

PRINTABLE RULES SHEET

Spite & Malice

The complete two-player rules — setup, every legal move, and the win condition. Print it, fold it, keep it with your cards.

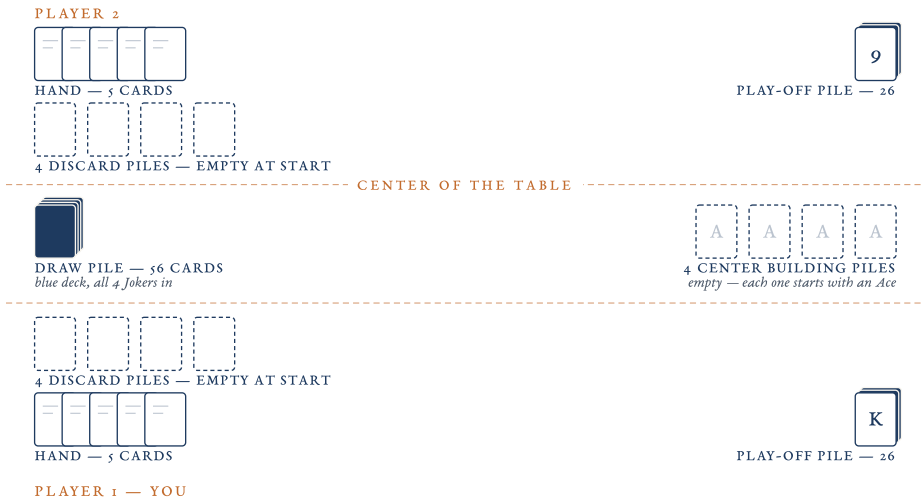
PLAYERS 2 TIME 20–45 min AGE 8+ EQUIPMENT 2 decks with both Jokers — one red, one blue

Objective. Be the first to play all 26 cards from your Play-Off Pile onto the Center Building Piles.

Setup

- Red deck (52 cards, no Jokers): split evenly, 26 cards each, face down — that’s your Play-Off Pile. Flip your top card face-up.
- Blue deck (56 cards, all 4 Jokers): the shared Draw Pile goes in the middle of the table. Deal 5 cards to each player’s hand.
- Who deals and goes first: whoever’s face-up Play-Off card is higher (King is high, Ace is low). Tied? Reshuffle both Play-Off Piles and flip again.

EXAMPLE — Player A flips a 9, Player B flips a King. King is higher, so Player B deals and goes first.



Everything on the table before Player 1’s first move.

Your turn, step by step

1 PLAY

As many as you can — from your hand, the top of your Play-Off Pile, or the top of any Discard Pile. Here a pile shows an Ace and you hold the 2.

2 DISCARD

Stuck, or done playing? Exactly one card onto one of your own Discard Piles. That ends your turn.

3 DRAW

Refill from the shared Draw Pile until you are holding 5 again. Now it is your opponent’s turn.

BONUS — Play all 5 cards from your hand without discarding, and you draw 5 more and keep playing — no discard needed that turn.

The Center Building Piles

- Shared by both players, 4 piles max.

- Each pile must start with an Ace.
- Build up: $A \rightarrow 2 \rightarrow 3 \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow K$.
- A matching number can stack on the same number.
- A completed King is removed from play and set aside.

EXAMPLE — *A Center Pile shows a 6. You can play another 6 on it, or the 7 to keep building up — but not an 8.*

Your Discard Piles

- Yours alone, up to 4 piles.
- Any card can start a pile.
- Build down, high to low — same-on-same is OK here too.
- Only the **top card** of each pile is playable.
- Jokers can never be discarded.
- You can move cards between your own discard piles to keep all 4 in play.

EXAMPLE — *A Discard Pile shows a 7. You can play another 7 on it, or a 6 to keep building down — but not a 5.*

Jokers

- Wild for any card — except an Ace or a 2.
- Playable on the **Center Building Piles only** — never in a discard pile.

EXAMPLE — *A Center Pile needs a 5 next. A Joker can be played there as the 5 — but a Joker can never be played as the opening Ace or as a 2.*

When the Draw Pile runs low

1. Set aside the current top card.
2. Shuffle the rest of the Draw Pile together with any completed (King) piles.
3. Put the saved card back on top.

If you can't play

- Your turn just ends at Discard — your opponent keeps playing until they're stuck too.
- Both players stuck? Gather every card on the table — both hands, the Draw Pile, and all Discard Piles — shuffle it all together, and deal 5 fresh cards to each player. Whoever got stuck last goes first.

How to win

First to empty their Play-Off Pile. Keep score across games if you're playing a series.

Where the game comes from

- Origins: descends from Crapette (also called Russian Bank), a patience game first documented in the German publication *Illustriertes Buch der Patienzen* (1884–85) as Zank-Patience — literally "quarrel patience."
- Early praise: the U.S. Playing Card Company published its rules in 1898, calling it "probably the best game for two players ever invented."
- 1970s revival: bridge champion Easley Blackwood (1903–1992) — inventor of the Blackwood convention — saw it played on a cruise ship and published *Spite & Malice: The Complete Rules and Strategy* (Cornerstone Library, 1970).
- Commercial spinoff: in 1967, Minnie Hazel "Skip" Bowman of Brownfield, Texas created a boxed edition called Skip-Bo. International Games bought it in 1980; Mattel acquired the company in 1992.

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