

Winter Court

Royal Intrigue for Two Courtiers

Winter, in medieval times, was for diplomacy, when courts were confined by weather to single castles.

Contents

8 court tiles, depicting 12 characters labeled A-L

60 cards: 6 suits (Lands, Might, Wealth, Knowledge, Devotion, Wit), of 10 cards, ranked 1-10

12 pawns (4 purple royals, 8 other court members)

2 summary tiles

Setup

Place the court tiles in a row, in order A-L, between the two players. Put a pawn on top of each court tile, with the 4 purple royal pawns on tiles A-D.

The A-D royal tiles are two-sided. Use whichever side of each that you prefer.

Choose a player to go first. Shuffle the cards. Deal 5 cards to the first player and 6 cards to the second player. The remaining cards form the draw pile.

Overview

Two opposing courtiers try to sway members of a court to their side. The four royals have higher status (5), but the other court members have special powers that can be used to influence them. If a courtier ever controls all four royals at the same time, they instantly win! Otherwise, the courtier with the most status (5) at the end of winter (when the draw pile runs out) wins.

Each court member is represented by a pawn, which is either *unclaimed*, on its court tile between the players, or *controlled* by a player, on that player's side. To shift a pawn one position towards you, play a card of a suit matching the color(s) of its court tile that is of higher rank than any card currently influencing that court member.

Your card remains, indicating your *influence*, until a player later plays a card of higher rank to influence this court member, discarding your card. As the game progresses, more and more influence will be established, creating diplomatic "terrain" that players must navigate.

Turns

Players alternate turns. On your turn, play 1 card or pass (make no play).

At any time during this step, you may return one or more non-royal pawns — that you controlled at the start of your turn — to their court tiles to use their powers.

Then, you may draw 1 card.

If you pass, you *must* draw, but may (instead of drawing 1 card) draw 2 cards together, look at them, and then discard 1 of them.

There is no hand limit. Players' hands may increase or decrease during play.

Playing a Card

Place it on your side of one of the three court tiles whose suit it matches.

Example: A Lands 2 (Lands suit) can be played on the Ruler, Steward, or Matchmaker.

If a previously played card exists on either side of the court member's tile, then the rank of the card played must exceed the rank of the card already present, which is then discarded.

If the court member can be influenced by two suits, then a card of either suit can be played, regardless of the suit of a card already present (see example at right).

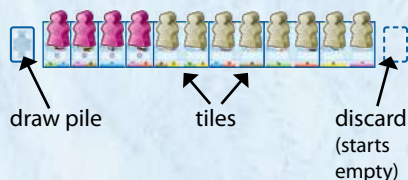
Shift the court member's pawn one position towards you. Take control of it, if it was unclaimed, or place it on its court tile, if your opponent controlled it.

Boosting a Card

You may play one or more rank 1, 2, or 3 cards of the same suit as the card being played to temporarily increase its rank. Discard any boosting cards after the play. You may not boost a previously played card. 1s, 2s, and 3s have * after their ranks as a reminder of this alternative use for them.

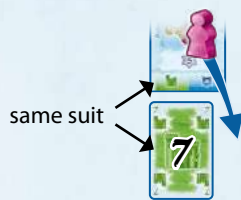
Example: Anne plays Wealth 5, boosted by Wealth 1 and 2 — a total of 8 — to shift the Steward (currently controlled by Lands 7) back to its court tile. Anne then discards Wealth 1 and 2 (and the previously played Lands 7), leaving Wealth 5 in play.

The suits represent spheres of courtly life:



The 4 royals each provide 2-5 status.

The other 8 court members are worth only 1 status at game end but have special powers. To use their special powers, you must give up control of them (losing their status).



Most turns are: play 1 card; draw 1 card.

Players may pass either for draw selection or, if ahead, to speed up the game.

If behind, a player can play 1 card and draw 0 cards to slow down the game (in order to play cards from their hand before it ends).

A player cannot pass and draw 0 cards; they must do something. A player with no cards to play must pass and then draw.



- Anne plays Lands 2 to claim the Steward.
- Bob plays Wealth 6 (the other suit that influences the Steward), shifts the Steward pawn back to its court tile, and discards Anne's previously played Lands 2.
- Bob later plays Lands 7 to claim the Steward, discarding his previously played Wealth 6.

Powers

Each non-royal court member has a power. To use it, you must control the court member at the *start* of your turn and then return its pawn to its court tile. Do *not* discard the card influencing them; it stays, making it harder to claim them.

Four powers produce effects directly:



- **Wizard.** Make a second play (anywhere; after resolving your first play).
- **Steward.** Draw 2 cards (your end-of-turn draw is *in addition* to this).

Example: Bob takes control of the Steward. On his next turn, Bob returns its pawn to its court card to draw 2 cards before making a play. After doing so, Bob draws 1 card.

- **Sage.** Examine the discard pile (which begins empty), take any card from it, show it to your opponent, and put it in your hand.
- **Charlatan.** Discard the card influencing an unclaimed court member (one whose pawn is on its court tile).

Example: Anne returns the Charlatan to its court tile to discard the previously played Lands 10 that shifted the Ruler to its tile. Anne then plays Might 9 to claim the Ruler.

Four powers modify a play as you make it:

- **Knight.** Add a Might () card to your play.
- **Lover.** Add a Devotion () card to your play.
- **Matchmaker.** When playing to a court member that can be influenced by *two* suits, add a card of *the other* suit to your play.
- **Fool.** Play a card of an influencing suit but *lower* rank than the card currently influencing a court member to influence that court member.

Example: Anne controls the Consort with Knowledge 9. Bob returns the Fool's pawn and plays Wit 2 (the Consort's other influencing suit) to shift its pawn back to its court tile, discarding Knowledge 9. Bob then returns the Wizard's pawn to make another play: Wit 10 to take control of the Consort (discarding Wit 2).

Adding a Card to a Play


When you use a power to *add* a card, you play it with a card play, adding its rank to the played card's rank, and then leave it in play. The card played and the added card(s) are now considered *one* card, whose rank is the sum of their ranks (and may exceed 10), for all purposes until they are discarded.

Example: Bob controls the Consort with Wit 10. Anne, who controls the Matchmaker, plays Knowledge 4, boosted by Knowledge 1, and returns the Matchmaker's pawn to add Wit 4 (the Consort's other influencing suit), boosted by Wit 2, for 11 total influence (4+1 and 4+2) on the Consort.

11 influence exceeds Bob's 10 influence, so Anne shifts the Consort's pawn back to its court tile and discards both boost cards (Knowledge 1 and Wit 2), along with Bob's Wit 10, keeping Knowledge 4 and Wit 4 as one combined card in play with 8 influence (their total ranks) on the now unclaimed Consort.

Game End

The game ends *immediately* if a player ever controls all four royals (purple pawns) at once, instantly winning, or when the last card in the draw pile is drawn (do not reshuffle discards).

If the draw pile runs out, total the status () of all court members each player controls. The player with the most status wins.

If tied, the player who controls the court member closest to the ruler, with the earliest letter alphabetically (A, then B, ...) wins.

(very rare) If neither player controls any court members, the result is a draw.

Etiquette

The draw pile may be counted (to see how many cards remain in it near the end of the game). The discard pile is open for examination. If asked, you must state how many cards you have.

Credits

Design and rules: **Tom Lehmann**

Illustrations and Layout: **Harald Lieske**

Playtesting and Advice

Brian Bankler, Richard Breese, Stefan Brück, Bernd Brunnhofer, Chris Esko, Aaron Fuegi, Trisha and Wei-Hwa Huang, Douglas and Wendy Kaufman, Matt Leacock, Bernhard Petschina, and Steve Thomas.



Wizard
make 2 plays



Steward
draw 2 cards



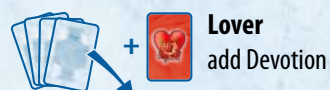
Sage
take a discard



Charlatan
remove influence
from unclaimed



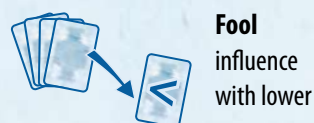
Knight
add Might



Lover
add Devotion



Matchmaker
add *other* suit

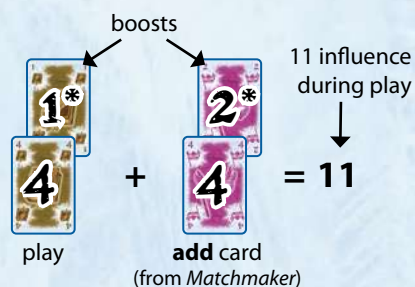


Fool
influence
with lower

You cannot add to a previously played card.

By using several powers, you can add several cards to one play.

Add cards, unlike boost cards, can be of any rank. They can be boosted.



8 influence
left after play

A player who controls a court member may play on it (discarding their previous influence) to strengthen the amount by which they hold it.

If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please write to us at:

**Rio Grande Games, PO Box 1033,
Placitas, NM 87043, USA**

RioGames@aol.com

www.riograndegames.com