

## Consonants

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Version 0.3, 2005-04-24

3-6 players

60-90 minutes

Requires one deck of **Alpha Playing Cards**

## Introduction

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Consonants is the Alpha Playing Cards counterpart of the standard playing-card game **Hearts**. The name comes from the fact that in Consonants, consonant cards score, just as in Hearts, Hearts cards score.

## Object

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The object of the game is to score the fewest points. The game ends after a hand in which at least one player has reached 150 points. (This number may be changed by player agreement.)

## The Deal

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One player is chosen randomly to be the dealer. After that, the role of dealer passes to the left.

All cards in the full Alpha deck are dealt out evenly among the players. If any are left over, they are placed face-down into a kitty, which goes to the player who takes the last trick of the hand.

After the deal, each player passes four cards to a neighbour. Use the **standard Hearts passing rules** for different numbers of players.

## The Play

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The player with the J card leads it to the first trick. Each successive player must then play a card according to the following rules:

1. If you can follow the letter led by playing the same letter, you must do so.
2. If you cannot follow the letter led, you must play a letter alphabetically greater than or equal to any letter on the table, if you can. (Example: if the greatest card in the trick is now a P, you must play a P, Q, R, or greater if you can.)
3. Otherwise, you may play any card in your hand.

If you play a vowel card, you must declare which side of the card you are playing.

Wild cards may represent any letter, but it must be declared which. It is never mandatory to play a wild card, unless you only have wilds in your hand.

## Taking a trick

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1. The alphabetically greatest card played takes the trick. (For example, a T beats a P and an R.)
2. In the case of a tie among vowels, the other side of the card breaks the tie. (For example, an A/U beats an A/O and an A/E.)
3. If there is still a tie among vowels, or if there is a tie among consonants, the first tied card played breaks the tie. (For example, if two A/U cards are tied, the first one played breaks the tie; the same goes for two T cards.)

The player who took the trick leads to the next trick.

After you take a trick, you place it face down in a pile in front of you; you may not examine your pile of taken cards until the scoring phase.

Players continue playing tricks until all cards are played; this is the end of the hand, and its scoring phase occurs.

## Flying by Night

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There are six "singleton" cards in an Alpha deck: J, K, Q, V, X, and Z. Each of these cards occurs only once in the deck.

Each singleton is worth 20 points rather than its face value. However, anyone who takes *all six* singletons in a single hand scores nothing; in addition, she may choose between decreasing her own score by 50 points and increasing the scores of all other players by 50 points.

Hint: a mnemonic for remembering the singletons in an Alpha deck: **J**ack, **Q**ueen, **K**ing, **V**w**X**y**Z**. Note also that 'w' and 'y' are sometimes vowels in English.

## Scoring

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The points taken on a hand are the sum of the point values for the *consonant* cards taken. However, see **Flying by Night** for exceptions.

During a hand's scoring phase, you may attempt to make words (of four or more letters only) with the cards you took. Any words you make do not count toward your score. You may use either side of a vowel card to make a word. Wild cards *cannot* be used to make words.

## Challenges

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Any player may challenge the validity of a word made by another player. The winner in the challenge subtracts the points in the challenged word from her score; the loser of the challenge then *adds* these points to his score.

Challenges are settled with any standard dictionary on which the players agree, such as *The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary*.

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## Credits

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Marty Hale-Evans and AlphaTim? Schutz both contributed major rules or rule fixes: word-making at the end of a hand and flying by night, respectively. Big thanks to them.

Thanks for playtesting Consonants also to the other members of EGGs (Experimental Game Genesis of Seattle) and Seattle Cosmic Game Night, including Meredith Hale, Dave Howell, Kathy Kizer, Chad Urso McDaniel?, and Eric Yarnell.

## History

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- 0.3, 2005-04-23: Flying by Night (Shooting the Moon) fixed. Victory points adjusted from 50 to 150. Wild cards return, but can't make words.
- 0.2, 2005-03-28: First two playtests. Victory points adjusted from 240 to 50. Can't shoot the moon. J cuts loose. No wild cards. Other side of a vowel breaks the tie. Four-letter words or better. Pass four cards, not three.
- 0.1.1, 2005-03-27: Light edit (style and typos).
- 0.1, 2005-03-27: Initial electronic draft.

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