

The Crow and the Pitcher

An Aesop Card Game by Sean D. MacDonald

For 3-4 players — Game length 20 min — For ages 12+

Components

27 Stone cards (9 green, 9 orange, 9 red)

9 Thirst cards (9 black)

12 Pitcher cards

Object of the Game

Players attempt to win tricks by filling Pitcher cards with Stone cards equal or lower in value than the Pitcher card. After every player has dealt a round, the player with the most points is the winner.

Round Setup

Shuffle and place the Pitcher cards face down in the middle of the playing area.

NOTE: IN A 4-PLAYER GAME, remove the 6, 7, and one 13 Pitcher card.

Shuffle the Stone and Thirst cards together and deal all the cards to the players.

After looking at the Stone cards dealt to her, each player must pass one card from her hand to each other player. Players cannot look at cards passed to them until all cards are passed.

Beginning Play

The dealer, or the player to most recently win a trick, turns over the top Pitcher card. The player to the left of the player who turned over the Pitcher card starts the trick. The direction of play is clockwise from the starting player.

The starting player can lead the trick with any one Stone (green, orange, red) card. All other players must play the same color Stone card that started the trick, if possible.

Card Description

Stone card



Stone cards help fill the pitcher and are worth positive points at the end of a round.

Pitcher card



Pitcher cards determine the value players must match to fill the pitcher.

Pitchers not successfully filled are worth negative points at the end of a round.

Thirst Cards

If a player cannot play a Stone card of the same color as the Stone card that started the trick, she can play a Thirst (black) card.

A player can lead a trick with a Thirst card once a Thirst card has been used in a previous trick during the round.

Thirst cards are worth negative points at the end of a round.

Thirst card



Winning the Trick

Only cards of the same color as the leading card can take a trick.

Tricks lead with Stone Cards

Add together all cards of the SAME COLOR as the leading card that are UNDER the value of the Pitcher card.

-If the total is EQUAL TO OR MORE than the value of the Pitcher:

The player who played the highest card matching the leading color under the Pitcher card value wins the trick. The winning player collects all played cards, places them facedown in front of her, and discards the current Pitcher.

-If the total is LESS than the value of the Pitcher:

The player who played the lowest card matching the leading color wins the trick. The winning player collects all played cards AND the current Pitcher and places them facedown in front of her.

Tricks lead with Thirst cards

If the trick is led with a Thirst card, all players must play a Thirst card if possible.

The player who plays the highest-value Thirst card wins the trick. The winning player discards the current Pitcher card from play, collects all played cards, and places them facedown in front of her.

Pitcher cards are ignored during tricks led with Thirst cards.

After all Stone cards are played, each player counts all the points from cards she has collected during the round.

- Blue waves: positive points
- Black waves: negative points
- Pitcher cards: -5 points each

A player's total score cannot go below 0.

If at least one player has not dealt a round, begin a new round with the player to the left of the previous dealer dealing the new round.

If every player has dealt a round, the game is over.

End of Game

The player with the highest score is the winner. If there is a tie, the tied players share in victory.

Variant: Longer Game

For a longer game, have each player deal 2 hands each.

Example of Play - Pitcher Filled



Starting player
Leads Stone card

2nd player

3rd player

4th player

- 1) Player leads with a green Stone card. All green cards that are under the Pitcher card value are added up. The trick total is 11.
- 2) The green 10 DOES NOT count because it is equal to or more than the Pitcher card.
- 3) The Thirst (black) 3 DOES NOT count because it does not match the lead card color.
- 4) Since the trick total is GREATER than the value of the Pitcher card, the highest card matching the lead card color UNDER the value of the pitcher wins the trick. The 1st player takes all played cards and discards the Pitcher card.

Example of Play - Pitcher Not Filled



Starting player
Leads Stone card

2nd player

3rd player

4th player

- 1) Player leads with a green Stone card. All green cards that are under the Pitcher card value are added up. The trick total is 9.
- 2) The green 10 DOES NOT count because it is equal to or more than the Pitcher card.
- 3) The Thirst (black) 3 DOES NOT count because it does not match the lead card color.
- 4) Since the trick total is LESS than the value of the Pitcher card, the lowest card matching the lead card color wins the trick. The 4th player takes all played cards AND the Pitcher card.

Scoring Example



-2



+1



-1



+3

= 1 point.



Art Design: Sean D. MacDonald & Phil Kilcrease
Based on the fable "The Crow and the Pitcher" by Aesop
Contact: phil@5thstreetgames.com