

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).

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

Rat-a-Tat-Cat (Ultra-Peek Version)

2-4 players

Materials: One deck of *Rat-a-Tat-Cat* cards (remove the POWER cards)

Objective: To have the lowest score at the end of the game.

To play:

1. Players decide who will be dealer. The dealer shuffles the cards and deals four cards, face down, to each player.
2. Dealer places the rest of the deck, face down, in the middle. This is the DRAW pile. Dealer turns the top card face up and places it to the side of the DRAW pile. This is the DISCARD pile.
3. Players arrange their four cards face up in a line in front of them.
4. Players decide who goes first.
5. Players take turns. For each turn players have two choices. They may:
 - Take the top card from the DISCARD pile. This card is used to replace one of the cards in their line of cards. The card from the line is then placed face up on the top of the DISCARD pile; or
 - Take the top card from the DRAW pile. Players may use it to replace one of the cards in their line, or place it, face up, on the DISCARD pile.
6. When a player thinks he or she has the lowest score and can win, the player ends the game by saying, "Rat-a Tat-Cat". After this, the other players each get one more turn. Then players turn their cards face up.
7. **SCORING:** Players add the numbers on their four cards. The player with the lowest score wins.

Rat-a-Tat-Cat (Peek Version)

(2-4 players)

Materials: Deck of *Rat-a-Tat-Cat* cards (remove PEEK cards)

Objective: To have the lowest score at the end of the game

To play:

1. Players decide who will be dealer. The dealer shuffles the cards and deals four cards, face down, to each player. Players do not look at their cards.
2. Dealer places the rest of the deck, face down, in the middle. This is the DRAW pile. Dealer turns the top card face up and places it to the side of the DRAW pile. This is the DISCARD pile.
3. Players arrange their four cards face down in a line in front of them. Players can look at their cards whenever they want to remember what cards they have.
4. Players decide who goes first.
5. Players take turns. For each turn players have two choices. They may:
 - Take the top card from the DISCARD pile. This card is used to replace one of the cards in their line of cards. The card from the line is then placed face up on the top of the DISCARD pile; or
 - Take the top card from the DRAW pile. Players may use it to replace one of the cards in their line, or place it, face up, on the DISCARD pile.
6. There are two kinds of POWER cards: SWAP and DRAW 2. Players may only use a POWER card when they take it from the DRAW pile.
 - If players draw a SWAP card, they may switch any one of their cards with any card from another player. They can look at their card being swapped but they cannot look at the other player's card. After the switch, the turn is over and the SWAP card is placed on the DISCARD pile.
 - If players draw a DRAW 2 card, they may take up to two more turns. First they pick the next card from the DRAW pile. If they decide to use this card, their turn is over and they do not take the second turn. If they do not use the first card, they discard it and draw another card. If they do not use it, they place it on the DISCARD pile and their turn is over.
7. When a player thinks he or she has the lowest score and can win, the player ends the game by saying, "Rat-a Tat-Cat". After this, the other players each get one more turn. Then players turn their cards face up. If players have a POWER card, they must put it in the DISCARD pile and take a new card from the DRAW pile (the top card on the pile).
8. **SCORING:** Players add the numbers on their four cards. The player with the lowest score wins.

Rat-a-Tat-Cat (Standard Rules)

(2-4 players)

Materials: Deck of *Rat-a-Tat-Cat* cards

Objective: To have the lowest score at the end of the game

To play:

1. Players decide who will be dealer. The dealer shuffles the cards and deals four cards, face down, to each player. Players do not look at their cards.
2. Dealer places the rest of the deck, face down, in the middle. This is the DRAW pile. Dealer turns the top card face up and places it to the side of the DRAW pile. This is the DISCARD pile.
3. Players arrange their four cards face down in a line in front of them. Players look at their two outside cards, and then turn them face down. This is the last time players can look at their cards, unless they draw a PEEK card.
4. Players decide who goes first.
5. Players take turns. For each turn players have two choices. They may:
 - Take the top card from the DISCARD pile. This card is used to replace one of the cards in their line of cards. The card from the line is then placed face up on the top of the DISCARD pile; or
 - Take the top card from the DRAW pile. Players may use it to replace one of the cards in their line, or place it, face up, on the DISCARD pile.
6. There are three kinds of POWER cards: SWAP, DRAW 2, and PEEK. Players may only use a POWER card when they take it from the DRAW pile.
 - If players draw a PEEK card, they can peek at any ONE of their cards. Their turn is over and they put the PEEK card on the DISCARD pile.
 - If players draw a SWAP card, they may switch any one of their cards with any card from another player. They cannot look at the card being swapped or the other player's card. After the switch, the turn is over and the SWAP card is placed on the DISCARD pile.
 - If players draw a DRAW 2 card, they may take up to two more turns. First they pick the next card from the DRAW pile. If they decide to use this card, their turn is over and they do not take the second turn. If they do not use the first card, they discard it and draw another card. If they do not use it, they place it on the DISCARD pile and their turn is over.
7. When a player thinks he or she has the lowest score and can win, the player ends the game by saying, "Rat-a Tat-Cat". After this, the other players each get one more turn. Then players turn their cards face up. If players have a POWER card, they must put it in the DISCARD pile and take a new card from the DRAW pile (the top card on the pile).
8. **SCORING:** Players add the numbers on their four cards. The player with the lowest score wins.
9. If players want to, they can record their scores and play several games. After each game, they add their score to their previous score. At the end of several games, the player with the lowest score wins.