

Donkey

3-13 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Short

Collect four of a kind and signal before being the last to react.

SETUP

- Use sets of 4 matching cards equal to the number of players.
- Deal 4 cards to each player.
- Agree on a signal action (e.g., touch your nose).

SCORING

- Last player to react earns a letter of D-O-N-K-E-Y.
- Spelling the full word eliminates you.
- Last player remaining wins.

Tip: Watch other players more than your cards; spotting the signal first keeps you safe.

ON YOUR TURN

- Everyone simultaneously passes one unwanted card to the left.
- Pick up the received card and repeat rapidly.
- When you get four of a kind, quietly perform the signal.
- All other players must react immediately; the last one loses.

Donkey is a lighthearted and fast-paced card game often played by families and children. Players rapidly pass cards around trying to collect four of a kind, and when someone succeeds, everyone scrambles to grab a spoon or touch their nose, leaving the last person to react as the 'donkey.'

Objective

Collect four cards of the same rank before anyone else. When someone succeeds, all players race to perform a designated action (such as touching their nose). The last player to react earns a letter of D-O-N-K-E-Y. Spell out the full word and you are eliminated.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 to 13 players.
2. **Deck:** Use sets of four matching cards equal to the number of players. For example, with 5 players, use 5 ranks (20 cards total).
3. **Deal:** Each player receives exactly 4 cards.

Gameplay

1. **Pass simultaneously:** On a signal, every player selects one unwanted card and passes it face-down to the player on their left.
2. **Pick up:** Each player picks up the card passed to them and evaluates their hand.
3. **Repeat rapidly:** Continue passing cards in quick succession without waiting for a formal signal after the first round.
4. **Four of a kind:** When a player collects four matching cards, they quietly perform the designated signal (touching their nose, placing a hand on the table, etc.).
5. **React:** As soon as anyone notices, all other players must immediately do the same. The last player to react is the donkey for that round.

Scoring

- **Letters:** The last player to react earns one letter of D-O-N-K-E-Y.
- **Elimination:** A player who spells the full word DONKEY is out of the game.
- **Winner:** The last player remaining who has not been eliminated wins.

Variations

- **Spoons:** Instead of touching noses, place spoons in the center (one fewer than players). When someone gets four of a kind, they grab a spoon, triggering a scramble.
- **Pig:** A simpler version where players silently put a finger on their nose and the last to notice is the pig.

Tips and Strategies

- Stay alert and watch other players even while evaluating your own hand.
- Pass cards quickly to maintain game tempo and keep opponents off balance.
- Focus on collecting a rank that you see appearing frequently in your hand.

Tips & Strategy

Keep your eyes on the table as much as on your cards. Being observant is more important than being fast at passing, since spotting the signal first is what keeps you safe.

Since the game rewards observation over card skill, position yourself where you can see the most players. Peripheral vision is your greatest asset.