



THE CARD GAME

www.duel52.com



Two Player



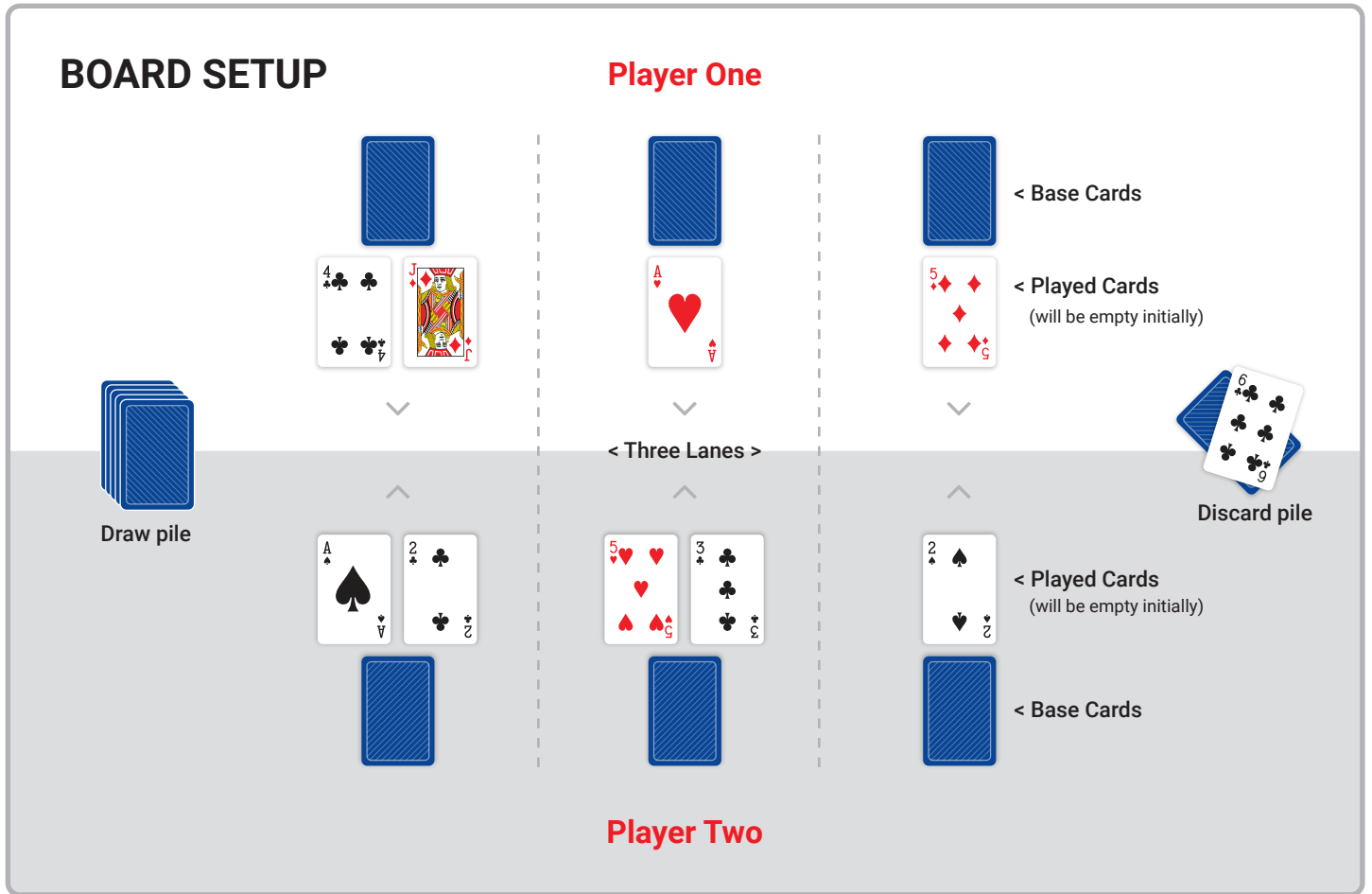
Standard Deck



25 Minute Games

1. Overview & Setup

- Duel 52 is a game of board control and tempo. The board is divided into **three lanes**, where both players fight for control.
- Players take turns drawing cards, playing cards into lanes, using powers and attacking the opponents board.
- The game ends when a player **wins two lanes**. A lane is won by killing all opposing cards in that lane.



SETUP



Begin with a standard 52 card deck, remove jokers.



Deal one card face-down in each lane for each player (six cards total). These are your Base cards.



Deal five cards to each player's hand.

-10


Remove ten cards from the draw pile and set them aside, these will not be used this game.

THREE LANES

- Cards are played from your hand into a lane, and must remain in that lane until the lane is won, or the card is killed.
- Cards may only attack cards in the same lane.
- Each lane begins with a Base card, dealt face-down and not revealed to either player.
- Base cards can be only activated or attacked when the draw pile is empty. They serve as your last line of defence.
- A lane is won when you have killed all of your opponent's cards in that lane, and they cannot play any more cards. **Win two lanes to win!**

2. Turns & Actions

THREE ACTIONS PER TURN




Play a Card

Played face-down (inactive).
May be attacked and killed
but cannot attack.




Flip a Card

Activates card power. Can
now attack (for one action).



Attack

Deal one damage to any
opposing card in lane.



Pair

Create a pair.
See below.

Any combination of actions is allowed.
For example: *Play > Flip > Attack*, or *Attack > Attack > Attack*.
You must use all your actions.

On the very first turn of the game, the first player has
just two actions. You may look at your own played cards
at any time for free.

ATTACK & DAMAGE



Undamaged

- Cards have **two** hit points.
- Cards deal **one** damage.
- *Each card may only attack once per turn.*



Damaged

- When a card is damaged, turn it sideways. Damaged cards may still attack and constant powers still apply.
- If a card is damaged when face-down, it remains damaged when flipped.



Killed (discard pile)

- When a card is killed, it is discarded (removed from game).
- If killed face-down, card powers do not activate, and the card is not revealed. The discard pile will be a mix of face-up and face-down cards.



PAIRS

- It costs one action to create a pair.
- Cards must be in the same lane, face-up, and the same rank to make a pair.
- Cards in a pair still take damage individually.
- Pairs must attack together. They deal **two** damage to a single card for one action. The damage cannot be split.
- Triplets and quads cannot be made.

Draw a card each turn



At the start of your turn, draw one card from the shared draw pile.

Once the draw pile is empty, no more cards may be drawn by any means.

When the draw pile is empty, Base cards become normal cards (but they cannot be looked at before being flipped)!

3. Card Powers

2

VIEW | Draw a card, then discard a card



"THE RECRUITER"

Add a card to your hand from the draw pile, then discard any card from your hand into the discard pile. The drawn card may be played if an action is available. If draw pile is empty, does nothing.

STRATEGY

Gives you more card options, which is important in the early game. Weak in the endgame when the draw pile is empty.

3

TRAP | If killed face-down, return to play face-up



"IT'S A TRAP!"

When your opponent kills a face-down 3, instead of being discarded, it flips and is now a normal live card with 2 hit points.

STRATEGY

Huge payoff if your opponent spends two actions killing it, plus its ready to attack on your turn. Sometimes awkward as you don't want to flip it yourself. Can swing a contested lane. Fun to bluff!

4

FORESIGHT | Look at any face-down card



"INFORMATION IS POWER"

Look at any face-down card on the board. If you look at a Base card, do not show it to your opponent.

STRATEGY

Short term; look at an opponent's board card to shutdown their strategy - kill the King before he activates! Long term; look at a Base card to decide where to play. Also counters 3s!

5

FLIP | Flip all your face-down cards in lane



"A CALL TO ARMS"

Flip all face-down cards in its lane. Flipped card powers activate in the order that you choose, and they can attack if actions are available. If draw pile is empty, will also flip base card.

STRATEGY

Potentially a huge tempo gain when flipping multiple cards - two or more free flips can outright win a lane. Careful not to overcommit though (and lose the other two lanes)!

6

FREEZE | Freeze enemy cards in lane for one turn



"THE FROST MAGE"

All enemy cards in lane are frozen for one turn, they may not attack or flip themselves. They may still be flipped by a 5, healed by a 7, moved by a Queen or activated by a King. Cannot freeze a 9. New cards may be played into the lane.

STRATEGY

Very powerful in a contested lane, a 6 can buy you time to reinforce and swing the balance in your favour. Weak in the early game.

7

HEAL | Heals your entire board



"THE LIFE MAGE"

Heals all your damaged cards, in all lanes, face-down and face-up. Heals a Jack to full. Does nothing if there are no damaged cards.

STRATEGY

One of the few cards that can affect other lanes, a 7 is situationally very strong, gaining multiple tempo and saving your cards. Jacks (who have three hit points) love them!

3. Card Powers (continued)

8

RETALIATE | Damages attackers



"THE SPIKED SOLDIER"

Any card that attacks an 8 will take one damage (except a 9).

WHEN PAIRED

Both 8's take damage separately, dealing one damage to each attacker. Like all pairs, they deal two damage for one action to a single card. *When attacked by a pair, an 8 damages both cards in the pair.*

STRATEGY

Difficult to deal with, an 8 is a persistent strong card - like all cards with constant powers. It does nothing when flipped, but has a huge impact on the fight for board control.

9

NIMBLE | Counters enemy constant powers



"THE NINJA"

Cannot be frozen by a 6. Doesn't take damage when attacking an 8. Cannot be damaged by a 10's twinstrike (can still be attacked, but only alone). Deals **two** damage to a Jack.

WHEN PAIRED

All powers still apply. A pair of 9's cannot be frozen, can kill an 8 without taking damage, and can deal **three** damage to a Jack.

STRATEGY

Situationally strong against cards with constant powers, a 9 is almost always useful, especially as a Jack killer.

10

TWINSTRIKE | Damages two cards in one attack



"THE BRAWLER"

When attacking, deals one damage each to two cards in the opposing lane. The cards do not have to be next to each other. Cannot damage past a Jack, cannot damage a 9 and another card (can still choose to damage one of them).

WHEN PAIRED

A pair of 10's deals two damage to the first card, and one damage to the second card (not two damage to two cards). That's still three damage for one action, but sometimes it's stronger not to pair them!

STRATEGY

A dominating lane presence, a 10 is capable of smashing through a lane if left alive. Slow but very deadly, getting more than one attack in with a 10 will often win a lane outright. Can kill two damaged cards when played from your hand!

J

TAUNT | Must be killed first in lane, three hit points



"THE PROTECTOR"

A Jack must be killed before other cards can be attacked. Place him at the front of the lane to remind your opponent. He has three hit points; turn 45 degrees for first damage, 90 degrees for second damage.

WHEN PAIRED

Both Jacks take damage individually. If your opponent pairs Jacks, probably best to abandon that lane and win the other two, as they've likely overcommitted.

STRATEGY

Three hit points make the Jack stay on board, protect other valuable cards, and win lanes. Your opponent must spend their entire turn to kill him, assuming they have enough power. It counters a 10, but is countered by a 9. Healing a Jack with a 7 is fantastic value.

3. Card Powers (continued)

Q

MOVE | May move an ally card to her lane



"TO MY SIDE!"



May move an ally card from another lane to her lane, face-down or face-up. The moved card does not reactivate flip powers but retains constant powers. It may attack if an action is available. If the draw pile is empty, she may move a Base card.

STRATEGY

The ultimate endgame swing card, a Queen can bring a card from a won or abandoned lane to a contested lane. She loves cards with constant powers; the 8, 9, 10, and Jack.

K

EMPOWER | Reactivates your card powers in lane



"BE STRONG!"



All your face-up cards in lane reactivate their powers. Does not affect other Kings. Does not affect cards with constant powers. You may choose the order of activations.

STRATEGY

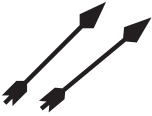
Empower affects the 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, Queen, and Ace. Playing a King at the right time is lane winning. His existence makes players prioritize the cards they kill, as the value freezing the lane again, or healing again, or *multiple activations* is enormous.

A

ACTION | Gain one action, may attack twice first turn



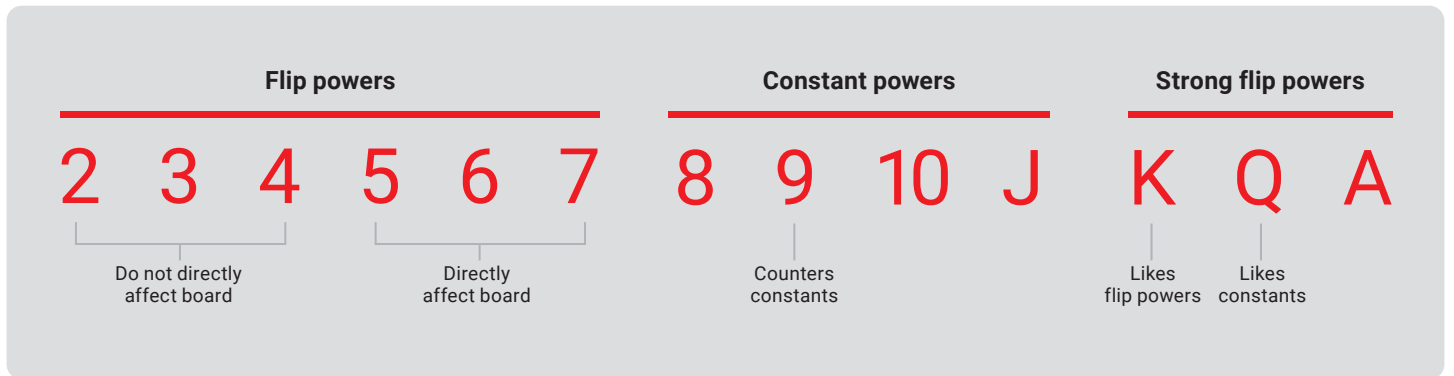
"THE ASSASSIN"



When flipped, gain one action. You may use this action however you like. On its first turn, an Ace may attack twice. When Kinged, gain one action, and may attack twice.

STRATEGY

The Ace is the only card that can deal two damage from your hand. *Play > Flip (+1 action) > Attack > Attack*. This is integral to winning. It's also flexible, the action can be used for anything. Combining an Ace with a King is insanely strong.



Variants

-16

Quick Game: 15 minutes
Remove sixteen cards from the deck during setup.

-0

Long Game: 40 minutes
Do not remove any cards from the deck during setup.

About the creators

Duel 52 was created by Judd Madden and Nina Riddell on our honeymoon in 2017. It has been through countless iterations and balance changes since then. We are sharing it with the world as a free game you can play anywhere with a standard deck of cards. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do!

4. Player Variants

PLAY AT YOUR OWN RISK
 These variants are not as balanced or as tested as the standard 2 player game!

SINGLE PLAYER

- Play both sides of a normal Duel 52 game, always playing the best moves for each side. Based on the two opening hands, choose one side you think will win. If that side does win, you win.

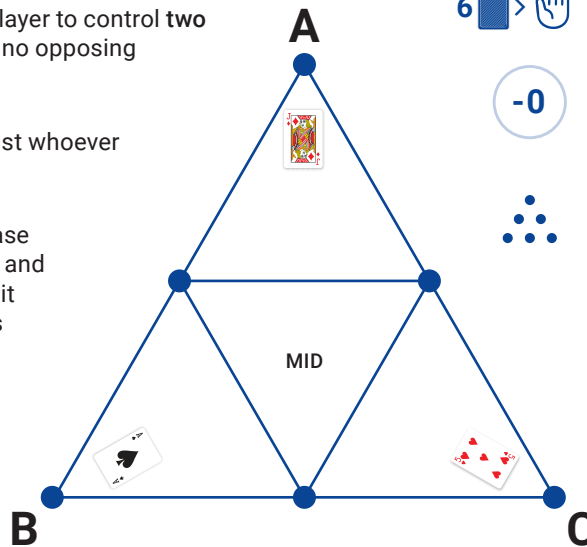
- 3's and 4's do not have their normal powers, instead they are Vampiric.

3 & 4 VAMPIRIC

After attacking and killing, heal itself one hit point

THREE PLAYER

- Instead of three lanes, there are **four triangles**. Players may play cards into any triangle.
- Once the draw pile is empty, the first player to control **two triangles** wins (meaning that there are no opposing cards in either triangle).
- Players may attack as they wish, against whoever they wish, within triangles.
- All card powers are the same as the base game, with 'lane' replaced by 'triangle', and these caveats: a 10's cleave can be split between cards of two players, a Jack's taunt applies to the entire triangle (A cannot attack B if C has a Jack).
- On their first turn, the 1st player has one action and the 2nd player has two actions. From then on, everyone has three actions. You must use all your actions.



There are no Base cards.



Deal six cards to each player's hand.



Do not remove any cards from the deck during setup.



Use 6 objects to mark out the triangles as shown (coins, coasters, poker chips, etc.)

For each triangle, place cards in the corner / edge closest to you. Angle cards pointing away from your home corner.

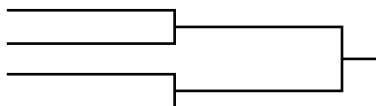
To win, you must stop the others from winning before you!

FOUR PLAYER

Tournament

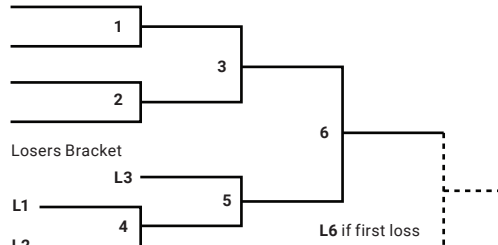
Play games of standard Duel 52 to decide the champion! Here are two bracket options:

Single Elimination



Double Elimination

Winners Bracket



Team play: 2 vs 2

Setup a standard game with three lanes and 6 Base cards. Deal 6 cards to each player and do not remove any cards from the deck.

Turn order: A > B > C > D.

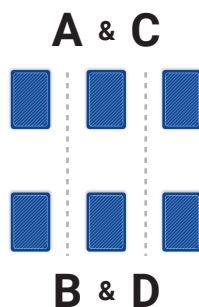
First turn actions: A=1, B=2, C=2, D=3.

Players may play cards into any lane.

You may not look at your partners hand, or show/tell them what you have.

Nobody can look at face-down cards (unless they use a 4). You must remember what you played.

Once a card has been played, it may be used by either partner (on their turn). Careful with those 3's!



Simultaneous Play

We tried, but it's mighty complicated. Do let us know if you figure something balanced out! Five areas to fight over perhaps?