

Cuckoo (Ranter-Go-Round)

3-12 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Short

Avoid being the player with the lowest-ranked card when all cards are revealed.

SETUP

- 3-12 players with a standard 52-card deck.
- Deal exactly 1 card face-down to each player.
- Each player starts with 3 lives.

SCORING

- Player with the lowest card loses one life.
- Ties for lowest all lose a life.
- A player with no lives is eliminated; last player standing wins.

Tip: Swap aggressively with low cards — the risk of keeping them almost always outweighs the risk of swapping.

ON YOUR TURN

- Keep your card or force a swap with the player to your left.
- A King blocks the swap — the holder keeps their card.
- Dealer may swap with the top deck card (King draw voids the swap).
- All players reveal; lowest card loses a life.

Cuckoo, also known as Ranter-Go-Round, is a simple and chaotic card game where each player holds just one card and tries to avoid having the lowest card at the end of the round.

Objective

Avoid being the player with the lowest-ranked card when the round ends. Players may swap cards with their neighbor to improve their position.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 to 12 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Deal:** Each player receives exactly 1 card, dealt face-down.
4. **Lives:** Each player starts with 3 lives (tokens, chips, or coins).

Gameplay

1. **Decision:** Starting to the dealer's left, each player either keeps their card or forces a swap with the player to their left.
2. **Forced swap:** The next player must swap unless they hold a King, which blocks the exchange.
3. **Dealer's turn:** The dealer may swap with the top card of the deck if unhappy with their card, but if a King is drawn, the swap is voided.
4. **Reveal:** After the dealer's turn, all players reveal their cards. The player with the lowest card loses a life.

Scoring

- **Losing a life:** The player with the lowest revealed card loses one life.
- **Ties:** If multiple players tie for the lowest, all of them lose a life.
- **Elimination:** A player with no remaining lives is out of the game. The last player standing wins.

Variations

- **Swedish Cuckoo (Kille):** Uses a specialized deck with numbered cards and special action cards.
- **Chase the Ace:** A popular British version where Aces are the lowest and Kings are safe cards.

Tips and Strategies

- Swap aggressively when you hold low cards — the risk of keeping them almost always outweighs the risk of swapping.
- If you receive a card from a swap, consider that your neighbor thought it was better than what they had.

Tips & Strategy

Always swap if you hold a very low card. If you receive a mid-range card from a swap, it is usually safe to keep it.

With mostly luck involved, the only real decision is when to swap. Generally, anything below a 7 is worth swapping.