

Catenate 1. to connect, in a series of links or ties; to chain. 2. A card resource management and trick-taking game with the goal of creating sequences of cards. © Jay Schindler, 2022

BACKGROUND: I wanted to develop a card game that:

1. Focuses less on taking tricks, and more on using cards as resources
2. Doesn't have low and high value cards: each card is equally powerful yet limited
3. Can be played by 3 to 8 people with one or two decks of normal playing cards
4. Allows players to spend points to try to gain higher initiative when trading cards.
5. Is a quick game, so it can be played many times at a sitting with scores accumulating over multiple games.

GAME SUMMARY: For 3 rounds players are given 4 cards and must decide which card to put in their RESERVE, which card to put up for AUCTION, which card to use for TRADE, and which card to save for their FUTURE. They may then spend points to try to gain initiative while trading for cards. Card trading ensues. For the 4th and final round players use their FUTURE cards. Finally, players score their 13 cards by creating short and long sequences of cards to score the most points.

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND-- END OF GAME SCORING: By the end of the game players will have 13 cards. The goal is to create one or more numerical sequences of cards (concatenations) that score the most points. However, card suit (and suit color) is important too. There are 3 types of sequences:

Sequence in Same Suit: **3♥ 4♥ 5♥ 6♥ 7♥**

Sequence in Same Color: **10♣ J♠ Q♣ K♣ A♣ 2♠**

Sequence (no suit or color similarity): **K♠ A♥ 2♣ 3♦ 4♦ 5♠ 6♣**

The LENGTH of each sequence determines its value, but a sequence in the Same Color or Same Suit is more valuable. Note: Sequences can wrap from King to Ace-- there is a circular order to the cards.

Point Value of Sequences:

| # of Cards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sequence (plain) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 21 | 24 | 27 | 40 | 44 | 48 | 65 |
| Sequence in color | 1 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 15 | 21 | 28 | 36 | 45 | 55 | 66 | 78 | 91 |
| Sequence in suit | 1 | 4 | 9 | 16 | 25 | 36 | 49 | 64 | 81 | 100 | 121 | 144 | 169 |

Scoring Examples: If you have the following 13 cards at the end of game play:

J♠ Q♦ Q♣ A♠ 2♠ 3♥ 4♥ 4♦ 5♥ 6♥ 6♦ 7♦ 8♦

You could score the cards with the following sequences, for a total of 30 points.

A♠ 2♠ 3♥ 4♥ 5♥ 6♥ 7♦ 8♦ for 24 points (Sequence)

J♠ Q♣ for 3 points (Sequence in color)

Q♦ 4♦ 6♦ for 1 point each (Single cards as sequences)

Or, you could score the same 13 cards in different sequences, for a total of 34 points

A♠ 2♠ for 4 points (Sequence in suit)

3♥ 4♥ 5♥ 6♥ for 16 points (Sequence in suit)

6♦ 7♦ 8♦ for 9 points (Sequence in suit)

J♠ Q♣ for 3 points (Sequence in color)

Q♦ 4♦ for 1 point each (Single cards as sequences)

You can decide how to create your sequences, and each sequence can be scored using the most appropriate scale. (For your Final Score, you will also add the number of coins in your cup at game end-- but more on this later).

INITIAL GAME SETUP: Use one full suit of 13 cards (A through K) for each player in the game. With 3 players you might select spades, hearts, and clubs. For 5 players you would use 2 decks and could choose spades, hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades. Try to keep suits and suit colors as balanced as possible, and let players know what all the suits are in the game deck before beginning the game.

Choose the first dealer any way you like. The dealer shuffles all the cards and deals one card face down to each player-- a GIFT card. Players must then choose the role for the card: RESERVE, TRADE, or AUCTION, and position the card. (See the discussion of these card roles and positions below.)

DEAL CARDS TO PLAYERS: The dealer deals 4 cards to each player, 2 at a time. Each player must deploy exactly one card into each of the 4 following roles. Position the cards in front of themselves on the table or playing area according to the following layout:

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------|---------|
| | AUCTION CARD(S) | |
| PLAYER: | RESERVE | FUTURE |
| LAYOUT | CARD(S) | CARD(S) |
| | TRADE CARD(S) | |

RESERVE CARD ROLE: One card is placed face down to the left. This card is your resource alone and will be yours until the end of the game. Use it to help create a valuable sequence at game end. Keep it face down until scoring at game end.

TRADE CARD ROLE: One card is placed face down near you. You will use this card to trade for (and win) a card available for auction. It starts as a hidden card, but will be turned face up later.

AUCTION CARD ROLE: One card is placed face down further away from you. You are offering this card up for auction in trade for another card. You may get a more helpful card during trading. It will be turned face up later.

FUTURE CARD ROLE: One card is placed face down to your right. This card will be yours to use in the last round-- the future 4th round of the game. You will have 3 cards in this position by then.

Once all players have placed all their cards, players turn their AUCTION and TRADE cards face up. Now it's time for the Dance of the Cups to determine player initiative for the upcoming trade action.

DANCE OF THE CUPS: DECIDING PLAYER INITIATIVE FOR TRADE

INITIAL SETUP: In the center of the table or game area, place a paper with a large arrow printed on it. On the arrow, line up a sequence of opaque cups (or goblets), each cup marked to identify its owner. (I use miniature plastic cups which each person has decorated with stickers of their own choosing.) Cups are mixed randomly before placing them in the line. Then, starting with the first cup at the head of the arrow, and working down to the last cup, put coins (e.g., dimes) in each cup as follows: Cup 1: 1 coin, Cup 2: 2 coins, Cup 3: 3 coins, Cup 4: 4 coins, etc., until all cups have coins in them.

DANCING THE CUPS: Place a marker next to the first cup. (I use a small miniature of a knight.) The owner of that cup may (or not) spend 1 or more coins to move along the line—one position for each coin they spend from their cup. For each position they move, they must put one coin into the cup they pass. Thus, they share their wealth to change position (and initiative). Going earlier or later in order can be strategic! Players are limited how far they can move based on the number of coins in their cup (e.g., if a cup has 2 coins in it, that player may move at most 2 spaces up or down the line of cups).

Once the person owning the first cup is done moving their cup, move the marker (knight) down to the 2nd cup in the line. The owner of the 2nd cup may also move their cup up or down the line of cups by spending one coin per position. Move the marker (knight) to the 3rd cup. That cup's owner may now move and spend coins in the same manner. This process continues down the cup positions to the end of the line. As a result, the first may be last, and the last may be first.

TRADE: Starting with the player who owns the first cup (highest initiative), and moving down the line of cups to the player with the last cup (lowest initiative), each player may now make 1 Trade.

On each player's turn, the player takes 1 of the cards in their TRADE area and trades it with a card in one player's AUCTION area. The player can also choose not to trade and keep their cards as is. The player can also choose to trade their own TRADE card with a card in their own AUCTION area.

When trading, the cards traded go into each player's hands. Each player (the trader and recipient) now decides WHERE to put the traded card: into their RESERVE, AUCTION, or TRADE area.

WINNING A CARD DURING TRADE: Cards have a cyclical order to determine which card can successfully take another card during trading. Each card can take (or win) another card of the same value or a value up to 6 positions less than its own. In other words:

| | | | | | |
|------|-----------|----------------------|-----|-----------|----------------------|
| An A | can take: | A, K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8 | A 7 | can take: | 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, A |
| A K | can take: | K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7 | A 6 | can take: | 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, A, K |
| A Q | can take: | Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6 | A 5 | can take: | 5, 4, 3, 2, A, K, Q |
| A J | can take: | J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5 | A 4 | can take: | 4, 3, 2, A, K, Q, J |
| A 10 | can take: | 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 | A 3 | can take: | 3, 2, A, K, Q, J, 10 |
| A 9 | can take: | 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3 | A 2 | can take: | 2, A, K, Q, J, 10, 9 |
| An 8 | can take: | 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 | | | |

It might help to remember (and display) the following card pair guides when conducting trading:

A \ 8 K \ 7 Q \ 6 J \ 5 10 \ 4 9 \ 3 8 \ 2 7 \ A 6 \ K 5 \ Q 4 \ J 3 \ 10 2 \ 9

Once every player has made a trade (or chose not to), the round is over. The cups stay where they ended, and the next round begins with dealing out 4 more cards to each player. This happens for 2 additional rounds.

THE LAST ROUND: After 3 rounds of dealing 4 cards out to each player, there should be no cards left to deal! (Remember, you gave each player 1 Gift card at the beginning of the game.) For the last round (4th), pick up and play your 3 FUTURE cards. Place one card into each of your RESERVE, TRADE, and AUCTION areas (and none into the FUTURE area). Play out the remainder of this last round as usual.

END OF GAME: Pick up the cards from your RESERVE, any AUCTION cards remaining before you, and all TRADE cards you still have. There should be 13 cards in total. Using the Scoring Guide provided earlier, create sequences for scoring. Add the points from all of your sequences. To that total, add the number of coins in your player's cup to create your Final Score! The player with the highest Final Score wins the game. If there is a tie, the person with the longest sequence of any kind wins. If there is still a tie, the tied players share the victory. If the players decided to play multiple games before totalling the score, proceed on to the next game.

OPTIONAL RULES FOR PLAY: (I'm working on these.)

1. Add in the Joker cards, and add a Joker automa player to increase trading options and create longer sequences.
2. Allow team play. Allow table talk. When scoring, let team players combine cards and choose their best 13 cards.
3. Allow trade negotiations and contracts between players for more complex card trading.

FEEDBACK?: Have any suggestions or feedback? Do you want my rules to the Optional Rules for Play? Please contact me (Jay Schindler) at jayvs2@comcast.net. This game is still a work in progress!