

Flathead Rummy

A Game for the Fanucci Deck

by Dave Howell

For two to six players.

Summary

The first player to lay down all the cards in their hand earns points based on how many cards are still held by the other players. Cards can be played either by putting out a set of three or more cards in a qualifying group, or by laying cards on existing groups. First player to score 42 points or more, wins.

Setup

Shuffle the deck, and deal 10 cards to each player. Set the remainder of the deck in the center of the table as a draw pile, and flip over the top card to start the discard tableau.

Playing The Game

Playing a Turn

On each turn, a player will take a card; may elect to play some cards onto the table; then, if the game isn't over, discard a card to the end of the discard tableau, making sure that all previously discarded cards are still visible.

Taking a Card

At the beginning of a turn, a player can take a card from one of three different places. They can draw a face-down card from the top of the draw pile. They can take the last card played from the top of the discard tableau. Or, they can take any one card from the discard tableau if they can play it on that turn.

Laying Down

To lay cards down, you need three or more cards that all fit into one of the three types of meld. Type one is a **set**: three or more cards of the same *rank* (3 sevens, or 4 nines, for example). Type two is a **flush**: three or more cards of the same *suit* (3 Mazes, or 4 Lamps). Type three is the **run**, and it's a little more complicated: three or more cards of sequential *rank*, and of the same *color*. (2 of Lamps, 3 of Plungers, 4 of Fromps, because they're all red; or 7 and 8 of Zurfs and 9 of Rain, because they're all blue). Warning: in Flathead Rummy, ∞ does not come after 9, so it's not legal to add the ∞ of Tops to the blue example run.

Once cards are laid down on the table, they can't be rearranged.

Laying Off

Once a player has laid down a group of cards, any player may then (on their turn) add additional cards to that set, as long as the result is still a valid meld type.

Bonus Meld

There are three more special meld types, called *bonus melds*. The first is the **color set**: three or more cards of the same *rank* and *color*. The second is the **flush run**: three or more cards of sequential *rank*, and in the same *suit*. The third is **infinity**: a set of three or more ∞ cards.

When a player lays down a bonus meld, they receive a bonus mark. You can give people chips or make a note on the score pad if you like, but usually it's not hard to remember if somebody has one. *If* that player wins the hand and has a bonus mark, they will score double the usual points. See *Scoring* for the details.

Laying Off on Bonus Meld

Once a bonus meld is on the table, it is treated like any other meld. So, for example, if a player melds a color set of 6s in black, the next player can put a

red 6 of Plungers on the set. A flush run of 5, 6, 7 of Faces could have a 9 of Faces added to it, making it a regular flush, or could have the 8 of Hives added to it, making it a regular run.

Trumps

Trumps act like wild cards, filling in for a missing card in a group. However, a trump does not *become* the missing card, so putting the Grue with the 2 and 3 of Scythes does not make a bonus flush run. Also, each group of cards on the table can contain no more than one trump card. Finally, a trump card in the discard tableau cannot be picked up, which includes if the trump is turned over as the card that starts the discard tableau. The starting player will have to draw a card.

Going Out, and Scoring

When a player plays or discards their last card, the hand is over. The player who went out scores one point for every card remaining in their opponents' hands, plus five more points if it's a two-player game. Before adding up those cards, though, the other players may lay off any cards in their hands that can be legally played onto melds on the table. Losing players may *not* lay down: they may not meld new groups of cards. They can only lay off: adding cards from their hands to melds already on the table.

After the card count is established, multiply that number times one plus the number of bonus marks the winning player has, minus the number of bonus marks the losing players have. For example, if, after laying off, a player's opponents have seven cards left, the winner has two bonus marks, and one of the losing players has one bonus mark, then the winner will get 7 points for cards $\times (1 + 2 \text{ bonus marks from the winner} - 1 \text{ bonus mark from the losers}) = 14$ points. In a two-player game, that would be (5 points for going out + 7 points for cards) $\times (1 + 2 \text{ bonus marks from the winner} - 1 \text{ bonus mark from the loser}) = 24$ points. If the losing players have *more* bonus marks than the winner, then the winner just gets the normal score.

Strategy

Obviously, you're trying to put together those groups of three so you can lay them all down and go out. However, if you're holding three groups of 3 in a ten-card hand, then you've got one extra card (or, after you draw and before you discard, *two* extra cards). In order to go out, you have to have one set of *four* cards, or be able to lay off that extra card.

Should you lay down groups as soon as you get them, or wait until you can lay everything down and go out? The disadvantage to laying down groups before you can go out is that you're now providing your opponents with places to lay down their tenth card, and go out before you do. Also, if you draw a later card that would let you go out if you rearrange your groups, you can't do that if one or more of your groups are already on the table. On the other hand, the *advantage* of laying groups down early is that if (or when) your opponent goes out before you, they earn fewer points.

Be careful what you discard. Let's say you discard the 1 of Bugs, and there's a 1 of Books further back in the discard tableau. If your opponent has even a single 1 in their hand, you've just given them a set. They pick up the 1 of Bugs on their turn and add it to their hand. On the turn after that, they lay down their original 1, the 1 of Bugs, and pull the 1 of Books from the discard tableau.

On the other hand, if there's a 1 of Books *and* a 1 of Time in the discard tableau, then discarding the 1 of Bugs is somewhat safer. There's no way they can get both of the buried '1's out of the discards, and they probably didn't have a 1 in their hand when the second 1 was thrown in the discards or they'd have picked it up then.