

# Joker in the Mix

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## Abstract

*Joker in the Mix* is a simplified strategy game where two players fight to find the hidden Joker. A subset of a standard playing card deck is used, giving each player a simple set of 8 Face/Ace cards plus one Joker. Cards are arranged in a secretive face-down arrangement, hiding the Joker card in the mix. The other cards are used to battle and scout, attacking and defending as each player tries to uncover the Joker before their opponent does.

## Materials

One standard deck of playing cards, 2 players, and approximately 30 minutes to play several rounds.

## Rules

### 1) Setup

- a) A subset of the standard playing deck of 54 cards is used to play the game.
- b) The dealer first pulls all of the Face/Ace cards (Jack, Queen, King, & Aces) and Joker cards out of the deck. These 18 cards are all that are used in gameplay.
- c) Each player is dealt two of each Face/Ace card & one Joker card. This should total 9 cards of the same type per player.
  - i) Give all of the Clubs and Spades to one player and the Hearts and Diamonds to the other. This Red vs Black color coding will help differentiate which cards belong to which player later in the game.

### 2) Setting the 'Board'

- a) Each player then puts their cards face down in a 3x3 grid. This arrangement of cards is where the initial strategy comes into play. Knowing that the Ace card is the most powerful, the Jack the weakest, and the goal being to find the opponents hidden Joker you should arrange the board in a logical sense to protect your Joker and set up an attack plan.

### 3) Play

- a) The player who is not the dealer goes first, moving cards from the front row forward to attack. You can move in left, right, up, down but not diagonally and you can not jump other cards.
- b) After an attack both cards are flipped over revealing their values, and the more powerful card eliminates the weaker. For example a Queen will beat a Jack and an Ace will beat a King. If the cards match, both cards are removed from play.
  - i) If there is a winning card, it is left in that position on the grid flipped over so it is showing its value.
- c) Play continues in this matter with each player taking turns making one move at a time. A move doesn't need to be an attack and a player can move to a blank space.
- d) The game is won when a player successfully hits their opponent's Joker card.

## Design Process

### I. Basis

Being greatly inspired by classic computer Real Time Strategy (RTS) games I initially wanted to try to prototype a game of this style. I quickly realized that for such a simple exercise I would need to start with something more basic than something RTS inspired. I thought back to one of my childhood favorite games, *Stratego*. I enjoyed the battling dynamics but simple rules and gameplay. I chose to design a game similar in style, but one that doesn't require a game board or many pieces. I chose to use the simple standard playing deck and simplified setup and number of pieces to create the game *Joker in the Mix*.

### II. Elements of Skill

The primary element of strategy comes in the initial setup of laying down the grid of cards. Does a player choose to heavily defend the Joker, putting all the Aces and Kings by it? Or perhaps take a riskier strategy and put all the strongest cards in the front row, hoping to penetrate their opponents first line of defense and quickly make way towards finding the Joker.

### III. Further Work

Going one step further I would modify the game to allow different types of moves and abilities. For instance I could allow the Jack to move diagonally giving it a special benefit despite its low power rating when attacking.