

Prince Albert Rules

Prince Albert is a simple card game that combines elements of poker, gin rummy, and point bidding to create a unique card-game experience. The game is played with a standard playing card deck and works with 2-4 players (although you can alter the rules slightly to play with five).

Game Basics

A round of play always includes two phases: bidding and drawing. Each round is self-contained - no cards are kept by the players - and the only thing that persists from round to round is the score. The setup for any round is easy; shuffle the cards well and **deal five to each player**, and place the remaining cards in the center of the table as the draw deck. Players go around the table bidding for how few cards they need to make the best poker hand, and then players take turns discarding and drawing to make the best possible hand. The game ends when any player reaches 25 points.

Phase 1 - Bidding

After the cards are dealt, bidding begins with the person who won the last round - except on the first round in which case the last person to have finished an alcoholic drink goes first. The bid is on how many cards you will need to trade in for you to have a better five-card poker hand than anyone else, similar to how you play draw poker. The maximum bid in a standard two, three, or four player game is eight cards (this goes down to five cards in a five player game).

Each player, beginning with the first, has the option to bid or pass, and each bid must be less than the previous. If you pass, you are out of the bidding phase for this round (although you can bid in the next round). Players can continue to bid until all players pass to the low bidder, or a player bids zero (the lowest possible bid). If all players pass on the first time around the table, then the last player to bid **MUST** bid eight (or five in a five-player game).

The bidding determines how many points the bidder is playing for. The number of points is determined by taking the inverse of the number of cards bid - in other words, the less the bid, the more the points:

$$\# \text{ points} = 8 - \text{bid}$$

For example, a bid of 3 would result in 5 points being played for by the bidder. You cannot earn less than one point on any round, so a bid of eight still earns you one point for a win.

Phase 2 - Drawing

After the Bidding phase is over, the drawing phase begins with the low bidder. First, flip the top card from the deck to form the discard pile. The order of action is

always *discard first, draw second*. And yes, this does make the game more difficult. The low bidder always discards face down in front of them; however, all other players discard face up to a central discard pile. This is the bidder's benefit for winning that phase. The player now draws either a card off the top of the deck, or the last face up card that was discarded.

No player is allowed to look through the discard pile at any time, keep that pile tidy. Players will continue to draw up to the number of cards bid in the first phase, but no more.

Any player can choose to pass instead of discarding and drawing on any round, but this action ends their drawing phase. In other words, once you pass in the drawing phase, you're done for that round. All other players continue to discard and draw until either the last card bid is drawn, or all players pass.

Zero Bids

If the bid was zero, the low bidder can draw no cards, but all other players are allowed to discard and draw one card. After this short drawing phase, the bidder must show their hand.

All In

After all drawing is complete, but **before anyone shows their hand**, any player (except the low bidder) with any points (must be positive) is able to go "all in" (multiple players can do this). Any player choosing this option is essentially claiming *they* have the best hand at the table. Once the "all in" bets are made, everyone shows their hands. If an "all in" player *does not* have the best hand, they lose all points they currently have. If they *do* have the best hand, then they will double up their points!

End of Round

The bid will determine how many cards each player will be able to trade in order to make their hands. After all cards have been discarded and drawn (and after any "all in" bets), any player wanting to claim victory for that round must show their hand. In other words, *you do not need to show your hand if you don't want to*. The only exception is that the **low bidder and "all in" players must always show their hand**.

If the low bidder has the best poker hand at the end of the round, then they win the points determined by their bid (8 - bid). If someone else has the best hand at the end of the round, then the **bidder loses that number of points** (and yes, they can go below zero) and the winner (non-low-bidder) gains two points (regardless of what the bid was). If an "all in" player has the best hand, they double up their points, and if an "all in" player does not have the best hand their points go to zero.

Continue playing rounds until a player reaches 25 points. Of course, you can always play for more or less points to shorten or lengthen the game. **Be sure to shuffle**

the entire deck between each round!

Variations

For a 5-player game, the maximum bid is 5 cards. Otherwise the game should play as normal. Heads up play (2-players) works, but isn't nearly as fun.

You can add cash betting to the game if you're interested. There is one betting round *before bidding* (starting with the previous round winner), one betting round *after bidding* is over (started by the low bidder), and a round *after drawing and all in's* (but before showing hands, obviously). During the betting rounds, a player can choose to fold, taking them out of that round. Players who pass during the drawing phase must still bet as usual. Betting on any given round begins with low bidder.

Disputes

Any time there is a dispute in the rules that is not covered here there will be a vote by all players to decide what to do - simple majority wins. If the vote is tied, then the low bidder and the nearest person to their left that is opposed to the bidder's view play rock-paper-scissors to decide.