

Kings & Peasants

The rules · 3 or more players · age 8+ · learn in 2 minutes, about 20 minutes a game

The idea

Get rid of your cards first and you are crowned **King**, with the power to add a new rule to the game. Finish last and you are the **Peasant**: you shuffle, you deal, you hand over your best cards, and you live under the King's law. Play several games in a row; the crown can change hands every time.

In the box

52 illustrated playing cards

1 King card and 1 Peasant card

2 Jokers (not used in this game)

1 Ideas for the King card, 2 rules cards

Setup

- Remove the two Jokers. Shuffle the 52 cards and deal them out **evenly**, one at a time. Any leftover cards are set aside face down and are not used.
- In the first game, whoever holds the **3♣** leads. If the **3♣** was set aside, the first player to put down a 3 leads.

Card order

2 is the highest card, then Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10 and down to **3, the lowest**. Suits do not matter.



Playing a round

A game is played over a series of **rounds**. Keep playing rounds until everyone has played all their cards.

- Lead.** The leader plays a single card, a pair or a triple of the same rank. That number of cards is fixed for the whole round: if the round opens with pairs, everyone plays pairs.
- Beat it or pass.** Going clockwise, each player must play a higher set of the same size, or pass. If you pass, you are out until the next round.
- Runs.** If three consecutive ranks are played one after another (for example 4, 5, 6), the player who played the third card may declare that the rest of the round must continue the run.
- A 2 ends the round** at once, because nothing can beat it.
- Last one standing.** When everyone else has passed, the last player may keep playing cards until they pass or run out.
- Next round.** The winner of the round leads the next one. If they have no cards left, the player to their left leads.

Crowning the King

- The **first** player to play all their cards is the **King** and takes the King card.
- The **last** player still holding cards is the **Peasant** and takes the Peasant card.
- Everyone else plays on until all cards are gone, so the order of the middle ranks is decided too.

Royal decrees

Before the next game the King issues a **decree**: one new rule that everyone must obey from now on.

Decrees stack: each new King adds a rule and the old ones stay in force, so every session builds its own rulebook. A King who loses the crown has to live under the laws they made.

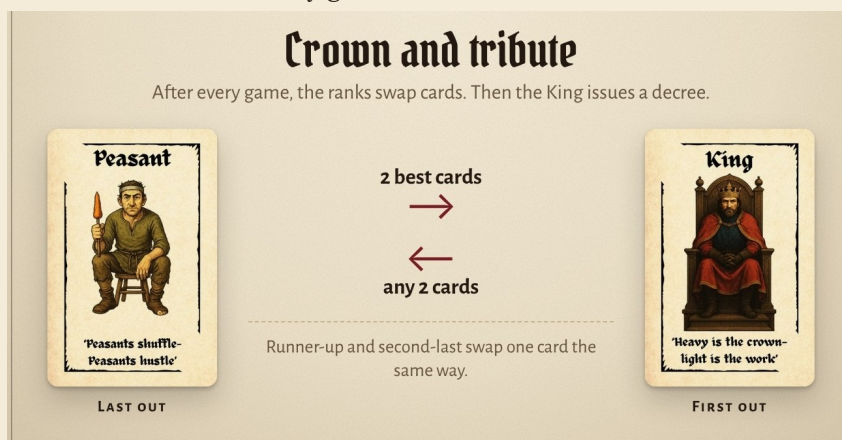
Examples from our own table:

- Playing a 7 reverses the direction of play and makes 3 the highest card for that round.
- The Peasant refills everyone's drinks on demand.
- A new King must thank the table before decreeing, or the runner-up takes the crown.
- Anyone who plays a 2 must strike a strongman pose and shout "Look at my power."

The Ideas for the King card has more. What will you decree?

The next game: tribute

- The **Peasant shuffles and deals**.
- The Peasant gives the King their **two best cards**. The King gives back **any two cards** of their choice.
- The **runner-up** (second out) and the **second-to-last** player swap one card the same way: best card up, any card back.
- Anyone in the middle keeps the hand they were dealt. With 3 players only the King and the Peasant swap.
- **The Peasant leads** the first round of every game after the first.



Quick answers

- **Can I pass even if I could play?** Yes, but you are out until the next round.
- **Do suits matter?** No. Only rank counts.
- **How many players?** 3 or more. With more players, hands are smaller and the leftover cards change.