



# Official Rulebook

*Patent Pending*

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## Why Play Spoil?

In Spoil, the best hand doesn't win - you do. Spoil exists to give game lovers and gamblers a new way to prove they are the best by being the last man standing. Spoil is not won by chance, but by instinct, timing, and social mastery. Every player starts equal. Every move matters. And only one will outlast the rest. It is a gamble on yourself to become victorious.

Spoil is simple to learn but endlessly complex to master. It's a high-stakes test of resource management, social intuition, and reaction under pressure.

Play Spoil to earn your victory, to outsmart your opponents, to test your moves, to master your strategy, and to stay in the game.



## Game Overview

Spoil is a last-player-standing casino card game that incorporates strategy, deception, and risk management. Players must carefully manage their lives and ante chips while using suits strategically to attack, defend, steal, or bluff with the goal of eliminating all of their opponents. Players are eliminated when they run out of lives or ante tokens to play with. The last player standing is the winner.

The game is designed for 3 to 6 players and uses a standard 52-card deck along with colored poker chips to track lives and targets, and antes.

## Game Setup

### Buy-in

- Players pay a buy-in fee to enter the game.
- Players must purchase an equal amount in ante chips (e.g., a \$10 buy-in requires a \$10 ante chip purchase, making a \$20 total investment).

### Chips, Ante, & Life Tokens

- Each player is assigned a color and receives three life tokens of that color.
- Each player also receives one targeting chip for every player in the game, including themselves.
- Each player finally receives 10 neutral colored ante tokens, each representing the same value.
- Example: In a 6-player game, each player gets 3 life tokens and 6 specific targeting chips (one per player), and 10 ante tokens.

### Dealing Cards

- Each player is dealt a number of cards equal to the number of players to make their starting hand (e.g., 6 players → 6 cards each; 5 players → 5 cards each, etc.).
- As players are eliminated from play, the number of cards dealt on a new hand goes down as well. Cards dealt will always match the number of active players. (e.g., even if the game began with 6 players, if there are 4 players remaining when it is time to deal again, 4 cards each will be dealt).
- Between each round, three face-up cards are dealt in the center of the table. (one round is a set of one card played by each player).
- The deck is not shuffled until there are not enough cards to distribute for a new hand/round, allowing for card-counting strategies.



## Core Concepts & Terminology

### Hands vs. Rounds vs. Turns

To play the game sequentially, one of the most essential structures is the difference between a hand, round, and turn. Each category represents a different game function and triggers different game events:

- A "turn" is every time one player plays one card from their hand, and targets another player.
  - In a 6 player game, there will be 6 turns in a round.
- A "round" is every time all players play a card from their hand, and target another player, the cards are revealed and suit actions take place, and a new ante is charged.
- A "hand" is every set of cards being dealt and played through.
  - In a 6 player game, after 6 rounds, players will be out of cards, and in need of dealing a new hand.
  - Each hand continues until players have played their entire hand. This requires players to strategically plan when they will play the cards they are dealt, based on positioning and reading the other players.

Extra clarification: In a 6 player game, the first hand will be 6 rounds. In a 4 player game, the first hand will be 4 rounds. Cards dealt and active players will always match.

### Starter Token Rotation

- There is a starter token that rotates on every *round* and **hand** transition.

The player in seat one begins as the starter. After the cards are dealt, that triggers a **hand** transition, passing the starter token to the player in seat 2. In the first *round* of the game, seat two starts. At the end of that *round*, the starter token rotates to seat 3, for that player to begin the next *round*.

- At the end of the **hand**, the first starter (the player who "dealt") will have the token back in front of them and will go first in the last *round* of the **hand**.

When a new **hand** is dealt, a new *round* begins as well, effectively rotating the starter token twice. This means that the player in seat 3 will start in *round* 2. This creates strategic variance in each stage of the game - changing the positioning of when each player will have to play across the different stages of a **hand**.



## How to Play: Turn Structure

Once the game has begun, each player's turn follows a specific sequence in the round:

1. Pay an ante chip to the pot. (pre-turn, for all players)
2. Optionally purchase a center card.

*Players may optionally purchase a face-up center card by paying an additional ante chip to the pot. When doing so, the player is given the center card and forced to swap the card with a card from their own hand. That card will be played face up in the center, replacing the old card, until the center cards are replaced next round.*

*Players may buy as many center cards as they want on their turn, but each card costs one ante token, and each purchase requires a swap.*

3. Play a card from the player's hand.

*The card is played face down on the table in the designated card area.*

4. Choose a target.

*A targeting token from the player's pile is placed on the table on top of the player's facedown card, confirming the selection.*

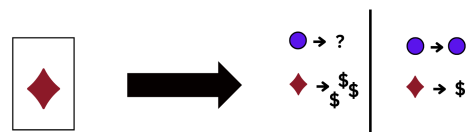
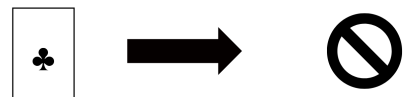
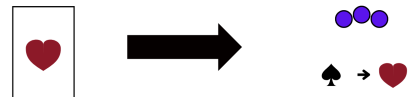
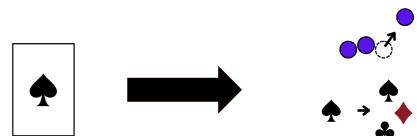
5. Cards are revealed, round is resolved.
6. Life Tokens and Ante are addressed and distributed as needed, and a new round begins, repeating the turn structure.

## Resolution: Card Effects by Suit

At the end of each round, all played cards are revealed simultaneously, managed by a gamerunner/dealer if necessary. The effects of the suits are then resolved in a specific order to ensure proper gameplay and game flow.

Card Effects:

♠ **Spades (Attack)** When a player plays a Spade, their intention is to attack the targeted player, taking one of their life tokens.



- The targeted player loses **one life** unless they are protected by a Heart.
- If two players attack each other with Spades, the **higher-ranked Spade** wins, and only the player who played the lower-ranked Spade loses a life.
- Regardless of how many Spade attacks a player receives, they can **only lose one life per round**.
- Spade attacks are successful if targeting a player who played a Diamond or a Club.

♥ **Hearts (Defend)** Playing a Heart grants the player protection from incoming Spade attacks for that round.

- The player is **protected** from all Spade attacks directed at them.
- Hearts **only protect the card player**; you cannot defend other players in the game.
- Due to this, the targeting token played with a Heart can be used for deception or to apply pressure by selecting any target for the played card, but it has no mechanical effect on the game.

♣ **Clubs (Spoiled/Bluff Cards)** Clubs are primarily used for bluffing and have no inherent action.

- When a Club is played, it **does nothing**. These cards have no effect, and a player must be skilled in maneuvering through the game with clubs. Clubs can be used to mislead opponents about your intentions, or can be good cards to swap with when purchasing a center card.
- Much like Hearts, the targeting chip does not matter when playing a Club, and players should select any target they deem strategically correct.

♦ **Diamonds (Steal)** Diamonds allow players to claim a portion of the ante pot, provided they are not attacked that round.

- Like Spades, it is crucial who the player selects to target with their targeting chip when playing a Diamond, as this will have a direct impact on the round resolution and payouts.

**When Attacked:**

- Players who have played a Diamond and were the target of a Spade card during a round **lose a life and do not win any portion of the ante pot**. Their Diamond card would have been discarded, and their targeting chip would remain on the table (see *Order of Suit Resolution* below).

**When Not Attacked:** Assume for the following explanations and examples that the Diamond player was *not* attacked by a Spade.

- A successfully played Diamond creates one or two claims to the ante pot that round. When selecting your target with a played Diamond, you are choosing a player whom you would like to win a portion of the ante with you.



- At the end of the round, during Diamond resolution, all players who hold a claim to the ante pot from a Diamond card receive an equal share of the spoils. Any remainder rolls over into the pot for the next round.

#### Claims & Sharing Example:

- We are playing a 4-player game with Red, Blue, Green, and Yellow.
- Red has played a Diamond and targeted Blue.
- Blue has played a Diamond and targeted Yellow.
- Yellow and Green each played a Heart, to no effect.
- In this round, Red, Blue, and Yellow all have a claim to the ante pot (awarded either directly by a Diamond being played, or by being the target of a played Diamond). Although Blue received a claim from both their own Diamond and Red's targeted Diamond, a player can only have **1 claim** to the pot each round. Thus, it is still a 3-way split.
- If the round began with 8 ante chips in the pot, Red, Blue, and Yellow will each receive 2 ante chips from the pot, and the remaining two ante chips will carry over into the next round.

#### Self-Targeting Diamond:

- Players are also permitted to target themselves when playing a Diamond card. However, to create socially dynamic gameplay, a "self-targeting" Diamond does not create a full claim to the ante pot. Rather, the claim is to earn a "free round," and the successful self-target results in the return of **one ante chip** from the pot if one remains.

#### Self-Targeting Example:

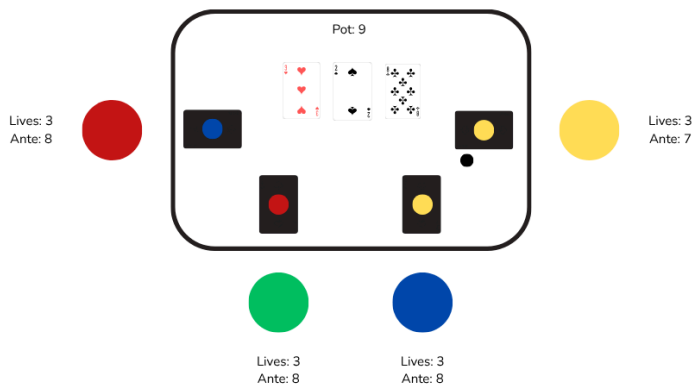
- Continuing with the example above, let's say Green actually played a Diamond as well, and selected the Green targeting token (self-targeted).
- Green now has a self-claim that is resolved *after* the pot is shared by full claims.
- Since Red, Blue, and Yellow each received 2 ante chips from the pot, and there were 2 ante chips left over, Green will be paid 1 ante chip for their Diamond, and 1 ante chip will remain in the pot to start the next round.
- In the instance where no ante chips were remaining, Green would not be paid. If there is ever not enough ante to pay all self-targeting players 1 ante token, the players with the highest-ranked Diamonds get paid first as a tie-breaker.



## Order of Suit Resolution

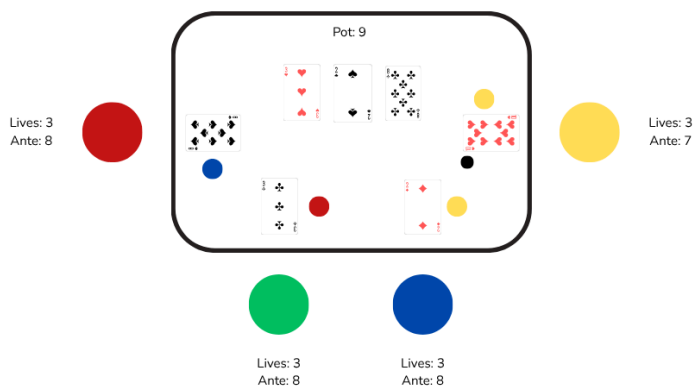
1. ♠ Spades resolve first → Determine attacks and remove any defeated Diamonds or Clubs with one of those players' life tokens. Remove the targeting tokens of Clubs, but leave any remaining targeting tokens of Diamonds for Diamond resolution.
2. ♥ Hearts resolve next → Blocks an attack. Remove all Hearts, Spades, and associated targeting tokens.
3. ♣ Clubs resolve third → They do nothing but maintain bluffing mechanics. Any remaining Clubs and associated targeting tokens can be removed.
4. ♦ Diamonds resolve last → If not attacked, the pot is awarded or split as directed. Once the ante token payouts have been administered, remove all remaining cards and targeting tokens from the table, and prepare for the next round. Pass the starter token once if between rounds, and twice if between hands. Redeal new cards if between hands. Begin play.

## Visual Example: Round Resolution



In a 4-player game, a round is about to resolve, and each player has played a face-down card and selected a target.

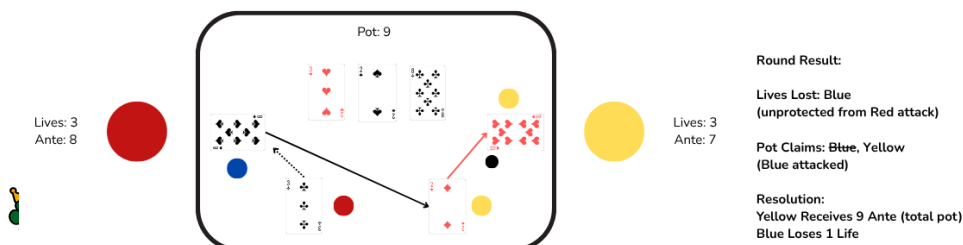
Yellow has the starter token and has self-targeted. Blue targets Yellow, Green targets Red, and Red targets Blue.



As the cards are revealed, Yellow has played a Heart, Blue has played a Diamond, Green a Club, and Red a Spade.

Yellow and Green's target has no effect.

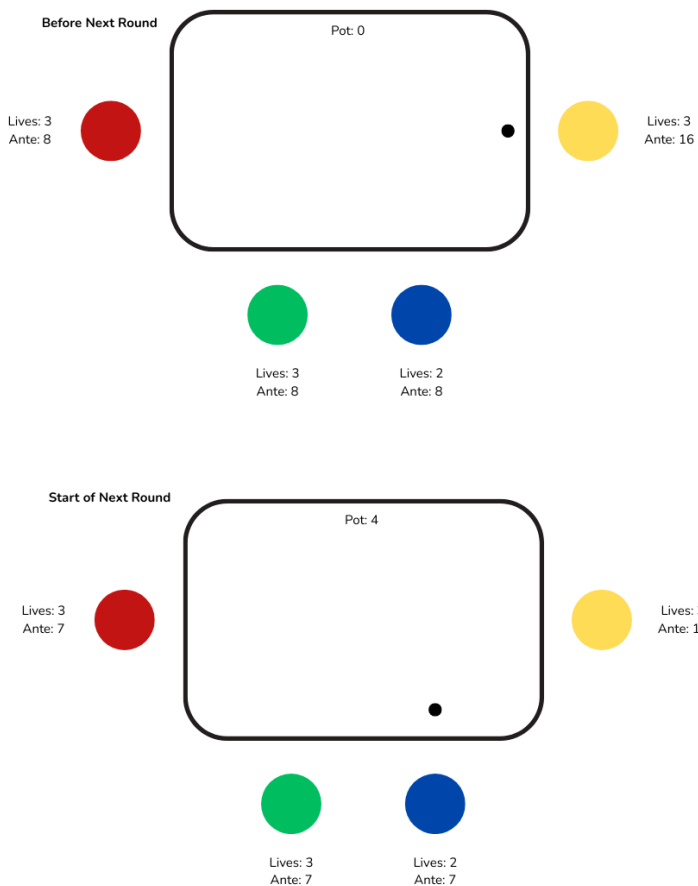
Indicated by the arrows, Blue targets yellow with a diamond, giving Blue and Yellow a claim



to the ante pot. However, Red targets Blue with a Spade, successfully attacking and taking one of Blue's lives.

Because Blue was attacked, they cannot have a claim to the ante pot, but the claim for yellow remains.

*At the end of the round, Blue will lose 1 life token, and Yellow will gain all 9 ante from the pot.*



Before the next round, Yellow has received their 9 ante, and Blue has been deducted a life. For the moment, the pot sits at 0.

The starter token passes to Blue for the next round, and each player is charged one ante for the next round of play, moving the pot up to 4 ante. Three center cards will be dealt, and Blue will begin the next round.

Blue will select a card and place a targeting chip on top of their face-down card. Once all players at the table have selected and played a card as well, the cards will be revealed, and actions will resolve, resulting in the loss of a life token or payment from the ante pot.



## Player Elimination and Game End

### Player Elimination

A player is eliminated from the game under two conditions:

- **Running Out of Ante Chips:** If a player runs out of ante chips and cannot pay for the next round, they are immediately out of the game. Effective management of your ante chips is crucial for survival.
- **Losing All Three Lives:** If a player loses all three of their life tokens, they are eliminated from the game. Any remaining ante chips they possess are kept by the player and are out of circulation.

### Game End

- The game ends when **only one player remains**. That player is declared the winner and claims the entire prize pot and/or the title of victor!

### Other Game Considerations

When playing Spoil, game runners may choose to implement optional variants including a unique game-end proposal. In this variant, players may collectively agree to end the game before a single winner remains. A player can propose ending the game and splitting the prize pot by pushing their "voting stack" (targeting tokens) to the dealer or the center of the table. This proposal requires unanimous agreement from all active players to pass. If all players agree to end the game, the victory is shared.

## Tips and Strategy

Spoil is not a game you can master, but it is a game you can play with strategy and knowledge. For players just starting out, here are some key considerations to make to find yourself as the last man standing.

### 1. Card Type Strategies:

- ♠ Spades (Attack):
  - **Elimination Focus:** Target players who are low on lives to try and eliminate them.
  - **Pot Denial:** Use Spades to attack players you suspect are playing Diamonds to deny them their portion of the ante pot.
  - **High Spade Advantage:** Remember that a higher-ranked Spade beats a lower-ranked one if both players attack each other. This is crucial for winning head-to-head Spade conflicts.



- Counter-Bluffing: If an opponent plays a Club and targets you, but you have a Spade, it's a "free" attack.
- ♥ Hearts (Defend):
  - Self-Preservation: Play a Heart when you need to protect your lives.
  - Bluff with Targeting: Since Hearts don't care about targeting, use your targeting token to create a false impression. Target a strong player to make others think you're attacking, or target yourself to signal self-defense (even though the Heart already does that).
- ♣ Clubs (Spoiled Cards):
  - Deception is Key: Clubs are your primary tool for misdirection. Play them when you want to conserve a valuable card or when you want to make opponents overthink your move.
  - Waste Opponent's Cards: If you can trick an opponent into wasting a Heart, Spade, or Diamond on your Club, it's a win.
- ♦ Diamonds (Steal):
  - Pot Control: Diamonds are how you gain ante chips. Prioritize playing them when the pot is large, and you feel safe from Spade attacks.
  - Risk vs. Reward: Diamonds are high-risk, high-reward cards because they are vulnerable to Spades. Play them carefully.
  - Targeting Matters:
    - Self-Targeting: Use a self-targeting Diamond for a "free round" to get one ante chip back. This is low-risk and helps manage your ante chip count.
    - Targeting Others: Use this to split the pot with an ally or to incentivize another player. This is a good way to share spoils and manage the pot size.
  - Beware of Multiple Claims: Remember, you only get one "full claim" to the pot per round, even if multiple Diamonds target you.

## 2. Reading Your Opponents:

- Targeting Chip Analysis: While Hearts and Clubs can be bluffed, Spades and Diamonds reveal intentions through targeting. Pay attention to who is targeting whom.
- Life and Chip Counts: Always keep track of how many lives and ante chips each player has. This informs who is vulnerable, who might be desperate, and who might be a good target for elimination or collaboration.
- Card Counting (If Applicable): Since the deck is not shuffled until necessary, observant players can track which high-value cards (especially high Spades and Diamonds) have been played.

## 3. Hand and Round Management:



- **Pacing Your Hand:** You play your entire hand of cards in each "hand" (e.g., 6 cards in a 6-player game). Don't just play your best cards immediately. Think about how your hand will play out over several rounds and adapt to the changing game state.
- **Center Cards:** The ability to purchase a center card can be powerful, especially if it's a high-value Spade, Heart, or Diamond that perfectly fits your strategy for the current or upcoming rounds.

#### 4. Communication and Deception:

- **Bluffing:** Use Clubs and the targeting chips of Hearts to mislead your opponents. Make them think you're attacking when you're defending, or vice-versa.
- **Subtle Communication:** While direct communication might be limited, your plays themselves can send messages. A repeated attack on one player might signal a rivalry, or a consistent Diamond play might mark you as a "pot seeker."

Spoil is designed for savvy gamblers and game lovers who crave intensity, unpredictability, and the chance to be remembered as a winner.

We encourage you to gather your friends, set up the table, and dive into the exciting world of *Spoil*. Practice is the best way to master the nuances of each suit and discover your own winning strategies.

In a game where only one can win, the only question is:

**Will it be you?**

