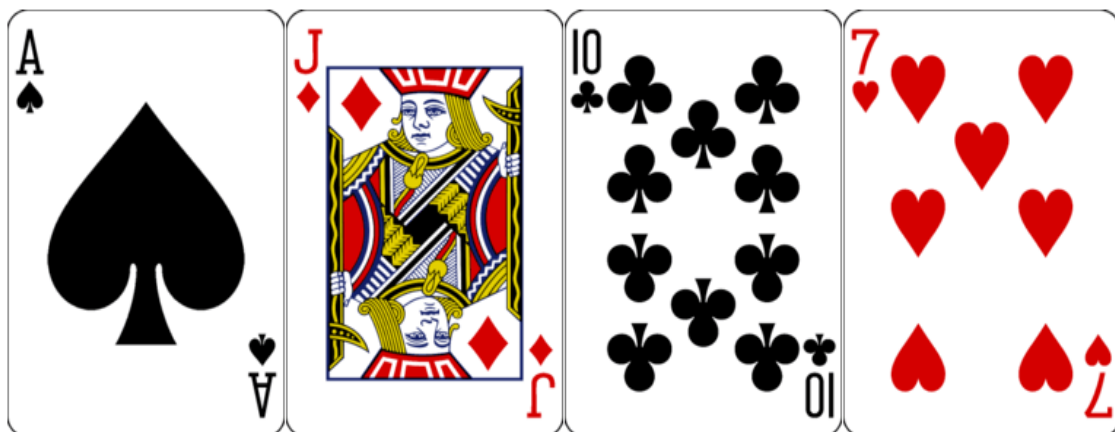
So far, all cards have been created as poker decks. Poker decks are 3.5 inches by 2.5 inches. The default width is 380 pixels and the default height is 532 pixels. Both of these can be changed using the 'Card Size' parameters. The narrower Bridge cards are also 3.5 inches high, but 2.25 inches wide, making it easier to hold more cards. Selecting the 'Bridge' radio button sets the correct width and height and maintains the aspect ratio if the height is adjusted.

Note, selecting 'Free' allows the width and height to be set independently.

Set the following non default values:

- Manually set the output directory (to 'Bridge' for example)
- 'Standard Pip' Height to 16% and the position to (27%, 18.7%)
- 'Face Pip' to a Height of 13% and a 'Y Centre' of 22%

Sample output:



Generate Decks using Add-ons

Now we are going to generate decks that use an image on every card.

Generate the Terry Pratchett deck

This first example uses book covers from Terry Pratchett books. These packages are not part of the CardWork package but are optional additions. First download then unzip the add-on package in the CardWork directory:

```
$ tar xzf Pratchett.tar.gz
```

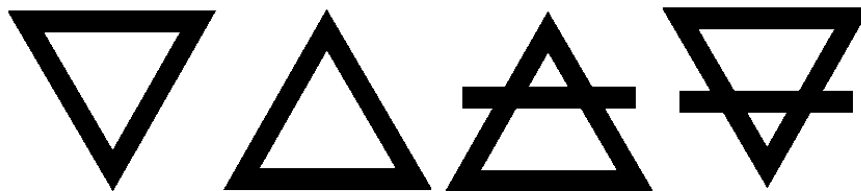
After restarting 'CardCreate2' set:

- 'Face' style to 'Pratchett'
- Optionally set the 'Background Colour' (I used an RGB of 204, 204, 204)
- Unselect 'Display Face Pip'

Sample output:



Generate the Angels & Demons deck



Water

Fire

Air

Earth

Now an example that uses custom pips and custom images for the aces. This deck is based on Dan Brown's Angels & Demons and uses the John Langdon created ambigram images from it for the aces, the

advantage being that you can read the card which ever way up you are holding it. The deck also uses the ancient symbols for earth, air, fire and water. Angels are represented by the white pip cards of water and air. Demons are represented by the red pip cards of fire and earth.

First download then unzip the add-on package in the 'CardWork' directory:

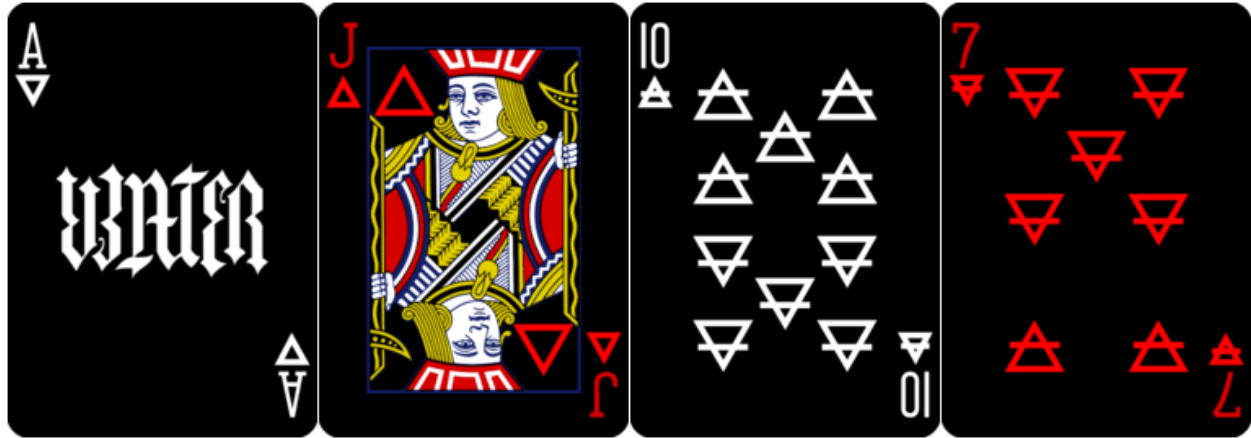
```
$ tar xzf AAD.tar.gz
```

After restarting 'CardCreate2' set:

- 'Face' style and 'Pip' style to 'AAD'
- 'index' style to '2'

- 'Background Colour' to black
- 'Standard Pip' Height to 12% and the position to (30%, 21%)
- 'Face Pip' Height to 12% and the position to (27.5%, 30%)

Sample output:



Miscellaneous Examples

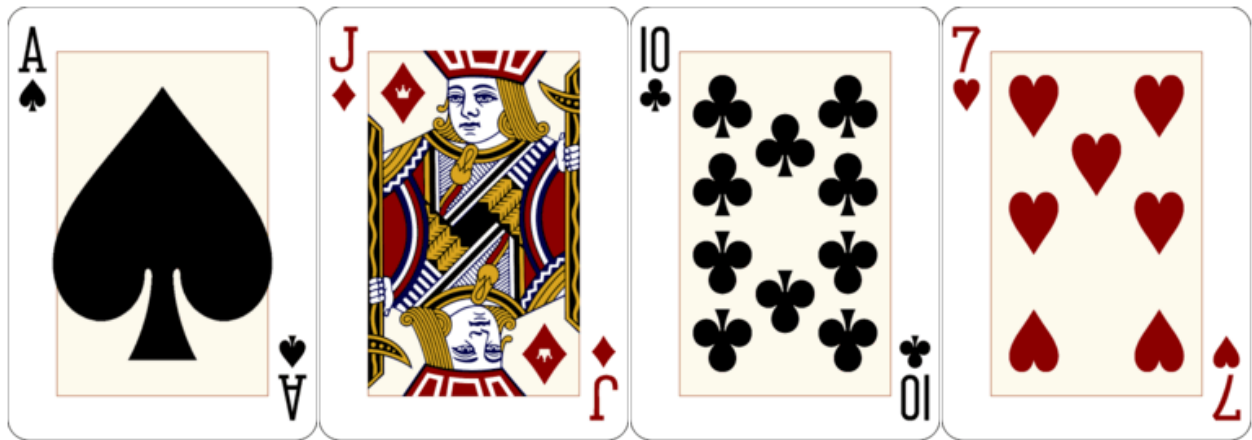
These decks illustrate other possibilities.

Custom Deck

To create this example deck with the style name of 'Custom' (for example), take the following actions:

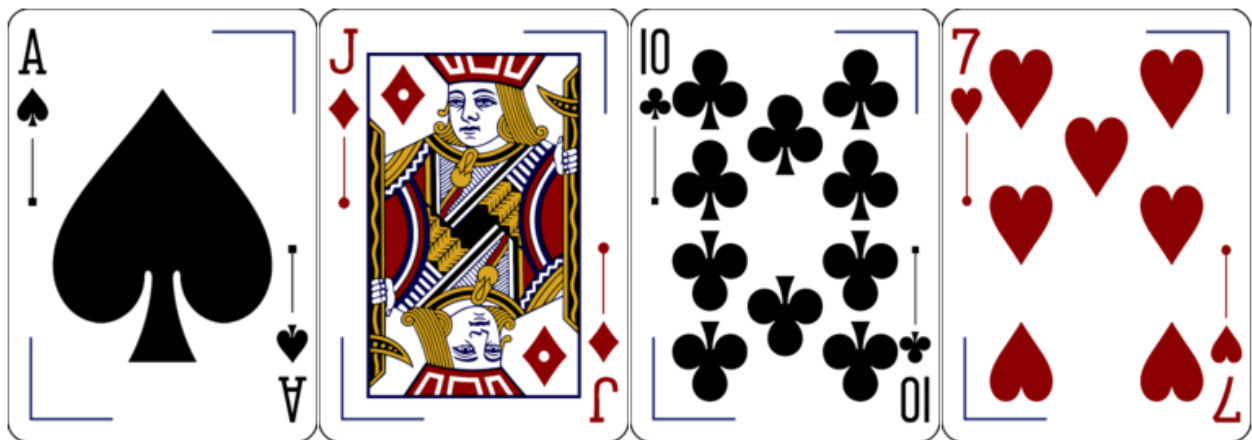
- Copy the style 'faces/1' directory to 'faces/Custom', then use a graphical editor to darkened the colours as follows:
 - Change the red to an RGB of 139, 0, 0.
 - Change the yellow to an RGB of 218, 165, 32.
 - Change the blue to an RGB of 0, 0, 73.
- Remove the blue boarder from around the 'faces/Custom' court images.
- Clone the 'indices/1' and 'pips/1' directories and darken the red to an RGB of 139, 0, 0.
- Clone these standard pips to create face pips (e.g. copy C.png to CF.png) and add small crowns to the centre.
- Use the large pips as aces by copying them from 'pips' directory into the 'faces' directory and add an 'A' to the filename (e.g., copy 'pips/Custom/C.png' to 'faces/Custom/CA.png').
- Copy the 'Watermark.png' from the boneyard into my faces directory.
- Set the background colour to an RGB of 230, 230, 204.
- Adjust the size of the standard pips to 14.5% and the position to (29.75%, 23%).

Sample output:



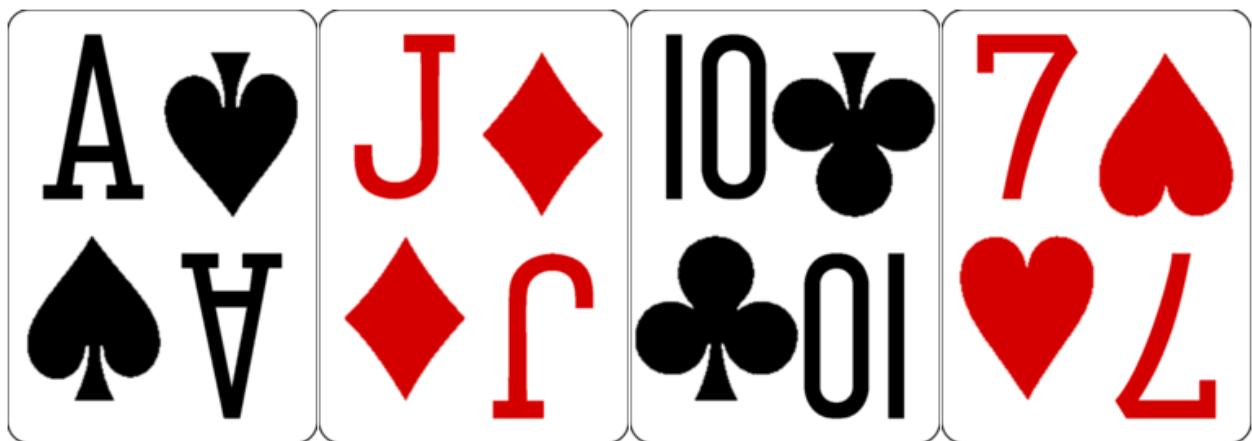
Custom2 Deck

Corner pips can be embellished or the watermark can add corners, for example:



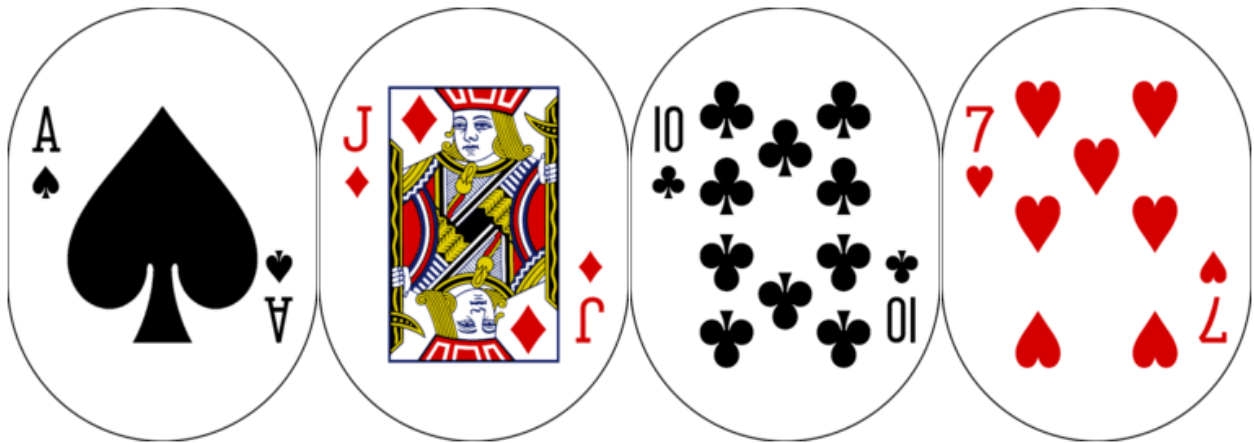
Minimalist Deck

For a plain minimalist deck, remove the standard pips, face images and face pips, then increase the size of the indices and corner pips to 38%, in this example, and reposition them:



Rounded Deck

The cards round corners can be set excessively, in this example to 73%, and with some adjustments to the card items:



Notes

- All images used are .png files because it is a common and popular format that supports transparency.
- The image files for the faces and indices use a common brief naming convention of the initial letter of the suit followed by the card index.
- The image files for the pips use the simple suit initial letter only, however additional pips images can optionally be provided with the addition of an 'F' after the suit letter for face pips and an 'S' (for small) after the suit letter for corner pips.
- If images for the spade indices are not found, clubs will be used because they are typically the same colour. Similarly, if indices for hearts are not found, indices for diamonds will be used. This avoids unnecessary duplication.