PLAYTEST RULEBOOK

Jest



Win rounds at the table.
Build one rank in your collection.

FIVE SEATS / TWO DECKS / BASELINE-V1

The aim of Jest is to finish with the highest total score. Win rounds to earn ledger points, and use folds, drafts and curation to build a collection around one rank. At the end, add the value of your chosen rank to your ledger and subtract the value of every other rank you still hold.

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Quick start

Use this page at the table. The complete rules start on page 3.

1 **Get ready**

Seat five players. Shuffle the two prepared decks together. Give each player two face-down collection cards and a ledger of zero. Choose the first dealer.

2 **Deal and reveal**

Give each player two fresh private hole cards. Reveal the flop (three shared cards). After flop betting, reveal the turn (one card), then the river (one card), with betting after each reveal.

3 **Take your turn**

With no bet, check, bet one collection card or fold. Facing a bet, call with one collection card, exchange a hole card if you have 0–3 collection cards, or fold. To fold, keep one hole card and pay the other face up to the pot.

4 **Award the pot and draft**

The strongest active hand takes the pot and earns ledger points. Each active player drafts one board card, strongest hand first. If everyone else folds, finish the board and have the sole survivor reveal and draft first and alone.

5 **Clean up and repeat**

Burn unused board cards and remaining hole cards. Above ten collection cards, return the excess publicly. Shuffle the shoe. Deal again with a new dealer if the shoe has at least 16 cards.

6 **Score the game**

At 15 or fewer cards in the shoe after cleanup, reveal collections. Choose your most valuable held rank. Add its value, subtract all other rank values, then add your ledger.

On a betting street

Start left of the dealer. After a bet, every other active player gets a response in clockwise order, even if they checked earlier. There is one opening bet and zero raises.

Quick score check

Round ledger = pot's printed rank total × highest active round multiplier ÷ 2, rounded up. **Game total** = ledger + chosen group value minus all other group values. See pages 5–7 for the card effects.

Set up the table

Five seats use one combined shoe of 104 cards.

Prepare and deal

Prepare two standard 52-card decks with identical backs. Remove any standard wild Jokers. Mark the face of the 20 cards listed on page 7 before combining the decks. Every printed rank appears eight times, including two copies of every rank-and-suit combination. A marked card keeps its printed rank and suit in poker.

Choose the first dealer and set every ledger to zero. Shuffle the combined shoe. Deal one card face down to each player clockwise from the dealer's left, then repeat for the second card. These ten cards start the five private collections and leave 94 cards in the shoe.

Start each round with all five players active. Deal two fresh hole cards per seat in the same two-pass order. Draw the board as each street starts. There is no pre-flop betting, ante, compulsory blind or card burned before a reveal.

Keep six card locations separate

Location	What belongs there
Shoe	Draw from the top. Returned cards go back here.
Hole cards	Two private cards for each active player this round.
Board	Public shared cards used to make a hand and later to draft.
Collection	Your cards from round to round. Spend them in betting and score them at the end.
Pot	Cards bet or called from collections, plus face-up tributes from folds.
Burn pile	Cleaned-up round cards, permanently out of play.

Information at the table

Keep collections private until the final reveal. At a physical table, put your hole cards down face down before handling your collection. You may inspect your own collection during play. Everyone can know the collection counts and the public ledger.

In the browser

The host opens a room and fills five seats with connected humans or bots. The app deals, enforces legal turns and tracks the score. Physical table mode uses current information and brief announcements. Public history keeps a reviewable log of public actions. The rules of play are the same in both modes.

Betting and folding

The board arrives in three streets. Act only on your turn.

Flop
3 cards

Turn
+1 card

River
+1 card

Each street starts with the first active seat clockwise from the dealer. Draw that street's card or cards immediately, without pre-dealing future board cards. Skip folded players.

Action	When	What happens
Check	No bet	Pass for now. If someone bets later, you must respond if still active.
Bet	No bet	Put one collection card into the pot to open betting.
Call	Facing a bet	Put one collection card into the pot and stay in the round.
Exchange	Facing a bet 0–3 collection cards	Reveal one hole card, put it on the bottom of the shoe, then draw its private replacement from the top. This uses your response and costs zero collection cards.
Fold	Any betting turn	Keep one selected hole card privately in your collection. Put the other face up in the pot as tribute. Any cards you paid earlier stay in the pot. You leave the round and lose your draft pick.

Open or blind. When you bet or call, choose one collection card and whether to put it in face up (open) or face down (blind). Each card pays for the action equally. Even a marked Ace and a plain 2 each pay for one action. You need a collection card to bet or call.

After the opening bet, action moves clockwise from the bettor and comes back around to active players who already checked. Each other active player gets one response: call, exchange if eligible, or fold. There are no raises. Exchange is available once per street, only in response to someone else's bet, at your collection count when you act.

End the street when everyone has checked or every required response is in. Move to the next street or, after the river, to showdown. If only one player stays active, end betting immediately and complete the board to five cards without further betting.

Showdown and the pot

All active players reveal both hole cards. An uncontested winner reveals both too.

Compare each active player's best five cards from their two hole cards and the completed five-card board. Use zero, one or two hole cards. Markings and deck origin do not affect poker strength. A shared board can be everyone's best five.

Strongest first	Compare within the category
Five of a kind	Repeated rank.
Straight flush	Top rank of the run.
Four of a kind	Four-card rank, then kicker.
Full house	Triple rank, then pair rank.
Flush	All five ranks in descending order, including duplicates.
Straight	Top rank of the run.
Three of a kind	Triple rank, then the two kickers highest first.
Two pair	Higher pair, lower pair, then kicker.
One pair	Pair rank, then three kickers highest first.
High card	All five ranks in descending order.

Ace is high except in A–2–3–4–5, which is five-high. 10–J–Q–K–A is ace-high. Runs do not wrap through Ace.

When the best five tie

Compare the higher hole rank, then the lower hole rank, even if neither card played. If both ranks match, compare the higher-ranked card's suit, then the other suit. Suit order is ♠ spades > ♥ hearts > ♣ clubs > ♦ diamonds. For a pocket pair, compare the stronger suit first. If both rank-and-suit pairs are identical, assign heads and tails and flip a coin to set order. At most two players can tie this exactly. Use the same ordering for the pot and for every draft position.

Score, transfer and draft

Reveal all pot cards, including blind commitments. Add their printed values (J 11, Q 12, K 13, A 14). Multiply by the highest round effect on the completed board or in the winner's hole cards (default 1), divide by two and round up once. Add those points to the winner's ledger and put every pot card into the winner's collection. An empty pot scores zero.

Then each active player **must** draft one remaining board card into their collection, starting with the winner and proceeding down the hand order. Only the sole survivor drafts after an uncontested win.

Cleanup and final scoring

Repeat until the shoe holds fewer than 16 cards after curation.

Close the round

Burn. Set aside the undrafted board cards and all remaining hole cards. All were public by this point. At a physical table, show the undrafted board as it goes to burn. Remaining hole cards may be shown again before going into the burn pile face down. Keep the burn pile out of play and unavailable for later inspection.

Curate. Start left of the dealer, including folded players, and continue clockwise. A player with more than ten collection cards chooses and publicly reveals cards to return to the bottom of the shoe, one at a time, until exactly ten remain. Do this only after drafting and burning. Skip collections of ten or fewer.

Shuffle the remaining shoe, including returns. With 16 or more cards, move the dealer one seat clockwise and start another round. With 15 or fewer, keep the dealer position for final selection. Ten hole cards and five board cards use 15 draws per round. The 16-card threshold leaves at least one card for a river exchange. Exchange leaves the shoe count unchanged. Curation can extend the game.

Score one chosen rank per player

Everyone reveals their collection together. Starting left of the last dealer and going clockwise, each player announces one rank they hold. Group their cards by rank and score each group separately.

Rank group value

Printed rank × number held × product of A factors × product of B factors + sum of flat bonuses
Ordinary factors are 1 and ordinary bonuses are 0. Multiply the whole rank group when a held card supplies a factor. Add each flat bonus once, after multiplication.

Collection score is the value of the chosen rank minus the sum of all other rank values. **Final score** is the collection score plus the public ledger. Subtract the full value of unwanted ranks, including their effects. A negative collection score or game total is possible.

Highest final score wins. Two joint leaders assign heads and tails and flip one coin. With three or more tied, each remaining leader flips. A mixed result keeps only heads. If all results match, the same group flips again. Repeat until one remains or use a single coin when only two remain.

The 20 marked cards

Deck numbers tell you which physical copy to mark. A and B are collection effect labels. Ace is a rank.

Deck	Card	Suit	Collection effect	Round effect
2	2♠	Spades	A ×5	None
2	2♥	Hearts	B ×4	None
1	3♠	Spades	A ×4	None
1	3♣	Clubs	B ×4	None
2	4♣	Clubs	A ×3	None
2	4♦	Diamonds	B ×3	None
1	5♥	Hearts	A ×3	None
1	5♦	Diamonds	B ×2	None
2	6♠	Spades	A ×2	None
2	6♥	Hearts	B ×2	None
1	7♣	Clubs	A ×2	None
1	7♦	Diamonds	B ×3	None
1	7♠	Spades	None	×2
2	8♠	Spades	B ×3	None
2	9♥	Hearts	B ×3	None
1	10♥	Hearts	B ×3	None
2	J♦	Diamonds	+175 flat	None
1	Q♥	Hearts	+175 flat	None
2	K♣	Clubs	+225 flat	None
1	A♠	Spades	+250 flat	×2

Round activation. The marked 7♠ and A♠ can double the ledger score from anywhere on the completed board or in the winner's hole cards, even outside the best five. If both are active, the multiplier is still ×2. Cards in the pot, collections, the burn pile or another player's hand cannot activate it.

Collection examples. Three 2s that include the marked 2♠ and 2♥ are worth 2 × 3 × 5 × 4 = 120. Two Queens that include the marked Q♥ are worth 12 × 2 + 175 = 199. Either group contributes its full value as a gain or a penalty depending on the rank you choose.

Basic strategy

Every bet changes two things: your chance of taking the pot and what remains in your collection.

Build around your best group

Keep a provisional target rank and recalculate after a big draft or pot win. A low rank with both multipliers can outrun a high rank, and a flat-bonus card can make a new rank worth collecting on its own.

Use your unwanted cards to pay

If you can pay equally well with two cards, compare what each removal does to your collection. Betting a penalty card can improve your position even if you lose the round. Paying with your best multiplier can cost far more than its printed rank adds to the pot.

Compare the fold with your likely draft

A fold guarantees one specific hole card now, at the cost of the other hole card and your chance at the pot or board. A weak hand with a valuable keeper can be worth folding. A strong hand and a desirable board card give you reasons to stay.

Exchange with a purpose

At 0–3 collection cards, an eligible exchange lets you stay without spending one. Protect a hole card that is doing work and replace the weaker one. The table sees what you return, and the replacement is uncertain.

Read the pot before committing

A big face total or a visible round joker can make the ledger prize attractive. Winning also gives you every pot card. Some may help your target, some may become penalties, and you can curate only while you are above ten.

Draft for the score you can keep

Prefer a card that grows your target or opens a stronger one. With poor options, a low penalty can beat a high printed rank. Use visible drafts and returns to make tentative reads about what others want. A blind bet hides the card until the pot reveal.

A quick draft comparison

If your collection is centered on two plain 9s, a third plain 9 adds 9 to that group. A plain King adds 13 to an unwanted group and can therefore cost 13. At the finish, choose the rank with the highest group value to maximise your total.

A complete game

Six rounds, from the opening collections to the final rank choices.

This is a constructed teaching game run through the playtest engine. The decisions were chosen to illustrate the rules. The example shows private starting cards, kept cards and exchange draws in hindsight so you can account for every card used. During real play, only the owner sees those faces at the time.

Seats and starting collections

Seat	Player	Two starting collection cards	Ledger
1	Mara	9♦ 4♦	0
2	Theo	3♦ 10♣	0
3	Imani	Q♦ K♥	0
4	Jules	2♥ Q♠	0
5	Lin • first dealer	6♠* 5♦	0

Seats run clockwise in the order above. Lin deals first, so Mara acts first on the first street. The first collection deal leaves **94 cards** in the shoe. Each round starts with a fresh pair of hole cards for all five seats.

Reading the round pages

A card such as 7♠* is the marked copy. An unstarred 7♠ is the plain copy. The suit symbols are ♠ spades, ♥ hearts, ♣ clubs and ♦ diamonds. Two identical unstarred faces can appear because there are two decks. In the action log, “down” means face down until the pot award.

What happens each round

Round	Dealer	Pot winner	Added to ledger	Shoe after
1	Lin	Jules · Showdown	6	79
2	Mara	Theo · Uncontested	32	64
3	Theo	Imani · Showdown	0	49
4	Imani	Mara · Showdown	0	34
5	Jules	Imani · Showdown	15	20
6	Lin	Jules · Showdown	40	13

A bet comes back around

Dealer Lin **First to act** Mara **Starting shoe** 94

Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
J♥ 4♣	A♣ J♦	A♠ 3♣	5♠ 10♠	3♥ 3♦

Hole cards at the deal, before any exchanges

Street	New board	Player actions in order
Flop	7♥ 3♥ 9♠	Mara checks → Theo bets 3♦ down → Imani exchanges 3♣ for 5♥* → Jules calls 2♥ up → Lin folds (keeps 3♥, tributes 3♦) → Mara calls 4♦ down.
Turn	4♥	Mara, Theo, Imani, Jules check in order.
River	10♣	Mara, Theo, Imani, Jules check in order.

Reveal and award

The players below reveal both hole cards, with any exchange applied.
Best five in hand order Jules pair (10♠ 10♣ 9♠ 7♥ 5♠) → Mara pair (J♥ 10♣ 9♠ 4♣ 4♥) → Theo high card (A♣ J♦ 10♣ 9♠ 7♥) → Imani high card (A♠ 10♣ 9♠ 7♥ 5♥*).

Pot 3♦, 2♥, 3♦, 4♦. Jules collects all 4 cards and adds **6** to the ledger (12 × 1 ÷ 2).

Draft, burn and curate

Draft in order Jules 3♥ → Mara 9♠ → Theo 10♣ → Imani 4♥.

Burn Board: 7♥. Hole cards: Mara J♥ 4♣ · Theo A♣ J♦ · Imani A♠ 5♥* · Jules 5♠ 10♠.

Public returns in order None.

End of round Shuffle 79 shoe cards. Move the dealer one seat clockwise.

After cleanup	Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
Collection size	2	2	3	6	3
Ledger	0	0	0	6	0

What to watch

Mara checks, then gets another turn after Theo opens. Imani's exchange pays no card into the pot. The blind cards are exposed with the rest of the pot at the award.

One player stays in

Dealer Mara **First to act** Theo **Starting shoe** 79

Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
10♦ 10♠	Q♦ 8♦	3♣* 5♥	7♥ 4♦*	4♥ 2♠*

Hole cards at the deal, before any exchanges

Street	New board	Player actions in order
Flop	8♥ 3♣ 7♠*	Theo bets 10♣ up → Imani folds (keeps 5♥, tributes 3♣*) → Jules folds (keeps 4♦*, tributes 7♥) → Lin folds (keeps 4♥, tributes 2♠*) → Mara folds (keeps 10♦, tributes 10♠).
Completion	A♥ 6♦	Board completed after the folds.

Reveal and award

Only **Theo** remains and reveals Q♦ 8♦.

Pot 10♣, 3♣*, 7♥, 2♠*, 10♠. Theo collects all 5 cards and adds **32** to the ledger (32 × 2 ÷ 2).

Draft, burn and curate

Draft in order Theo 6♦.

Burn Board: 8♥, 3♣, 7♠*, A♥. Hole cards: Theo Q♦ 8♦.

Public returns in order None.

End of round Shuffle 64 shoe cards. Move the dealer one seat clockwise.

After cleanup	Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
Collection size	3	7	4	7	4
Ledger	0	32	0	6	0

What to watch

Theo is the last active player. Both remaining board cards are revealed with no betting. The 7♠* on the flop doubles his ledger award. The 3♣* and 2♠* in the pot affect collections.

The hole cards break a tie

Dealer Theo **First to act** Imani **Starting shoe** 64

Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
6♣ 9♣	9♦ 7♣*	K♦ 7♦	4♠ 4♠	4♣* 7♦*

Hole cards at the deal, before any exchanges

Street	New board	Player actions in order
Flop	2♠ Q♣ A♠*	Imani, Jules, Lin, Mara, Theo check in order.
Turn	J♦*	Imani, Jules, Lin, Mara, Theo check in order.
River	K♦	Imani, Jules, Lin, Mara, Theo check in order.

Reveal and award

The players below reveal both hole cards, with any exchange applied.
Best five in hand order Imani pair (A♠* K♦ K♦ Q♣ J♦*) → Jules pair (A♠* K♦ Q♣ 4♠ 4♠) → Theo high card (A♠* K♦ Q♣ J♦* 9♦) → Mara high card (A♠* K♦ Q♣ J♦* 9♣) → Lin high card (A♠* K♦ Q♣ J♦* 7♦*).

Pot Empty. Imani collects zero cards and adds zero points (0 × 2 ÷ 2).

Draft, burn and curate

Draft in order Imani A♠* → Jules J♦* → Theo 2♠ → Mara Q♣ → Lin K♦.

Burn Board: none. Hole cards: Mara 6♣ 9♣ · Theo 9♦ 7♣* · Imani K♦ 7♦ · Jules 4♠ 4♠ · Lin 4♣* 7♦*.

Public returns in order None.

End of round Shuffle 49 shoe cards. Move the dealer one seat clockwise.

After cleanup	Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
Collection size	4	8	5	8	5
Ledger	0	32	0	6	0

What to watch

Theo and Mara have the same best five ranks: A, K, Q, J, 9. Both have a 9 in hand, so Theo's second hole rank, 7, beats Mara's 6 and gives him the earlier draft pick.

A draft from an empty pot

Dealer Imani **First to act** Jules **Starting shoe** 49

Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
6♠ K♣	9♥* 6♥	2♦ 9♣	10♥* 2♣	8♣ 5♣

Hole cards at the deal, before any exchanges

Street	New board	Player actions in order
Flop	Q♠ 7♠ 2♦	Jules, Lin, Mara, Theo, Imani check in order.
Turn	6♣	Jules, Lin, Mara, Theo, Imani check in order.
River	J♠	Jules, Lin, Mara, Theo, Imani check in order.

Reveal and award

The players below reveal both hole cards, with any exchange applied.
Best five in hand order Mara pair (K♣ Q♠ J♠ 6♠ 6♣) → Theo pair (Q♠ J♠ 9♥* 6♥ 6♣) → Jules pair (Q♠ J♠ 10♥* 2♣ 2♦) → Imani pair (Q♠ J♠ 9♣ 2♦ 2♦) → Lin high card (Q♠ J♠ 8♣ 7♠ 6♣).

Pot Empty. Mara collects zero cards and adds zero points (0 × 1 ÷ 2).

Draft, burn and curate

Draft in order Mara Q♠ → Theo 6♣ → Jules J♠ → Imani 2♦ → Lin 7♠.

Burn Board: none. Hole cards: Mara 6♠ K♣ · Theo 9♥* 6♥ · Imani 2♦ 9♣ · Jules 10♥* 2♣ · Lin 8♣ 5♣.

Public returns in order None.

End of round Shuffle 34 shoe cards. Move the dealer one seat clockwise.

After cleanup	Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
Collection size	5	9	6	9	6
Ledger	0	32	0	6	0

What to watch

Mara and Theo both make a pair of 6s. Mara wins on the first kicker (K over Q). She takes the first pick even though the pot is empty.

A fold to keep a King

Dealer Jules **First to act** Lin **Starting shoe** 34

Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
5♣ K♣*	Q♣ Q♥	A♣ 8♦	5♠ 9♠	3♠* A♦

Hole cards at the deal, before any exchanges

Street	New board	Player actions in order
Flop	2♣ 8♠* A♦	Lin, Mara, Theo check in order → Imani bets K♥ up → Jules calls 4♦* up → Lin calls 6♠* down → Mara folds (keeps K♣*, tributes 5♣) → Theo calls 2♠* up.
Turn	6♦	Lin, Theo, Imani, Jules check in order.
River	10♦	Lin, Theo, Imani, Jules check in order.

Reveal and award

The players below reveal both hole cards, with any exchange applied.
Best five in hand order Imani two pair (A♣ A♦ 10♦ 8♦ 8♠*) → Lin pair (A♦ A♦ 10♦ 8♠* 6♦) → Theo pair (A♦ Q♣ Q♥ 10♦ 8♠*) → Jules high card (A♦ 10♦ 9♠ 8♠* 6♦).

Pot K♥, 4♦*, 6♠*, 5♣, 2♠*. Imani collects all 5 cards and adds **15** to the ledger (30 × 1 ÷ 2).

Draft, burn and curate

Draft in order Imani A♦ → Lin 2♣ → Theo 10♦ → Jules 6♦.

Burn Board: 8♠*. Hole cards: Theo Q♣ Q♥ · Imani A♣ 8♦ · Jules 5♠ 9♠ · Lin 3♠* A♦.

Public returns in order Imani 4♦*.

End of round Shuffle 20 shoe cards. Move the dealer one seat clockwise.

After cleanup	Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
Collection size	6	9	10	9	6
Ledger	0	32	15	6	0

What to watch

Mara gives up her draft to keep K♣*, a King with a +225 collection bonus. Imani takes a plain Ace to pair with her marked Ace. Winning pushes Imani to 11 cards, so she returns one.

A flush and eight returns

Dealer Lin **First to act** Mara **Starting shoe** 20

Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
J♠ 2♥*	K♠ 8♠	4♦* 8♥	J♣ A♥	9♥ 7♣

Hole cards at the deal, before any exchanges

Street	New board	Player actions in order
Flop	Q♥* 6♥* 10♥	Mara, Theo, Imani, Jules, Lin check in order.
Turn	J♥	Mara bets Q♣ down → Theo calls 3♣* up → Imani calls 2♠* down → Jules calls Q♠ up → Lin calls 7♠ down.
River	5♦*	Mara bets Q♠ down → Theo calls 7♥ down → Imani calls K♥ up → Jules calls 6♦ down → Lin calls 5♦ up.

Reveal and award

The players below reveal both hole cards, with any exchange applied.
Best five in hand order Jules flush (A♥ Q♥* J♥ 10♥ 6♥*) → Lin flush (Q♥* J♥ 10♥ 9♥ 6♥*) → Imani flush (Q♥* J♥ 10♥ 8♥ 6♥*) → Mara flush (Q♥* J♥ 10♥ 6♥* 2♥*) → Theo high card (K♠ Q♥* J♥ 10♥ 8♠).

Pot Q♣, 3♣*, 2♠*, Q♠, 7♠, Q♠, 7♥, K♥, 6♦, 5♦. Jules collects all 10 cards and adds **40** to the ledger (79 × 1 ÷ 2 = 39.5, rounded up).

Draft, burn and curate

Draft in order Jules J♥ → Lin Q♥* → Imani 10♥ → Mara 5♦* → Theo 6♥*.

Burn Board: none. Hole cards: Mara J♠ 2♥* · Theo K♠ 8♠ · Imani 4♦* 8♥ · Jules J♣ A♥ · Lin 9♥ 7♣.

Public returns in order Jules 3♣* → Jules 2♠* → Jules K♥ → Jules Q♣ → Jules Q♠ → Jules Q♠ → Jules 7♠ → Jules 7♥.

End of round Shuffle 13 shoe cards. The shoe is below 16. Reveal collections and score.

After cleanup	Mara	Theo	Imani	Jules	Lin
Collection size	5	8	9	10	5
Ledger	0	32	15	46	0

What to watch

Jules has the highest heart flush. The pot's 79 printed points become 40 ledger points after halving and rounding up. Her pot and draft lift her to 18 cards, so she returns eight.

How Imani wins

13 cards remain in the shoe after Round 6. Everyone reveals their collection and chooses a rank.

Choices in order, starting left of Lin: Mara K → Theo 10 → Imani A → Jules J → Lin Q.

Player	Final collection	Rank group values
Mara	5♦* 9♦ 9♠ 10♦ K♣*	5 = 10 · 9 = 18 · 10 = 10 · **K = 238**
Theo	2♠ 6♣ 6♦ 6♥* 10♣ 10♣ 10♦ 10♠	2 = 2 · 6 = 36 · **10 = 40**
Imani	2♦ 4♥ 5♣ 5♥ 6♠* 10♥ Q♦ A♦ A♠*	2 = 2 · 4 = 4 · 5 = 10 · 6 = 12 · 10 = 10 · Q = 12 · **A = 278**
Jules	2♥ 3♦ 3♦ 3♥ 4♦ 5♦ 6♦ J♦* J♥ J♠	2 = 2 · 3 = 9 · 4 = 4 · 5 = 5 · 6 = 6 · **J = 208**
Lin	2♣ 3♥ 4♥ Q♥* K♦	2 = 2 · 3 = 3 · 4 = 4 · **Q = 187** · K = 13

Player	Ledger	Chosen gain	Penalties	Collection	Total
Mara	0	238	38	200	**200**
Theo	32	40	38	2	**34**
Imani	15	278	50	228	**243**
Jules	46	208	26	182	**228**
Lin	0	187	22	165	**165**

Imani's calculation

Two Aces including A♠* give 14 × 2 + 250 = **278**. The other groups cost 2 + 4 + 10 + 12 + 10 + 12 = **50**. Her collection scores **228**. Add 15 ledger points for a final score of **243**. Jules leads the ledger with 46 and finishes second overall with 228.

Rules reference

The browser playtest uses the frozen **baseline-v1** settings in `vendor/rules/baseline-v1.json` and the copied engine and scoring modules. Table handling follows *Jest-working-rules.md* (26 October 2026). The example uses a fresh teaching deal created for this guide.

Design notes

1. Introduction

Players of Texas Hold ’em poker, Rummy and Balatro will recognise elements of this game - and this is by design, a design which changed many times. The original vision, a hybrid of TH’E and Balatro, wrought many headaches and brought about many questions I failed to foresee. These questions however, led me down many rabbit holes and the version I am presenting is in many ways a minimisation of my original intentions, yet I feel it is a more complete and self-fulfilling game than I could have imagined. Let me walk through some of the elements of the aforementioned games to help you understand the way I want people to play the game - even if prolific completion of games leads to an antithetical meta, a fate many games have faced.

Texas Hold ’em

- Betting exists in a several round system, omitting pre-flop and chips, and exists in a binary state; any bet is only “1”. Specifics of this will be further defined.
- The ranking of “Hands” is consistent with poker with one addition and statistical changes;
    1. Five of a Kind (5oak)
    2. Straight Flush
    3. Four of a kind (4oak)
    4. Full House
    5. Flush
    6. Straight
    7. Three of a kind (3oak)
    8. Two pair (2x2oak)
    9. Pair (2oak)
    10. High Card
- Playing order shifts clockwise each round (No blinds)
- Hierarchy of suits: Spades > Hearts > Clubs > Diamonds

Rummy

- There is a common choice point of: which Card rank should I try and collect
- There are conditions under which extra information is disclosed to other players, giving insight into the strategy of other players
- As in some variants of Rummy, there is a running ledger, though it operates in a different fashion

Balatro

- Cards exist which modify scoring (Jokers), mostly in final score calculation but with two exceptions (An Ace, A Seven)
- There is an element of management, namely the curation of your collection; cards can either help or hinder your strategy

The design of Jest

2. Scope Choice, spite, pollution

There are three concepts to the game I should explain broadly, to simplify what comes next.

- **Scope Choice:** the game operates on two "hard" scales, the round and the game. You can play to win the round, to improve your final collection, or to do both. Folding can be a winning move, winning a Hand (Round) can lead you to lose.

  There is no fixed number of rounds. Let n be the round you are playing and y be the number of rounds this game ends up taking. When n = y, you have played the last round. That happens when fewer than 16 cards remain in the shoe after curation and the shuffle.

  ### How the two scales add up

  Round points = round up(pot's printed rank total × highest active round multiplier ÷ 2). Use ×1 when no round effect is active. Only the round winner scores these points.

  Ledger = your round points added across rounds 1 through y.

  Rank group value = printed rank × number held × product of A factors × product of B factors + sum of flat bonuses.

  Final score = ledger + chosen rank group value − sum of all other rank group values.

  Pages 5–7 explain the card effects and how they apply.

- **Spite:** it will be beneficial to note the cards you have seen - accurately utilising spite towards other players is beneficial. There are opportunities to show cards to use information as a weapon, and inversely to conceal cards to conceal weakness
- **Pollution:** in a simple sense, winning on the Game scale is about curating the "purest" collection you can; picking a Card Rank and eliminating cards which are not this rank. That being said, holding certain cards to spite others is also a possibility, and a pure collection can be beaten by a polluted one.

Why poker is broken

1. Poker is not solved, but it is optimised. The "unlimited" nature of Texas Hold 'Em gives the game no sense of time or urgency, and players can utilise this to manage risk over long periods; How many Big blinds do you have? How large is your bankroll? Out of the four recognised styles, only TAG and LAG are strategically sound. Generally, TP and LP are mathematically weaker; cautious but cowardly and hopeful but lacking confidence, respectively, as both are unwilling to capitalize on opportunities. The real fun of poker is the human layer, judging a player's actions by their physical state(s).

   TAG (tight-aggressive) plays fewer starting hands and presses its advantage. LAG (loose-aggressive) plays more hands and applies pressure across a wider range. TP (tight-passive) plays few hands but often misses value; LP (loose-passive) plays many hands but pays too often. Measured aggression builds pots with strong hands and can win pots when opponents fold, increasing expected winnings. [1, 6]

2. Bots can take some of the human layer out of online poker. A site can use bots to fill seats, keep games running and make tables attractive to players; more play can bring in more table fees. [7, 8, 9] In 2013, Professor Kurt Eggert said some sites had used bots and not always disclosed them. [7] A civil complaint alleged Full Tilt used bots to create an impression of liquidity; the allegation is not a court finding. [8] pokr openly offers seat-fillers with virtual chips. [9] Player-run bots are also a concern: partypoker reported closing 94 bot accounts. [2] Pluribus showed how strongly an AI can play against professionals. [5]

3. In-person Tournament poker addresses some of these problems, but introduces more luck as there is a higher incentive towards risk without rationale. You lose, you go home, no more fun for you, you've lost the entry fee you paid to play.

4. Socially, poker can be problematic and intimidating. The relationship between money and poker means that new players can be scared to play, inversely those with gambling issues are over-motivated. The results of a game of poker can be serious because of the money; especially in a scenario where deception between friends leads to a substantial transfer of funds, where only social skills would stop a player from simply exiting the game to enjoy the windfall while their friend is saddened by their real-life loss. Leading from this it is clear to see that any social, fun form of poker either requires social "harnessing" or reducing chips in value, e.g playing for matchsticks or on money stakes so low no-one can really be hurt. Of course, anything can be informally bet on, but at least for Jest this is firmly outside the design of the game. No fungible tokens of any kind are required to play.

Sources

[1] PokerStars Learn, Other Poker Playing Styles
[2] partypoker, April 2019 bot-account closures
[3] PokerBot.com, Liquidity bots (for clubs)
[4] PokerTH, Play poker against the computer
[5] Brown and Sandholm, Superhuman AI for multiplayer poker (2019)
[6] PokerStars Learn, How to Avoid Becoming a Passive Player
[7] US House hearing, Eggert testimony, page 90
[8] Cardroom International v. Scheinberg, pages 6-8
[9] pokr, Bots at the home poker table

Poker bots and table filling

Expert testimony

In 2013, law professor Kurt Eggert told a US House subcommittee that some poker sites had used bots to stimulate games and had not always disclosed them. He did not name the sites in that exchange. The available hearing transcript is preliminary and unedited.

US House hearing transcript, page 90

A court-recorded allegation

In a civil case, Cardroom International alleged that Full Tilt used software-controlled players to fill real-money tables and give an impression of liquidity. The court opinion recounts this allegation as part of the plaintiff's case. That passage does not establish it as a finding of fact.

Cardroom International v. Scheinberg, pages 6-8

A disclosed table-filling feature

The poker platform pokr describes bots that private-club owners and managers can assign to fill empty seats. The service says its clubs use virtual chips and do not offer real-money wagering.

pokr, Bots at the home poker table