

# SPOONS

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## **Abstract**

Spoons is a fast-paced card game where players try to be the first one to get four of a kind of the same number. When someone gets four of a kind, they can take a spoon from the center of the table, after which matching card numbers is off the table. It then becomes a race to see who can grab the last spoon, in a similar manner to musical chairs.

## Materials

- A standard 52 card deck
- Spoons

## Rules

Set up the table by giving each player 4 cards, and putting a number of spoons 1 less than the amount of players in the center (ex. If there are 5 players, put down 4 spoons).

Starting with the dealer, cards are passed around the table, one at a time, in order to make 4 of a kind. One card is picked up, and one card is passed onto the next person to that player's left. This continues until someone gets 4 of the same number card. If the draw pile runs out before anyone achieves this, reshuffle the discard pile and continue.

When someone gets 4 of a kind, they can take a spoon from the center. Once one spoon is taken from the center, anyone is allowed to take a spoon, and the person left without a spoon is given one of the letter of S-P-O-O-N-S.

During the spoon-grabbing phase, players are allowed to bluff in one of two ways: pretending to grab a spoon, or pretending to have four of a kind if they are the first person to grab the spoon. Players don't show their cards until all players either accept the first person's four of a kind or someone calls them on their bluff.

If someone falls for the first type of bluff, falsely grabbing a spoon without having four of a kind, they get a letter. If someone makes the second type of bluff, and successfully gets away with it, they can get rid of one of their letters. If someone correctly calls another player on the second type of bluff, they can get rid of one of their letters.

When they get all letters, they are out of the game.

## Design Process

While Spoons is a fun, quick game on its own, it's largely left to chance. The only time I have felt in control of the outcome of the game is when I was the first to grab the spoon, but have grabbed it quietly in order to not alert the others at the table of the missing spoon. Though there is some level of strategy to this, as a player I feel that I am so fixated on getting four of the same card that grabbing the spoon feels secondary, despite the name of the game.

Because I believe that winning the game is largely out of the player's hands, I propose a game of spoons where you're allowed to bluff, in a similar fashion to BS. That way, there is an added layer to skill that isn't just reflexes in the very end of the rounds. One bluff I had in mind is in the initial grab of the spoon, in which a player pretends to grab a spoon in order to get others to falsely grab spoons despite not having four of a kind. The second bluff I thought of was after the first person grabs a spoon, they don't physically reveal the cards they have, instead relying on the others at the table to take their word as to which four cards they have.

The bluff mechanic that was added was something I took from BS, a game that requires a little less chance than Spoons. It makes the players think a little more about the win conditions, as well as give the "spoonless" player a chance to win if they want to call another person's bluff. In the case of the second type of bluff, where the "first" person lies about the four of a kind they have, this also gives other players incentive to look at their cards and deduce whether or not that player actually has that four of a kind. Spoons, of course, isn't a perfect information game in this regard, but this mechanic entices the players to think about the cards that were already in play aside from the ones in their hands, which is another layer of skill.

While playtesting this game, the problem that I noticed was that with the addition of being able to get rid of letters in SPOONS, it prolongs the gameplay of an otherwise quick game. I think it is important to understand that if players expect a quick game, it should be made so, especially in the case that someone gets all letters of SPOONS quicker than other players, and therefore has to sit out for a long time. Since spelling out SPOONS, in my experience, seems to be an optional rule, it could be changed so that players have three "lives" instead of the six that are given by spelling out SPOONS.



In this case, while I don't have four of a kind, I could use this opportunity to try to lie and grab the last spoon.