

## Introduction

The exact origin of this unusual two-player game is unknown. Dating from the 1970's at the latest, it is the earliest example I have found of a combat card game. The aim is to be the first build a layout worth at least 21 points. Cards can be used for their point value, or to attack your opponent's layout by destroying or capturing cards.

For some years a FAQ by Richard Sipie, first published in 2000, was the only generally available documentation of the game. I am grateful to Michael Pearson for his help in preparing the new description on this page and to Greg Pallis, an enthusiastic player and winner of the Cuttle tournament in the 2009 Mind Sports Olympiad, for answering my various detailed questions about the rules.

## Players and Cards

Cuttle is played by two players using a standard 52-card deck without jokers.

## Goal

The goal is to be the first to accumulate 21 or more points worth of point cards on your side of the table. The first player to achieve this wins the game.

## Set-up

Each player has a hand of cards, normally held concealed from the opponent. The dealer deals six cards to himself and five to his opponent. These are the players' initial hands. The remaining deck is placed face-down and becomes the draw pile. The dealer's opponent then takes the first turn.

During the game, players play cards from their hands, placing them face up on the table in front of them. This way each player forms a layout of cards on their own side of the table.

Various actions cause cards to be discarded. Discarded cards are stacked face-up next to the draw pile so that only the top card is visible. This pile of discards is called the scrap pile.

## Play

On your turn you must perform exactly one of the following actions:

- draw a card from the draw pile and add it to your hand

- play a point card from your hand

- play a one-off effect card from your hand

- play a permanent effect card from your hand

The turn then passes to your opponent.

If the draw pile runs out, then instead of drawing a card, a player is allowed to pass, i.e. do nothing at all on that turn. If there are three consecutive passes the game ends and neither player wins.

## Card types and how to use them

In Cuttle there are three categories of card: point cards, one-off effect cards and permanent effect cards.

## 1. Point cards

Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 can be played as point cards.

Aces are worth 1 point. Number cards are worth their face value.

There are two ways to play a point card:

A point card can be played face-up on your side of the table. These cards add up to form your total points. The first player to accumulate 21 total points wins the game.

Alternatively, a point card can be played as a 'scuttle' allowing you to remove an opponent's point card from the table. The point card you play must be higher in value than the card you wish to scuttle, or equal in value with a higher suit. The rank of the suits is clubs (lowest) < diamonds < hearts < spades (highest). So for example the diamond7 can scuttle the club7 or the heart6 but the diamond7 cannot scuttle the heart7. To scuttle an opponent's point card, place your card on top of it and discard both cards to the scrap pile.

## 2. One-off effect cards

Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 can be played as one-off effect cards.

One-off effect cards are never placed on the table but are discarded into the scrap pile immediately after use. See the list below for a description of each effect.

## 3. Permanent effect cards

8, Jack, Queen, King can be played as permanent effect cards

Permanent effect cards are played face-up on the table like point cards, though note that the 8 is turned sideways. A permanent effect lasts for as long as the card is on the table. See the list below for a description of each effect.

### One-off Effects

#### Ace

Scrap all point cards on the table - both yours and your opponents'.

#### 2

There are two possible ways to use a two as a one-off effect card.

Play a two in your turn to scrap any permanent effect card on the table.

Play a two to block a one-off effect card played by your opponent. This is the only case in which you can play a card during your opponent's turn. Your two and your opponent's one-off effect card are both scrapped. Note that a two can be used to block a two: if you play a one-off effect and your opponent tries to block it with a two, you can use your own two to block your opponent's two. Both twos go to the scrap pile and your original one-off effect card takes effect (unless of course your opponent then plays another two to block it again).

#### 3

Rummage through the scrap pile and add a card of your choice to your hand. Since the 3 is not scrapped until after its effect has been carried out, you cannot use this effect to take back the 3 you just played.

#### 4

Your opponent must discard two cards of his choice from his hand, showing them to you before placing them on the scrap pile.

#### 5

Draw the top two cards from the draw pile and add them to your hand.

#### 6

Scrap all permanent effect cards on the table - both yours and your opponents'.

#### 7

Draw a card and play it immediately however you wish.

If you draw a card that cannot be played immediately it is discarded, but if it can be played you must play it, even if it is to your disadvantage. For example a jack might have to be used to give a point card to your opponent.

9

Return any one permanent effect card on the table to its controller's hand.

Note that if you use this to return a jack, the point card that it was stacked on changes sides.

Permanent Effects

8

While you have an 8 on the table as a permanent effect card, your opponent must play with the cards in his hand exposed. The 8 is placed sideways on the table, distinguishing it from point cards and making it look like a pair of glasses.

Jack

Transfer control of a point card. The jack is placed on top of a point card and both cards are moved across the table, changing the owner. Multiple jacks can be stacked on top of a single point card, and the ownership changes each time a jack is added or removed.

Naturally you would normally play a jack on a point card controlled by your opponent, moving it to your side of the table so that it becomes yours. However, if you were to draw a jack as a result of the one-off effect of a 7 when your opponent had no point cards, you would be forced to play it on one of your own point cards and pass it to your opponent.

If a point card is scrapped, either by an effect or by scuttling, any jacks upon it are also scrapped.

Queen

All your point cards and permanent effect cards on the table other than queens are defended from effects that target single cards. Queens protect against 2, 9 and jack effects, but not against an ace or a 6, since these target multiple cards. Queens do not protect against scuttling (scuttling is not an effect). Since queens do not defend themselves or other queens, you can use a 2 to remove an opponent's queen.

If you play a 2, your queen on the table blocks your opponent from countering it with his own 2.

King

The number of points you require to win the game is reduced according to the number of kings on your side of the table as follows:

No kings: 21 or more points;

One king: 14 or more points;

Two kings: 10 or more points;

Three kings: 7 or more points;

All four kings: 5 or more points.

Variants

The following improvements to the game have been suggested.

Fours

Greg Pallis recommends that when a four is played as a one-off effect, the two cards scrapped from the opponent's hand should be chosen at random. The opponent's hand is shuffled face down, two cards are drawn from it, exposed, and discarded to the scrap pile.

This rule change encourages aggressive play, makes the four stronger, and somewhat weakens the power of twos, since if you keep them in your hand they are vulnerable to a four attack.

#### Eights

Daniel Goers suggests that an 8 can be played as a one-off effect card to scrap a 8 that is on the table as a permanent effect card. Both 8's are discarded to the scrap pile.

#### Nines

In the standard rules, nines are almost useless as one-off effect cards. You might use one to remove a jack from a point card controlled by your opponent if that immediately won the game. In any other case, your opponent can immediately undo the effect of the nine by simply putting the permanent effect card back on the table.

I suggest the following amended rule. When you play a nine as a one-off effect, you return one permanent card of your choice to your opponent's hand, and your opponent must wait at least one turn before playing that card again.

Reddit user [gaylordqueen69](#) has suggested a more powerful use for the nine. When you play a nine as a one-off effect you take one permanent card of your choice from the table and place it face down on top of the draw pile. This card will therefore be acquired by the next player who draws a card.

#### Tens

Daniel Goers suggests that a 10 can be used as a one-off effect card to block a scuttle. The 10 and the card played as a scuttle are discarded to the scrap pile and the card that your opponment was trying to scuttle remains in place.

#### Queens

Reddit user [beamer159](#) has suggested a variant in which although a queen does not protect itself, it does protect other queens. Therefore if you have two queens they protect each other as well as your other permanent effect cards and can only be removed by a six.

#### Joker

Daniel Goers suggests that one Joker can be added to the deck. It is played as a one-off effect and causes the players to exchange hands with each other.

#### Other Cuttle Pages

Jared Miller has published a revised and clarified set of Cuttle rules on [github](#).

The Cuttle page by [gaylordqueen69](#) on Reddit includes an amusing rewrite of the FAQ, some suggested rule changes, and carries comments including a completely revised schedule of one-off effects suggested by [beamer159](#).

#### Cuttle Online

You can play Cuttle online against human opponents at [Ryan Emberling's Cuttle site](#).