

# 8-quilibrium – a simple but fun deck-of-cards game

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## What is 8-quilibrium?;

8-quilibrium or *Equilibrium*, is a fun and fairly quick card game about ending the round with the most *balanced* 8-card hand. On your turn you either **Give** a card to someone with the fewest cards, or spend a token to **Swap**. Players can spend tokens to deny an incoming card or cancel a swap. Hands can never exceed 8 cards. The Market is always 4 face-up cards.

**Players** 2–6

## Needs

- A jokerless card deck of 52.
- a spot for the **Market**: a face-up row that can handle 4 cards.
- **Reject tokens**: 2 tokens per player, the group can decide. Use some coins, pieces of paper, or poker chips.

## Goal

Finish the round with the most balanced 8-card hand by suits, color, and parity (even/odd), using the scoring in Section .

## Setup

1. Shuffle the deck.
2. Deal **3** cards to each player.
3. Reveal **4** face-up cards to form the **Market**.
4. Give each player **Reject tokens**.
5. Choose a starting player. The game runs in clockwise direction.

## Hard Limits and Invariants

- **Hand limit 8:** No player may ever hold more than 8 cards. You cannot Give a card to a player who already has 8.
- **Market size 4:** The Market always contains exactly 4 face-up cards (see Refill & Bottoming rules).

## Turns

On your turn, choose **one** action:

### A) Give (no token)

Take **1** card from either:

- the **Market** (choose one of the 4), or
- the **top of the deck** (reveal it).

Then **Give** that card to **any player tied for the fewest cards**. *You may choose yourself only if you are tied for the fewest* (see the 2-player adjustment).

- If the card came from the Market and is **accepted**, immediately **refill** the Market from the deck back to 4.
- If the card is **rejected** (see Reject tokens), place it into the Market (and possibly bottom a Market card to keep the Market at 4).

### B) Swap (spend 1 Reject token)

Choose **one** of the following:

1. **Swap with Market:** Exchange **1 card from your hand** with **1 card in the Market**. (1-for-1; Market remains 4.)
2. **Swap with Player:** Choose a player who has **at least as many cards as you**. You and that player each select **1 hand card face-down**, then:
  - **Before reveal**, the target may **spend 1 Reject token** to **cancel** this swap.
  - If **not** canceled, reveal and **exchange** the chosen cards simultaneously. (1-for-1; legal even if one or both are at 8.)
  - If **canceled**, both chosen cards **return to hands unrevealed**. Your action converts into a **forced Give from the deck**: reveal the top card of the deck and immediately **Give** it as follows:
    - a) If the *canceled* is among the fewest-cards players, the forced Give **must target the canceler**.
    - b) Otherwise, **choose any one** of the players tied for the fewest and Give to that player.
    - c) This **forced Give cannot be reacted to**. *You may not choose a Market card for this forced Give.*

## Reject Tokens

A **Reject token** can be spent in two ways as a *reaction*. **Reaction limits (per active player's turn):**

- Each player may **react at most once**.
  - Each individual event (a single incoming **Give** or a single attempted **Swap with Player**) may be **reacted to at most once**.
  - The active player **cannot** react to their own action
- 1) **Reject a Give targeting you (reaction)**. When a card is Given to you, you may spend 1 token to refuse it.
    - Place the incoming card into the **Market**.
    - If this would make the Market exceed 4 cards, the **rejecting player chooses any one Market card** to place **on the bottom of the deck** so the Market returns to 4. (You may bottom the just-rejected card.)
    - The active player's turn ends; no replacement Give is performed.
  - 2) **Cancel a Swap targeting you (reaction)**. When another player attempts *Swap with Player* with you, you may spend 1 token to cancel it. The active player must immediately perform the **forced Give from the deck** described above; **that forced Give cannot be reacted to**.

## Market Refill & Bottoming

- **Refill after accepted Market Give:** If you took a card from the Market and it was *accepted*, draw the top card of the deck to refill the Market to 4.
- **Rejects place into Market:** If a Given card is rejected:
  - If the card originated from the *deck*, add it to the Market; if the Market now shows 5, the rejecting player *bottoms* any one Market card to the bottom of the deck (Market returns to 4).
  - If the card originated from the *Market*, return it to the Market (it will be 4 again; no bottoming necessary).
- **Swap with Market:** Is a 1-for-1 exchange. No refill.

## Targeting the Fewest Cards

When Giving, determine the minimum hand size at the table. Your recipient must be among those players, and you cannot target any player who already has 8 cards.

- If a **single player** is uniquely fewest, that player **must** receive the card.
- If **multiple players** are tied for fewest, the **active player chooses any one** of those tied players to receive the card. *You may choose yourself only if you are tied for the fewest* (see the 2-player adjustment).
- If all other players have 8 and you do not, you must Give to yourself.

## Two-Player Adjustment

In a 2-player game, if both players are tied for fewest cards, a **Give must target the opponent** (*i.e.* Self-Give while tied is not allowed). If a **Swap with Player** is canceled while both are tied for fewest, the **forced Give from the deck targets the canceler and cannot be reacted to**. All other rules are unchanged.

## Round End

The round **ends immediately** when **every player has exactly 8 cards**.

- With fewer players: leftover cards remain in the deck; the Market is still 4.

## Scoring

Compute three scores; sum them. Higher total wins.

Aces count as odd. Face Cards: J=11 (odd), Q=12 (even), K=13 (odd).

**Suits (max 10):**

$$\text{Suit Score} = \max\left(0, 8 - \sum_{\heartsuit, \diamondsuit, \clubsuit, \spadesuit} |\text{count}_{\text{suit}} - 2|\right) + \begin{cases} 2, & \text{if suits are exactly } (2, 2, 2, 2), \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

**Color (max 3):**

$$\text{Color Score} = \max(0, 3 - |\text{reds} - 4|).$$

**Parity (max 3):**

$$\text{Parity Score} = \max(0, 3 - |\text{evens} - 4|).$$

**Total Max** 16 points.

**Ties** Break ties in this order: (1) Higher Suit Score; (2) Lower highest single-suit count; (3) Sum of ranks closest to **56**.

## Worked Examples:

### A Typical Give (accepted)

Market shows:  $\heartsuit 9$ ,  $\clubsuit 2$ ,  $\spadesuit K$ ,  $\diamondsuit 6$ .

Hands: You (6 cards), Alfa (7), Biden (8), Zelensky (6).

*Fewest* = 6  $\Rightarrow$  tied recipients are You and Zelensky. You **choose** Zelensky and Give  $\clubsuit 2$ . Zelensky is below 8, so accepts. Refill the Market by drawing the top card of the deck to restore 4 Market cards. Turn ends.

### Rejecting a Give from the Deck

You reveal the top card:  $\diamondsuit 7$ . You must Give to a fewest-cards player; you **choose** Alfa (among the tied fewest). Alfa spends a *Reject* token. Place  $\diamondsuit 7$  into the Market. The Market temporarily shows 5 cards; Alfa (the rejecting player) chooses any one Market card to place on the bottom of the deck, returning the Market to 4. Your turn is over.

### Swap with Player (canceled → forced Give)

You (6 cards) spend a token to *Swap with Player* targeting Marci (6 cards). You both select a card face-down. **Before the reveal**, Marci spends a **Reject** token to cancel the swap. Both chosen cards return to hands unrevealed. Due to the cancel, you must immediately perform a **forced Give from the deck**: reveal the top card and Give it to a fewest-cards player. Because the *canceler* (Marci) is among the fewest, the card **must target Marci**. (this "*Forced Give*" cannot be rejected.)

### Swap with Market

You spend a token to *Swap with Market*: trade your ♡9 for the Market's ♠2. The Market remains at 4; no refill occurs.

### Scoring a Hand

Suppose your 8-card hand has suits: ♡=3, ◇=1, ♣=2, ♠=2; reds=4, evens=3.

*Suits*:  $8 - (|3 - 2| + |1 - 2| + |2 - 2| + |2 - 2|) = 8 - (1 + 1 + 0 + 0) = 6$  (no perfect bonus).

*Color*:  $3 - |4 - 4| = 3$ .

*Parity*:  $3 - |3 - 4| = 2$ .

**Total**:  $6 + 3 + 2 = 11$  points.

See next page for Variants.

## Variant: Team Play

This module enables cooperative teams with open table talk, bluffing, and a few simple team-work tools. Use with 4 players (2v2) or 6 players (3v3).

### Seats, Setup, and Scoring

- **Seats:** Teammates sit as opposing as possible the table. Hands remain hidden as usual.
- **Setup:** Use the base setup. Each player starts with 2 Reject tokens. Market size and hand limit are unchanged.
- **Turn Order:** Normal clockwise order (there will be an opponent between teammates).
- **Communication:** Any *public* table talk is allowed, including exact card identities, plans, and code words. Bluffing and overt “signals” are allowed, but all signaling must be public (spoken or visible to everyone).
- **Team Scoring:** At round end, each player computes their score using the base rules. Team score = sum of teammates’ scores. The higher team total wins the round. If tied, compare the highest individual *Suit Score* among team members; if still tied, compare the lower highest single-suit count among those best hands; if still tied, the team with a member whose sum of ranks is closest to 56 wins; if still tied, the round is a draw.

### New Team Abilities

The following options add teamwork without changing the base engine. Unless stated otherwise, these options do not alter Market size or hand limits.

**A) Assist (On-Turn Token Transfer)** At the start of your turn, before choosing your action, you may give exactly 1 Reject token to a teammate.

- **Cost:** Your turn immediately ends. You perform no other action.
- **Limit:** Once per turn (per player). No per-round limit.
- **Notes:** This is not a reaction. It does not open a reaction window and does not affect reaction limits.

**B) Quick Toss (Off-Turn Token Transfer)** When your teammate is targeted by a *single* incoming event (a Give or an attempted Swap with Player) and is about to decide whether to react, you may pass them exactly 1 Reject token.

- **Timing:** Declare after the event is announced but before the target decides to Reject/Cancel. The token immediately becomes the target’s to use (or not).
- **Cost:** Place a personal *Skip* marker: you skip your next turn entirely. If you perform multiple Quick Tosses before your next turn, you still skip only once. Remove the marker when your skipped turn would begin.
- **Limits:**
  - At most one Quick Toss may occur for a given event. If multiple teammates offer, the target chooses whose token to accept.
  - Quick Toss is not itself a reaction and does not count against any reaction limit. Only the target may choose and perform the reaction.

(e.g., a forced Give from a canceled Swap remains unreactable).

**C) Relay Swap (Team Exchange Action)** On your turn, instead of taking a normal action (Give or Swap), you may perform a Relay Swap with exactly one teammate.

- **Procedure:**

1. Spend 1 Reject token (from the active player).
2. You and your chosen teammate each select 1 hand card face-down, then reveal simultaneously and exchange them (1-for-1).
3. Immediately perform a *forced Give from the top of the deck* (reveal the top card and Give it using the base “Targeting the Fewest” rules). This forced Give is *unreactable*. You may not choose a Market card for this forced Give.

- **Legality:** The 1-for-1 exchange is always legal, even if one or both players are at 8 cards (hand sizes remain unchanged by the exchange). The subsequent forced Give must still respect the hand limit (you cannot Give to a player who already has 8).
- **Limit:** At most once per round *per team*.
- **Notes:** The forced Give preserves pace and prevents stalling.

## Turn Skips

- When a player must *skip* their next turn (from Quick Toss or any future effect), place a visible marker. When that player’s turn would begin, remove the marker and their turn is skipped; play proceeds to the next player. Skipping a turn does not change hand sizes, Market state, or turn order. Multiple pending skips condense to a single skipped turn.

## 2v2 and 3v3 Clarifications

- In 3v3, you may Assist or Relay Swap with either teammate. For Quick Toss, if both teammates offer a token, the target chooses which one to accept; only one Quick Toss may occur for the event.
- Team abilities do not create additional reaction windows beyond those already present in the base rules.

## Worked Examples:

**Quick Toss Save (2v2).** Your teammate at 7 cards is targeted by a top-deck Give and has no tokens. You perform a Quick Toss to pass them a token; they immediately Reject, placing the revealed card into the Market and bottoming any one Market card to return the Market to 4. You will skip your next turn.

**Relay Swap Setup (3v3).** On your turn, you spend 1 token to Relay Swap your ♣4 for your teammate’s ♦Q, improving both suit and parity balance. As the penalty, you immediately reveal the top card and perform a forced Give to a fewest-cards player (unreactable), potentially pressuring an opponent.

## Variant: Open Stock Economy

This variant makes the top of the deck public information and ties the token economy to accepting randomness. It increases planning and creates meaningful tradeoffs without adding components.

### Seats, Setup, and Scope

- **Players:** Works at 2–6 players with the base Market of 4.
- **Setup:** Use the base setup. After revealing the Market, flip the top card of the deck face-up to form the *Stock*. Each player starts with 2 reject tokens. All base rules apply.

### The Stock (Public Top of Deck)

- The top card of the deck is always face-up as the *Stock*.
- Whenever any effect would draw *from the top of the deck* (a top-deck Give, a forced Give from a canceled Swap, or a Market refill after an accepted Market-origin Give), take the Stock instead, then immediately reveal the next top card as the new Stock.
- When a top-deck Give is *Rejected*, the incoming card (the Stock) is placed into the Market. If the Market would exceed 4, the rejecting player bottoms any one Market card to the bottom of the deck to return it to 4. Then immediately reveal the next top card as the new Stock.

### Burden Pays (Earning Tokens)

Accepting randomness grants agency.

- **Gain on accept:** When you *accept* a Stock-origin Give targeting you, gain 1 Reject token.
- **What counts:** Stock-origin Gives include:
  - A Give where the active player chose the deck (the Stock) and you accept it.
  - A forced Give from a canceled Swap with Player (these take the Stock and are unreactable); if it targets you, you gain 1 token.
- **Does not count:** Accepting a card that originated from the Market does not grant a token.
- **Cap:** You may hold at most 3 tokens. Excess gains are lost.

### New Token Spendage: Refresh the Stock

A light control valve on the visible top card.

- **Timing:** At the start of your turn, before choosing an action.
- **Do:** Spend 1 Reject token to *bottom* the current Stock to the bottom of the deck, then immediately reveal the next top card as the new Stock.
- **Turn impact:** This does not end your turn; you may still take your normal action afterward.
- **Notes:** Refreshing the Stock does not open any reaction window.



### Worked Examples:

**Token on burden.** Alfa is targeted by a top-deck Give (the Stock shows ♥9). Alfa accepts it, going to 7 cards and gaining 1 token (up to the 3 cap). Reveal the next top card as the new Stock.

**Reject to Market with Stock refresh.** You reveal the Stock ♦7 as a top-deck Give to Zelensky. Zelensky spends a token to Reject. Place ♦7 into the Market; because the Market now shows 5, Zelensky bottoms any one Market card to the bottom of the deck, then the next top card is flipped face-up as the new Stock.

**Refresh then act.** At the start of your turn the Stock is an unhelpful ♣K. You spend 1 token to Refresh the Stock, bottoming the ♣K and revealing ♠2. You then choose to Give from the Stock and target a fewest- cards opponent.

## Variant: Wind of Change

A once-per-round, table-wide rotation that shakes up hands without changing hand sizes. Works with 2–6 players.

### Scope and Setup

- Use the base setup. Each player still starts with 2 Reject tokens; Market size and hand limit are unchanged.
- Place a single *Wind marker* near the Market. At the start of each round, the Wind marker is *unused*.

### Calling the Wind

Once per round total (table-wide), immediately after your action fully resolves (including any reactions), you may spend 1 Reject token to call *Wind of Change*. Then perform the Wind pass as follows.

1. Declare the **direction** of the pass: clockwise or counterclockwise.
2. All players **simultaneously** choose 1 hand card face-down.
3. **Resolution:** All chosen cards leave hands simultaneously, then are passed in the chosen direction and added to recipients' hands face-down. Hands return to their prior sizes.

After the pass, your turn ends as normal. Flip the Wind marker to *used*. The Wind cannot be called again this round.

### Limits and Clarifications

- **Cost and limit:** The caller must spend 1 Reject token. At most one Wind of Change may be called per round (rotation) total (not per player).
- **Not a Give or Swap:** The Wind pass is neither a Give nor a Swap. It opens no reaction window; Reject and Cancel cannot be used on it. It does not count against any reaction limits.
- **Information:** Passed cards are chosen and transferred face-down and are not revealed to the table. Recipients may look at the received card and add it to hand.

### Worked Example

After completing a Give and with no reactions, you spend 1 token and call Wind of Change, choosing clockwise. All players select 1 card face-down. Everyone simultaneously passes their chosen card to the next player clockwise and takes the incoming card into hand. Hand sizes are unchanged; your turn then ends.

## Variant: Fog of War

Make the Market hidden information. Players can pay to peek; only cards seeded by rejects are public. This raises deduction, timing, and bluffing without changing core pacing.

### Scope and Setup

- Use the base setup. Market size and hand limit are unchanged.
- Deal 4 cards face-down to form the Market. Maintain the Market as four fixed *slots* in a row (left to right).

### Market Rules

- **Reveals on leave:** When a Market card leaves the Market (because it is accepted or swapped out), reveal it *as it leaves*.
- **Bottoming stays hidden:** Whenever a Market card is bottomed (placed on the bottom of the deck), do not reveal it; place it face-down.
- **Incoming cards:**
  - *From deck via Reject:* When a top-deck Give is Rejected, place that revealed card into a Market slot *face-up*. If the Market would show 5 cards, the rejecting player bottoms any one Market card (face-down) to return to 4.
  - *All other ways:* Any other card that enters the Market (refill after an accepted Market Give, Swap with Market replacement, returning a Market-origin card after a Reject) enters face-down.
  - *Preserve state on return:* If a Market-origin card is Rejected back to the Market, it returns in its current face state (face-up cards stay face-up; face-down stay face-down).
- **Choosing from the Market:** When you Give from the Market or Swap with Market, you choose a slot (not an identity) unless that slot is currently face-up. If you chose a face-down card, it is revealed only when it leaves the Market.
- **Refills:** After an *accepted* Market-origin Give, refill the emptied slot with the top card of the deck *face-down* to return the Market to 4.

### Peeking Mechanic

At the start of your turn, before choosing an action, you may spend 1 Reject token to *peek* at up to 2 Market cards.

- Secretly look at the chosen face-down cards..
- This does not end your turn and opens no reaction window.

### Clarifications

- All base reaction rules apply. Only the target may react; each player may react at most once per active turn; each event may be reacted to at most once.
- Forced Gives remain unreactable (unchanged).
- Round end timing is unchanged: if an accepted Market Give results in every player having exactly 8 cards, the round ends immediately; skip any pending refills or effects from variants.

### Worked Examples:

**Rejected deck card becomes public.** You reveal  $\diamond 7$  from the deck and target Zelensky, who Rejects. Place  $\diamond 7$  face-up into a Market slot. Because the Market now shows 5, Zelensky bottoms any one Market card face-down to return to 4. The face-up  $\diamond 7$  remains public until it leaves the Market.

**Swap from a hidden slot.** You Swap with Market, choosing slot 2, which is face-down. Reveal it *as it leaves* (it is  $\clubsuit Q$ ), take it into your hand, and place your chosen hand card face-down into slot 2. No refill occurs.

## Variant: Rank Powers

Accepting face cards and aces triggers some effects. This adds tactical spikes and tempo swings while keeping turns quick.

### Scope and Trigger

- Works with 2–6 players. Market size, hand limit, and reaction rules are unchanged.
- **Accepting a card:** You *accept* a card when a Give (from the Market or from the top of the deck, including forced Gives) resolves with you as the recipient and you keep the card (i.e., you did not Reject it).
- **Timing:** When you accept a face card or ace, resolve its Rank Power *after* any Market maintenance caused by that acceptance (refill or bottoming), unless noted otherwise. Rank Powers are not actions and open no reaction windows.
- **Round end:** If accepting a card makes all players have exactly 8 cards, the round ends immediately; do not resolve Rank Powers.

### The Powers

- **Jack (J):** After you accept a Jack, you may immediately *Swap with Market*. Choose any Market slot. You may decline the use of this power.
- **Queen (Q):** After you accept a Queen, peek at the top 2 cards of the deck, then put them back on top in any order. If Open Stock Economy is active, do not change the Stocks face-up state; the top card remains face-up. Otherwise keep them face-down.
- **King (K):** After you accept a King, immediately choose 1 card from your hand and *Give* it to a player using the base targeting rules. This King-Give is **unreactable**. You may choose the just-accepted King as the card to Give.
- **Ace (A):** After you accept an Ace, gain 1 Reject token (maximum 3 tokens held; excess is lost).

### Clarifications and Interactions

- Rank Powers trigger only on *accepting* a card from a Give. Cards gained via Swap with Market or Swap with Player do not trigger powers.
- Powers can chain: if a King forces a Give that is accepted and is a face card or Ace, resolve that new Rank Power after any maintenance from that forced Give, then continue. Always resolve one power fully before the next.
- If a Queen reveals the top 2 and a subsequent effect would draw from the top of the deck, it takes the top card as reordered.

## Worked Examples

**Queen into planning.** You accept a ♡*Q* from the Market. Refill the Market to 4. Then peek at the top 2 cards of the deck, reorder them, and continue the turn flow.

**King tribute (unreactable).** You accept a ♠*K* from a top-deck Give. After maintenance (none), you must immediately Give 1 card from your hand to a fewest-cards player; you choose to Give the ♠*K* to an opponent at fewest. That Give is unreactable and may itself trigger Rank Powers for the recipient if applicable.

See next page for combining variants.

## Combining Variants

This section explains how to layer multiple variants together, which combinations are especially fun or synergistic, and which mixes can slow the game down. All variants respect the core invariants (hand limit 8, Market size 4) and the base reaction rules unless a variant explicitly states otherwise.

### Compatibility at a glance

All five variants are designed to be modular. In practice:

- Any single variant works cleanly with the base game.
- Most pairs are fully compatible without rule changes.

**Full-stack caution.** Running three or more simultaneously (for example, Team Play + Open Stock Economy + Rank Powers, with or without Wind of Change or Fog of War) is legal, but expect longer turns. For new groups, enable one or two variants first, then add more.

### Timing and precedence with multiple variants

When several modules apply to the same event, resolve in this order:

1. Resolve the Give or Swap as usual. If the recipient accepts, immediately perform any Market maintenance caused by that acceptance (refill or bottoming) per the base rules.
2. If using Open Stock Economy and the accepted card originated from the Stock, update the Stock display and award the 1 token for “Burden Pays” to the recipient (respect the cap of 3).
3. If using Rank Powers and the accepted card is a face card or Ace, resolve its Rank Power. These are not actions and open no reaction windows. Ace token gain stacks with Stock-origin token gain but never exceeds the cap of 3 total.
4. If a Rank Power (e.g., King) forces a Give, perform that Give immediately. It is unreactable as specified by the variant. If Open Stock Economy is active, a forced Give that draws from the top of the deck takes the Stock.
5. Wind of Change never creates a reaction window and happens only after the caller’s action fully resolves (including any reactions), once per round table-wide.
6. Fog of War face-state rules always govern how cards enter or re-enter the Market when it is active: top-deck Rejects enter face-up; all other ways enter face-down; returning Market-origin cards preserve their face state.

## Sample setup presets

Preset	Players	Variants	Notes
Planning Duo	4 or 6	Team Play, Open Stock Economy	Strong synergy: off-turn saves (Quick Toss) plus Stock visibility. Expect crisp tempo; consider a light turn timer.
Combo Planner	3–5	Open Stock Economy, Rank Powers	Highly tactical: Stock-origin Aces can yield two tokens (cap 3). Kings create unreactable pressure.
Deduction Night	3–5	Fog of War, Wind of Change	Hidden Market with occasional rotation keeps info flowing without extra reactions; peeking becomes pivotal.
Swingy Teams	4 or 6	Team Play, Rank Powers, Wind of Change	Big tempo swings; Relay Swap and King-Gives can reshape hands quickly. Enforce “once per round” limits.
Full Featured	4 or 6	Team Play, Open Stock Economy, Rank Powers	Deep but thinky. Use 2 tokens each (Stock cap 3). Recommend a table norm for brisk decisions.

## Combos to use with care

Combination	Why / tips
Team Play + Fog of War	Public table talk plus hidden Market can slow turns. Encourage concise signals; peek only when it changes the action choice.
Team Play + Wind of Change + Relay Swap	Multiple non-reaction exchanges can inflate analysis time. Keep cadence: resolve, then Wind (once per round), and respect the per-team Relay Swap limit.
Open Stock Economy + Rank Powers + Wind of Change	Many timing layers. Apply the precedence listed in the combining rules. Favor simple Wind calls to avoid bogging down.