

Juggler

Rules

Juggler™ is a word game for 2 to 6 players played on a table with a special deck of cards. Each card has a letter of the alphabet and a value for that letter (E is worth 1, Q is worth 9...etc).

The **Juggler** card deck actually consists of two decks, one of vowel cards with red backs and faces, the other one of black consonant cards.

This edition has been designed to be played in English, German and French using a slightly different card selection depending on the language. Each card tells you which language(s) it should be used for. The English deck uses 70 of the cards (9 cards are not used).

Object/Overview

Juggler is a point-scoring game consisting of several rounds. In each round, each player aims to build the best word he can in his hand, ideally using every card he holds. If a player succeeds in turning his whole hand into a word, he can 'declare', hoping to catch the other players with cards they can't use (which count against them).

After the declarer has declared, the other players have only one more 'turn' in which to make the best of their hands (play is always in a clockwise direction around the table, each player having several 'turns' per round). When play comes back round to the player who declared, all the players place their hand of cards onto the table, announcing their word for that round and scoring the total face value of all the cards they have used for their word (minus the total face value of the ones they haven't used). Scores are recorded on a sheet of paper and when one player's running total hits 70 or more, the highest total wins.

Setting up

The two card decks are kept separate, each being thoroughly shuffled before play. The red deck is placed face down in the middle of the playing table.

The dealer then deals seven of the black consonant cards to each player around the table in a clockwise direction, placing the remainder face down next to the red deck.

The players each pick up their hand of seven cards, making sure the other players cannot see their cards. The **Juggler** cards have capital letters at one end and lower case letters at the other, so that players can choose whichever they prefer to use (this is the time to turn your cards to be your preferred way up). The player to the dealer's left is the first to play.

Playing the game

In his turn a player may first pick up ONE card from the playing table and then discard ONE card from his hand onto the table. The card picked up may be the top card of either the red or the black deck, or it may be a card which has been previously discarded (this is not possible at the beginning of the round, because no cards have yet been discarded).

Since everybody begins with only consonants, it is most likely that the players will pick up their first card from the red deck. Having picked up a card, the player decides whether he wishes to keep it (at the beginning a vowel is likely to be worth keeping!) He then decides whether he wishes to discard a card from his hand. Note that discarding is optional; you may keep all the cards and increase the size of your hand if you wish. Similarly the picking up of a card is also optional; by choosing not to pick up a card and just discarding, a player can reduce the size of his hand. Changing the size of your hand is a key feature of **Juggler**. Remember that the aim of the game is to turn your whole hand into a word (a 'full-hand word') - but it needn't be a seven letter word; by discarding, you may be able to declare a shorter word.

Discarding

If a player decides to discard one of his cards, he places the chosen card FACE UP in an empty space on the playing table. The next player can then in turn choose to pick up this card if he wishes rather than taking from one of the decks (after all, it's useful to see what you're going to get!). Each discarded card is placed face up in a new empty space on the table, so that the table gradually fills up with cards. Any of these discarded cards is available for any player to subsequently pick up on his turn, so the players have a wider selection of letters as the round progresses (you could even pick up one you discarded yourself earlier).

Strategies

There are many different ways to play **Juggler**. Should you grow your hand and go for a long word, or should you declare a shorter word and catch everybody out? It generally pays to use the more awkward letters if you can, because they'll give a better score; ideally you want a seven/eight letter word containing some of these letters. But it's down to you - and the cards you get. Having a larger hand may give you a better choice of letters, but if another player declares and you can't make a long word, you may not score anything! For this reason, it's a good idea to keep a word in your hand that you can fall back on, especially using your most valuable letters. It's also good to give yourself options by considering various different words that you can build if the right letters come your way. For example, suppose your hand contains these seven letters:

T H I C K E S

Clearly if you could pick up a **T**, you would be able to declare **THICKEST** (giving a score of $1+3+1+3+6+1+1+1 = 17$). But also notice that an **N** would enable you to declare **THICKENS** (or **KITCHENS**, also 17 points). In each case you would have built an eight letter word. Or if you picked up an **R**, you could discard the **H** and declare **STICKER** (14 points). So that's three different letters which could turn your whole hand into a word, enabling you to declare. Even if none of these letters were present on the table, you might decide to chance picking up the top

card from the black deck, since all three are quite plentiful letters in **Juggler**. However, there's a simpler way to declare with this hand: by just discarding the **I** (and not picking up a card), you could declare with **SKETCH** (15 points - not bad for a 6-letter word).

Declaring

Let's say that the **T**, **N** and **R** aren't available on the table, and so you decide to go with **SKETCH**. Having discarded the **I**, you announce to the other players that you have a full-hand word by saying 'I declare', but you don't reveal your cards to them yet. Play continues around the table, each player having one more turn in which to make the best of his hand. The method of play is no different for this final turn of the round; each player may still pick up a discarded card or the top card from one of the decks, and then discard one card face up on the table. When play comes back round to you, the declarer, everybody lays their hand of cards on the table and announces the word they are playing.

Scoring

Each player scores the total face value of all the letter cards he has used for his word MINUS the total face value of any cards remaining unused in his hand. If the total value of a player's unused cards is more than his word, he scores zero for the round (negative scores are not possible). The declarer has declared that he has a full-hand word, but if he cannot play one after all (perhaps having declared in error), he scores zero for the round. Although the other players have not declared, they could still make a full-hand word in their final turn, and so may not have any unused cards to subtract.

Checking words

All the players are free to check whether legal words have been played. If there is disagreement, a dictionary should be consulted. If a player's word is not allowed by the dictionary, that player scores zero for the round. A dictionary may only be used AFTER everybody has laid down their hand of cards and announced their word.

Any standard English words (including plurals, verb forms... etc) are permitted except those containing apostrophes, hyphens or capitals (names). Accents can be ignored. Abbreviations are also invalid.

A few extra rules

Words of any length can be played, although scores for most short words will probably be wiped out by unused letters! Only one word can be played by each player per round. Once a player has taken a card, he cannot put it back and take another (be careful to take from the correct deck!). If a deck becomes exhausted, play continues without it. In the unlikely event that a player is dealt a complete word at the start (eg. **RHYTHMS**), he must wait for his turn before he can declare.