

# THE RULES OF SABACC

Sabacc is a card game for two to eight players that is played throughout the galaxy. The rules below are for standard sabacc, but the rules and cards may vary depending on local custom.

## THE CARDS AND THEIR VALUES

---

Sabacc is played with a deck of 76 cards made up of four suits—**Coins, Flasks, Sabres,** and **Staves**—and a set of face cards. A suit is comprised of eleven regular cards, valued 1-11, as well as four ranked cards: **the Commander, the Mistress, the Master, and the Ace**, valued 12-15 respectively.

Each face card has a special name and value (listed below). There are two instances of each face card in the deck.

The Idiot	0
The Queen of Air and Darkness	-2
Endurance	-8
Balance	-11
Demise	-13
Moderation	-14
The Evil One	-15
The Star	-17

## RULES OF PLAY

---

The object of sabacc is to have the card total closest to 23 or -23, without going over 23 or under -23. Winning hands of 23 and -23 are called a **Pure Sabacc**. A hand comprised of the Idiot, a two of any suit, and a three of any suit is also a winning hand called an **Idiot's Array** (a literal 023). An Idiot's Array beats a Pure Sabacc.

A total which is over 23, under negative 23, or exactly 0 is called a **bomb out**; it requires the holder of the hand to pay a **penalty**, as described below.

There are two pots to be won in the game of sabacc. A pot is the total amount of credits staked by all of the players in one hand of the card game. Each pot should be kept clearly separate from the other. The first of the two pots is called the **hand pot** and is taken by the winner of the current hand. The second is the **sabacc pot** and continually builds over several hands until it is won with a special hand, as described below.

To start a game of sabacc, choose one player to be the dealer of the first hand. Other players wishing to be dealt in to a hand must first ante by placing one credit into the **hand pot**. Each player must also ante one credit into the **sabacc pot** if it is empty, which will always be the case during the first hand of the game.

## PHASES OF A HAND

---

### Ante

Each player must ante one credit into the **hand pot**. If there are no credits in the **sabacc pot** (including on the first hand of play), each player must also ante one credit to the sabacc pot.

### Deal

The dealer deals two cards to each player.

### Betting Phase

The player to the left of the dealer begins play with the option to bet. If he or she chooses to do so, the bet is placed in the **hand pot**. If a bet is placed, each player must match that bet if he or she wishes to remain in the hand. Going clockwise around the table, players may match the initial bet, raise, or fold. Betting continues until no one wishes to raise further.

Any time a player wishes to fold, they must pay one credit to the **sabacc pot**.

### Draw/Trade Phase

Beginning with the first player, each player has the option of drawing a single card, trading a card from their hand for a card from the deck, standing, or placing a second card in the **interference field** (see below). Afterward, another round of betting takes place. Players continue to draw and bet for four rounds, which is generally called the **pot-building phase**. **The game may not be called in the first four rounds.**

### Calling Phase

After the pot-building phase is over, any player may decide they wish to call the hand. If the player who calls the hand does not win it, they must pay a **penalty**, described below. One last round of betting occurs, starting with the calling player, and then players reveal their cards.

All hands—including the special hands of Pure Sabacc and the Idiot's Array—can only be declared during the calling phase.

## WINNING AND LOSING

---

Any player with a hand totaling more than 23, less than -23, or exactly 0 at the time a hand is called has **bombed out**. The **penalty** for bombing out is to pay an amount equal to the contents of the **hand pot** into the **sabacc pot**.

If the player who called the hand does not win it, they must pay a penalty to the **sabacc pot**, just as if they had bombed out.

The player with the hand closest to 23 or -23 without bombing out is the winner, and they take the **hand pot**. If a player had a **Pure Sabacc** or an **Idiot's Array**, they also win the **sabacc pot**.

If two or more players are tied, they must participate in a **sudden demise**. In a sudden demise, the dealer deals each tied player an additional card from the deck which is then added to their original hands. The best **modified hand**—the closest to 23 without bombing out—takes the pot. If there is still a tie after the additional deal, the players split the pot.

## SHIFTING

---

After each round of betting, the dealer rolls a six-sided die. If the result is 1 or 2, a **shift** occurs. Shifting regularly occurs at least once during an hand, and twice is not uncommon.

During a shift, each player must discard one card from his or her hand, chosen randomly by the player to the right. All of the players' discarded cards are then gathered by the dealer, reshuffled, and then dealt to the players in order.

Players may prevent a card from being shifted by placing it in an **interference field**, which involves laying it face-up on the table so that all players may see. A player's interference field can hold up to two cards. Players may play their first card into an interference field at any point. To play a second card into the interference field, they must wait to act until their turn during a draw/trade phase.

## RULE VARIANTS

---

There are a multitude of variations of sabacc, depending on the sector where the game is being played. Below are simply a few possibilities for rule modification.

### Special Hands

One of the easiest variants is to add special hands, also called arrays, which trump other hands of equal value. Some special hands are:

Fairy Empress	Two Queen of Air and Darkness cards (value -22)
Longing Hearts	An Endurance, any Master, and any Mistress (value -21)
Temptation	An Evil One, any Commander, and any Mistress (value -20)

## Betting Amounts

One variant is to alter the penalty paid for bombing out or for a player calling a hand but not winning it. The Alderaanian version of the rules, for example, reduces the penalty for calling but not winning to 10% of the hand pot.

Another variant is to limit the amount of credits that may be bet per round. For a friendly game, three credits per round of betting is a good limit.

For high stakes games, the ante amount per hand might be increased significantly.

## Limiting Discards

Rebel Alliance rules dictate that a player may discard no more than three cards during a hand, while Imperial Rules state that a player must discard exactly two cards during play.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE:

There are many, many different versions of the standard sabacc rules available on the holonet. The above rules attempt to find a middle-ground between all of the different variations with an aim toward simplicity and balanced gameplay.