

Instruction Dock



Mind-Bending Strategy!
Mind-Boggling Suspense!



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THE RULES OF ROWBOAT:

2-4 Players

If you're a visual learner, check out Rowboat's video tutorial at:

www.moosetachegames.com

THE CARDS: Rowboat is made up of 61 cards, split into 4 suits. Oars and Waves are the blue suits. Shells and Maps are the green suits. There are also three types of specialty cards (the Rowboat, the Moon, and the Lighthouse).

CARD VALUES (from weakest to strongest): Anchor (A), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Dolphin (D), Mermaid (M), Seeker (S), Whale (W)

If you have trouble remembering the face cards, just remember your ABC's. As you work your way through the alphabet (D-M-S-W), the cards get more powerful. Anchors (A) are even less powerful than the numbered cards.

ROWBOAT FOR 2 PLAYERS:

OBJECT OF THE GAME: The first player to score 200 points wins.

GETTING STARTED: Grab a pen and pad of paper for scoring. Both players

place one of each Specialty Card (Lighthouse, Moon, Rowboat) in front of them. Set aside the extra set of Specialty Cards and shuffle the remaining cards.

REVEALING THE TIDE: At the beginning of each hand, deal the cards face up in the center of the playing area until all 4 suits have appeared (oars, shells, waves, and maps), or **until 12 cards are dealt**, whichever happens first. Make sure each of these cards is fully visible. This spread of cards is called the “Tide”. The Tide can be anywhere between 4 and 12 cards, depending on when the 4th suit appears.

DEALING THE HAND: Deal each player the same number of cards that are in the Tide. Players alternate dealing from hand to hand.

LET’S LOOK AT AN EXAMPLE TIDE:

(card 1) 3 of maps	(card 4) Seeker of shells	(card 7) 3 of waves
(card 2) 7 of waves	(card 5) 8 of waves	(card 8) 8 of oars
(card 3) Mermaid of shells	(card 6) 5 of maps	

The fourth suit is reached on the 8th card, so each player is dealt 8 cards. This means the hand will contain 8 rounds of play or “tricks”. The number of tricks in the hand is always equal to the number of cards in the Tide.

NOVICE VERSION: If you are new to Rowboat, try playing without bidding.

BIDDING:

After the Tide is revealed and players receive their hands, each player bids on the hand. A player's bid represents the number of tricks they intend to win. The non-dealer bids first and the dealer bids last. A player can bid anywhere between 1 and the total number of cards in the Tide. **Players cannot bid 0.** Bidding is the most exciting element of Rowboat, but it's also the most challenging. If you are a beginner, and you are overwhelmed by bidding, play without bidding until you're more comfortable with game play. (To better understand how bidding affects your score, see **Scoring** on page 12.)

PROGRESSION OF PLAY: At the beginning of the first trick, the non-dealer always goes first. Each player plays one card from his hand, and whoever plays the stronger card wins the trick. The winner of the trick takes the two cards played and puts them aside face down in their side of the playing area. The winner of a trick always leads the following trick. Play continues in this manner until every trick has been played.

HOW TO USE THE TIDE: The Tide is like a game board for the hand. The first card revealed in the Tide influences the first trick. The second card revealed in the Tide influences the second trick, and so on.

Let's look at the example Tide. If the first card in the Tide is the 3 of Maps, what does that tell us? It tells us a few things.

During the 1st trick:

- The 3 of maps is the ruling card.
- Maps are the most powerful suit. (See **Trump Suits** on page 8.)
- Cards with a value of "3" are more powerful than cards with other values. (See **Knobs** on page 7 and **Off-colored Knobs** on page 9.)

The second card in the Tide is the 7 of waves.

This means that during the 2nd trick:

- The 7 of waves is the ruling card.
- Waves are the most powerful suit.
- Cards with a value of "7" are more powerful than cards with other values.

DETERMINING WHO PLAYED THE STRONGEST CARD:

Overview: (See the **Order of Power Card**) **The Rowboat** beats the **Knob**, the Knob beats **Trump**, Trump beats the **Off-colored Knobs**, and Off-colored Knobs beat **Non-Trump**.

1. **THE ROWBOAT CARD:** The Rowboat is the strongest card in the game. (See **Specialty Cards** Section on page 11.)

2. **KNOBS: The Knob** is the strongest card you can play from your hand. The Knob carries the **same value** and **same color** as the **ruling card** in the **Tide**, but it belongs to a **different suit**.

Let's look at all of the Knobs in the example Tide from page 4:

Card in Tide	Corresponding Knob
3 of maps	3 of shells
7 of waves	7 of oars
Mermaid of shells	Mermaid of maps
Seeker of shells	Seeker of maps
8 of waves	8 of oars
5 of maps	5 of shells
3 of waves	3 of oars
8 of oars	8 of waves

3. **THE TRUMP SUIT:** Cards belonging to the Trump Suit lose to the Knob, but beat the other 3 suits. The Trump suit is determined by the Tide. If the first card in the Tide is the 3 of maps, then maps are the Trump suit during the 1st trick. If the second card in the Tide is the 7 of waves, then waves are the Trump suit for the 2nd trick, and so on. **This means the Trump suit changes throughout the hand.** Cards in the Trump Suit beat cards belonging to the other suits, regardless of value. In other words, the 2 of Trump would beat a non-Trump Whale. **If both players have the Trump suit**, then the card with the stronger value wins. (See **Card Values** on page 3). Let's look at the Trump suits for the original example Tide on page 3:

Card in Tide	Trump Suit
3 of maps	Trick 1 - maps
7 of waves	Trick 2 - waves
Mermaid of shells	Trick 3 - shells
Seeker of shells	Trick 4 - shells
8 of waves	Trick 5 - waves
5 of maps	Trick 6 - maps
3 of waves	Trick 7 - waves
8 of oars	Trick 8 - oars

If you have a Trump card in your hand, you must play it. In other words, players must always follow suit. There is one exception to this rule, which involves saving a Knob for a future trick.

Saving Knobs: What if you only have one Trump card left, and you want to use it as a Knob later in the hand? A player is not required to play the Trump suit if their last remaining card in that suit is a future Knob.

Married to the Knob: If a player chooses not to follow suit in order to save their Knob, he **must** use that card as the Knob.

***If a player does not have a Trump card for the current trick,** he may play **any card** in his hand. Plan ahead and choose wisely. Playing the right cards when you don't have Trump can be the difference between success and disaster.

- 4. OFF-COLORED KNOBS:** The next most powerful type of card is an **Off-colored Knob**. Off-colored Knobs lose to the Knob and to the Trump suit, but beat non-Trump cards. Off-colored Knobs have the **same value** as the ruling card in the Tide, and a **different color**. For example, if the ruling card in the Tide is a blue 4, then both of the green 4's are Off-colored Knobs.

- Off-colored Knobs are not considered Trump cards. If you have a Trump card, you are not allowed to play an Off-colored Knob.
 - If your last remaining Trump card is an Off-colored Knob in a future trick, you are not allowed to save it.
5. **NON-TRUMP CARDS:** Non-Trump cards are the least powerful cards. Any card in your hand that does not fit into one of the 3 stronger categories (Knobs, Trump, and Off-colored Knobs) is considered non-Trump.

Who wins when both players play non-Trump? Whoever plays the higher value, regardless of suit, wins the trick. (See **Card Values** on page 3.)

Is one non-Trump suit more powerful than another non-Trump suit? No. All of the non-Trump suits hold equal value, and are less powerful than cards belonging to the Trump suit.

TIES: In the case of a tie, neither player wins the trick. Whoever wins the following trick wins both tricks. Whoever played first on the tie plays first on the following trick. When a tie occurs on the last trick of the hand, no one wins the trick.

SPECIALTY CARDS: In addition to the suited cards in the deck, there are also 3 sets of specialty cards (3 Rowboats, 3 Lighthouses, and 3 Moons). At the beginning of the game, both players receive one of each. Players place their 3 specialty cards face up in front of them. **Players may only use each specialty card once during the course of the entire game.**

THE ROWBOAT CARD: This awesome card beats EVERY other card in the game, including the Knob. **You cannot play the Rowboat on the last trick of any hand.** If a Rowboat is played, it cannot be beaten by another Rowboat. Since it is not in your hand, after you play it, you will have an extra card for the remainder of the hand.

THE LIGHTHOUSE CARD: This card may be played at any time. When you play the Lighthouse, you may look at your opponent's hand for the duration of the **Sand Timer**.

THE MOON CARD: This card must be played before the Tide is dealt. Only the dealer can play the Moon. When the dealer plays the Moon, he declares a number from 4 to 12, and then deals that many cards into the Tide.

NOVICE SCORING: (No bidding) Players receive 10 points for every trick they win. The first player to reach 200 points wins!

REGULAR SCORING: When players make their bid, they receive 10 times their bid. For example: If a player bids 4 and wins 4 tricks, he receives 40 points.

Players lose 10 times their bid for winning fewer tricks than they bid. For example: If a player bids 4 and wins fewer than 4 tricks, he loses 40 points.

Sandbags: If a player wins more tricks than he bids, he receives one Sandbag for each extra trick taken. For example: If a player bids 3 and wins 4 tricks, he receives 30 points and 1 Sandbag. On a score sheet, that would read 30/1. If a player bids 3 and wins 5 tricks, he receives 30 points and 2 Sandbags (30/2).

Capsizing: Be careful, Sandbags can add up! If a player accumulates 5 Sandbags over the course of a game, **he loses 100 points**. When the 5th bag is accumulated, the player first receives the points awarded for making his bid, and then loses 100 points. When this happens, the 5 Sandbags reset to 0.

If a player Capsizes with more than 5 Sandbags, then only 5 of his Sandbags are taken away when the Sandbags reset. For example, if a player accumulates 6 Sandbags, then only 5 Sandbags reset. A score of 150/6 would go to 50/1.

Misplays: For experienced players, **the penalty for a misplay is 2 Sandbags.** There are two types of misplays:

1. If a player does not follow suit when they are required to do so, it is considered a misplay.
2. If a card is Married to a Knob, and that card is not used as a Knob, it is considered a misplay. (See **Married to the Knob** on page 9.)

If a player misplays and earns enough for a game-winning score during that hand, then 0 points are awarded and 2 Sandbags are added.

WINNING THE GAME: The first player to reach 200 points with less than 5 Sandbags wins the game!

If the final score is tied, the player with fewer Sandbags wins. Therefore, a score of 200/0 would beat a score of 200/1. If the score is not tied, Sandbags are irrelevant. A score of 210/4 would beat a score of 200/0. If the score and the number of Sandbags are tied, then play continues until the tie is broken.

ROWBOAT FOR 3 PLAYERS: Rowboat for 3 players is the same as Rowboat for 2 players, with the following exceptions:

DEALING AND BIDDING: The dealer rotates clockwise, and hands are dealt clockwise. The player to the dealer's left bids first and plays first.

TIES: In the case of a two-way tie, all 3 players are still eligible to win both tricks.

THE LIGHTHOUSE: The Lighthouse card may be used to look at both opponents' hands, and the Sand Timer runs twice (once per player).

WINNING THE GAME: The first player to reach **150 points** wins the game.

ROWBOAT FOR 4 PLAYERS: Rowboat for 4 players is the same as Rowboat for 2 players, with the following exceptions:

PARTNERS: Players are split into teams of 2. Partners sit opposite one another. Partners may not share and discuss their cards or their strategy during the course of play, except when discussing specialty cards.

THE TIDE: In 2 and 3 player Rowboat, the Tide cannot exceed 12 cards. **In 4 player Rowboat, the Tide cannot exceed 10 cards.**

DEALING AND BIDDING: The dealer rotates clockwise, and hands are dealt clockwise. The player to the dealer's left bids first and plays first.

The Exchange: After the hand is dealt and before the bid, every player chooses one card from their hand, and gives it to their partner. Players may not look at their new card until they pass one of their own.

Each player bids. The sum of the partners' bids represents their total team bid. Players may bid 0, as long as the total team bid is at least 1. It doesn't matter which partner wins the tricks, as long as the total team bid is met.

SPECIALTY CARDS: Each team (not each player) receives one of each specialty card. Each specialty card may only be used once.

The Lighthouse: Both players may look at both opponents' hands, as well as each other's hands. The sand timer runs 3 times, one time for each hand.

HAVE FUN!

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