Durak: Comprehensive Game Rules

Durak is a traditional Russian card game that emphasizes strategy and tactical play. The objective is to avoid being the last player left with cards, thereby preventing yourself from becoming the "Durak" (the fool). This guide outlines the rules, gameplay mechanics, and special cases to help you master Durak.

Contents

1. Objective

The primary objective of Durak is to **avoid being the last player** with cards in hand, there is no winner, only one looser the "Durak". The last remaining player holding cards after all others have discarded theirs becomes the "Durak" (fool).

2. Components

- **Deck:** A standard 52-card deck is used, comprising cards from 2 up to Ace in each of the four suits (Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, Spades).

3. Setup

1. **Determine Trump Suit:**
   a. Shuffle the deck thoroughly.
   b. Each player is dealt **6 cards**.
   c. Reveal the next top card from the deck; its suit becomes the **trump suit**. Place this card partially visible under the remaining deck so that the trump suit is known to all players, this card is the last card that will be picked up from the cardstack.
2. **Gameplay Direction:**
   a. The game proceeds **counter-clockwise**, meaning play moves to the player on the right.

4. Card Rankings and Suits

- **Suits:**
  - Each card belongs to one of four suits: Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, or Spades.
  - The **trump suit** beats all other suits.
- **Ranking (Ascending Order):**
  - 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J (Jack), Q (Queen), K (King), A (Ace).
- **Trump Cards:**
  - Any trump card, regardless of rank, **beats any non-trump card**.

5. Gameplay Overview

Durak is played in **battles**, each consisting of a series of attacks and defences between three players (defender and two attackers). The attacker left of the defender starts the battle by placing cards on the field, and the defending player must beat them according to the rules, the attacker to the right of the defender can join the attack if he has suitable cards.

6. Turns and Actions

1. **Starting the battle:**
   a. The player with the **lowest trump card** begins the first battle of the game.
2. **Attack and Defense:**
   a. The **attacker** places a card on the field.
   b. The **defender** must respond by beating the attacking card.
   c. The defender can only beat a card with:
      i. A **higher-ranking card** of the **same suit**, or
      ii. **Any trump card** (if the attacking card is non-trump).
3. **Continuing the Battle:**
   a. The two attackers may add more attacking cards if they match cards in rank with any of the cards currently the middle.
   b. **Maximum of 6 total attacks** can be made in a single battle.
4. **Passing or Taking Cards:**
   a. If the defender successfully beats all attacking cards, all cards on the field are discarded, and the defender becomes the next attacker.
   b. If the defender cannot beat an attacking card, they must **take all cards** on the field into their hand, the two attackers can still throw in suitable cards which the defender has to pick up (as long as the total amount of cards doesn't exceed 6), then the battle ends. The defender has lost his right to attack since he picked up, therefore the attacker to the right of the defender will start the in the next battle.
5. **Ending a battle:**
   a. If all cards are defended, and the two attackers don't want or can place any other attacks anymore, the battle is finished. The defender will be the next attacker.
   b. If the defender decides to pick up all cards, the battle is ended. The attackers can still throw in cards, which the defender has to pick up. Since the defender picked up he lost his right to attack, the attacker to the right of the defender will start the in the next battle

7. Attacks and Defenses

1. **Attacking:**
   a. Only cards **already present on the battlefield** can be used for additional attacks.
   b. The rank numbers of attacking cards must **match** the ranks of cards already on the field.
2. **Defending:**
   a. The defender must beat each attacking card individually following the rules outlined in section 4.
   b. The defender can pass on the first attack, if he plays a card with the same rank, then he becomes the new attacker, while the attacker right to the defender will be the new defender
   c. If the defender passes on the first attack with a trump, he does not have to play the card, this is called "reflect" an attack
3. **Attack Limits:**
   a. A single battle can consist of up to **6 small attacks** (i.e., a maximum of 6 cards on the field).
   b. **First Battle Exception:**
      i. In the first Battle of the game, the player with the lowest trump is the attacker
      ii. The very first battle of the game can only have a maximum of **5 attacks**.
      iii. Reflecting or passing on the first attack is **not allowed.**

8. Battle Mechanics

1. **Initiating a Battle:**
   a. The attacker plays the first card.
   b. The defender responds by beating it, passing on or reflecting it

2. **Adding to the Battle:**
   a. After the initial defense, the two attackers may add attacking cards.
   b. Only cards matching the ranks of cards on the field can be added.
   c. Players must have cards of matching ranks to add as attacks.

3. **Ending the Battle:**
   a. If the defender successfully defends against all attacks, all cards on the field are discarded.
   b. If the defender cannot defend against any attack, they must take all cards into their hand, the two attackers still throw in cards which the defender has to pick up

4. **Subsequent Battles:**
   a. The defender becomes the next attacker if they successfully defended.
   b. If the defender took the cards, the next battle is initiated by the player to their right.

9. Special Rules and Edge Cases

1. **First Battle Limitations:**
   a. The very first battle of the game **cannot exceed 5 attacks**.
   b. This rule helps in balancing the initial play and avoiding an overwhelming number of cards on the field early on.
2. **First Card Restrictions:**
   a. In the first battle, the **first attacking card cannot be passed** to another player. It must be played by the starting attacker.
3. **Passing on Attacks:**
   a. After the first attack, players may choose to pass instead of adding more attacks, provided they adhere to the maximum attack limit.
4. **Matching Ranks for Additional Attacks:**
   a. Only ranks of cards **already present on the battlefield** can be used for additional attacks. For example, if a 7 and a King are on the field, only 7s and Kings can be added as attacking cards.
5. **Deck Replenishment:**
   a. After each battle, players replenish their hands from the deck, starting with the attacker and proceeding in counter-clockwise order.
   b. The attacker draws first, followed by other players.
6. **Empty Deck:**
   a. If the deck is exhausted, players continue to play with the cards remaining in their hands without drawing new cards.

10. End of the Game

- **Ending the Game:**
  o The game continues until all players except one have successfully discarded all their cards.
- **Determining the Durak:**
  o The **last player** holding cards is declared the **durak** (the fool).

11. Additional Notes

- **Strategic Play:**
  - Balancing when to attack, defend, and pass is crucial for success.
  - Keeping track of played cards can provide an advantage in predicting opponents' hands.
- **Variations:**
  - While this guide outlines standard Durak rules, regional and house variations may introduce different mechanics or limits.
- **Etiquette:**
  - Maintain a respectful and fair play environment.
  - Avoid revealing your cards to other players during the game.