

Notes Concerning *Rat-a-Tat-Cat*

Level: Intermediate/advanced

Recommended # of players: 2-4

Materials: *Deck of Rat-a-Tat-Cat** cards (see notes)

Relationships: More and less; numeral recognition; memory; addition of 4 numbers 1-9

Notes:

This delightful game is both challenging and enjoyable. The whimsical artwork on the cards depicts cats (the low numbers) and rats (the high numbers). The lowest card, zero, is the Statue of (Cat) Liberty, while the highest card, nine, is the King Rat. Children try to collect 4 cards that add up to the lowest sum.

When children first play this game, they tend to think of numbers categorically: the cat cards are good and the rat cards are bad. As they gain experience with the cards, they begin to distinguish between less good and less bad. For example, a child who consistently fails to replace a 4 with a 3 because they are both cats (and therefore in the child's eyes equally good) will, with experience, come to figure out that 3 is a lower number than 4 and therefore better.

This game can also be played with a standard deck of cards, but we have found that the colorful rat and cat cards are much more attractive to children and motivate them to play. Because the cat and rat cards have numerals only on them (and not a set of objects), these cards aid in numeral recognition.

Children have the opportunity to exercise their memory when they try to remember what cards they have (if they are playing one of the versions that allow limited or no peeking). They also learn that when another player takes a low card from the DISCARD pile, it is wise to remember where the player placed it, so that if they get a chance to take it (by drawing a SWAP card), they will know which card to swap.

Perspective taking is promoted in this game as children learn how to hide their cards from the other players and to control their reactions to cards, in order not to draw attention to low cards that could be taken by another player (when a SWAP card is drawn).

Included on this CD are 4 versions of the game. The versions range in difficulty from the Ultra-Peek version (the easiest, and usually used only briefly for learning how to play the game) to the Peek version (slightly harder), to the Outside Peek version (slightly harder still), to the standard rules (the hardest). By playing with the children, teachers can usually determine which version is most appropriate. Preschoolers tend to prefer the Peek version.

The Ultra-Peek version requires that all of the POWER cards be removed from the deck. For the Peek version, just the PEEK cards are removed. However, if children have difficulty using the POWER cards, all of them can be removed.

For children who are unable to add 4 numbers together, unifix cubes or some other stacking objects can be used to determine scores. Children place the correct number of cubes on each card, then snap all of their cubes into a line. The player with the shortest line is the winner. Older children can play a series of several rounds, adding up their cumulative scores to determine the winner.

* *Rat-a-Tat-Cat* is made by Gamewright (www.gamewright.com)