

Dou Dizhu

3 players

54 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Short

Landlord: empty your hand first. Peasants: either one empties before the Landlord.

SETUP

- 3 players, 54-card deck (52 cards + 2 jokers).
- Deal 17 cards each. Set 3 aside for the Landlord.
- Bid for the Landlord role; winner takes the 3 extra cards.

SCORING

- Base stake equals the Landlord's bid. Bombs double the stake.
- Landlord wins: each Peasant pays. Peasant wins: Landlord pays both.

Tip: Count the 2s and jokers. Whoever controls these controls the game.

ON YOUR TURN

- Play a valid card combination (solo, pair, chain, bomb, etc.).
- Next player must beat it with the same type at higher rank, or pass.
- Two consecutive passes return the lead to the last player who played.

Dou Dizhu (meaning 'Fight the Landlord') is the most popular card game in China, played by hundreds of millions of people both in person and online. It is a three-player climbing game where two Peasants team up against one Landlord, who has the advantage of extra cards. The game combines hand management, partnership play, and rapid card combination strategies.

Objective

The Landlord tries to play all their cards first. The two Peasants win if either of them empties their hand before the Landlord does.

Setup

1. **Players:** Exactly 3 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck plus 2 jokers (54 cards total).
3. **Deal:** Deal 17 cards to each player. The remaining 3 cards are set aside face-down.
4. **Bidding:** Players bid for the Landlord role (0, 1, 2, or 3 points). The highest bidder becomes the Landlord and picks up the 3 extra cards, giving them 20 cards total.

Gameplay

1. **Card ranking:** Colored Joker (highest), Black Joker, 2, A, K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3 (lowest).
2. **Leading:** The Landlord plays first. They may play any valid combination.
3. **Following:** The next player must play the same type of combination at a higher rank, or pass.
4. **Valid combinations:** Solo card, pair, trio, trio with a kicker (solo or pair), chain (5+ consecutive singles), pair chain (3+ consecutive pairs), airplane (2+ consecutive trios, with or without kickers), and bomb (four of a kind or both jokers).
5. **Bombs:** A bomb (four of a kind) or rocket (both jokers) can beat any non-bomb combination. A higher bomb beats a lower bomb. The rocket beats all bombs.
6. **Winning the round:** When two consecutive players pass, the last player who played leads a new combination.

Scoring

- The base stake is determined by the Landlord's bid (1, 2, or 3).
- Each bomb or rocket played during the round doubles the stake.
- If the Landlord wins, each Peasant pays the Landlord the final stake. If a Peasant wins, the Landlord pays each Peasant.
- Spring bonus: If the Landlord plays all cards without either Peasant playing a single card, the stake doubles. Reverse spring works the same if the Landlord never gets to play after the opening.

Variations

- **Four-Player Dou Dizhu:** One player sits out each round or two players form the Landlord team.
- **Happy Dou Dizhu:** Additional bonuses for special card combinations in the initial hand.
- **Laizi Dou Dizhu:** Designated wild cards (laizi) that can substitute for any card in combinations.

Tips and Strategies

- As the Landlord, lead with your strongest chains and combos to seize control early.
- As a Peasant, coordinate with your partner. Save bombs to stop the Landlord at critical moments.
- Count cards carefully, especially 2s and jokers, as they determine who controls the endgame.

Tips & Strategy

As the Landlord, lead aggressively with chains and trios to maintain tempo. As Peasants, cooperate by saving your power cards to interrupt the Landlord's runs. Always track the remaining 2s and jokers.

The key to Dou Dizhu is tempo control. The Landlord must shed cards in efficient combos before the Peasants can coordinate. Peasants should communicate through their plays, sacrificing individual cards to help their partner gain the lead.