SOFTWARE & TECH

Rat A Tat Cat Game

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Introduction to the Rat A Tat Cat Game

Looking for a fast-paced, memory-based card game that combines strategy, laughter, and a dash of mischief? The **Rat A Tat Cat game** is exactly what you need. Designed by Gamewright and often described as a “game of memory, odds, and bluffing,” this modern classic has become a staple for family game nights, parties, and even casual classroom fun. In this comprehensive guide, we’ll explore everything from basic rules and winning strategies to the best variations and tips for making your **Rat A Tat Cat game** sessions unforgettable. Whether you’re a complete beginner or a seasoned player, you’ll find valuable insights that will help you master the art of the “rat” and the “tat.”

What Is the Rat A Tat Cat Game?

At its core, the **Rat A Tat Cat game** is a card game for 2 to 6 players, ages 6 and up. Each game lasts about 15 to 20 minutes, making it an ideal filler or a quick competitive break. The deck consists of 4 types of cards: numbers (0 through 9), “Rat” cards (which force you to draw extra cards), “Tat” cards (which allow you to peek at opponents’ cards), and special “Cat” cards (which let you steal cards). The ultimate objective is to have the lowest total score when one player yells “Rat a tat cat!” But there’s a twist: you never know exactly what cards you or your opponents hold, because most cards remain hidden throughout the game.

The Unique Memory Mechanic

What sets the **Rat A Tat Cat game** apart from other casual card games is its emphasis on memory. Players arrange their cards in a row in front of them, but only the two end cards are face-up. All middle cards remain face-down. As the game progresses, you may use “Tat” cards to peek at your own or an opponent’s hidden cards, or “Cat” cards to swap a face-down card with an opponent’s. The challenge is to remember everyone’s positions while also bluffing and planning your moves. This mechanic makes each round feel fresh and mentally engaging, even for younger players.

How to Play the Rat A Tat Cat Game – Step-by-Step Rules

Learning to play the **Rat A Tat Cat game** is straightforward, but mastering it requires practice. Below is a clear set of rules to get you started.

Setup

1. Shuffle the deck of 54 cards (40 number cards, 4 Rats, 4 Tats, 4 Cats, and 2 special “Power” cards).
2. Deal 4 cards to each player. Players place their cards in a row, face down, in front of them. Only the two outermost cards are turned face-up. The two middle cards remain face-down.
3. Place the remaining deck in the center as a draw pile.
4. The youngest player goes first, and play proceeds clockwise.

Gameplay

On your turn, you have two choices: **draw from the pile** or **draw from the discard pile**. After drawing, you must discard one card from your hand (not from your row) onto the discard pile. However, the real action comes from the special cards you may draw or already hold.

- Number cards (0–9): These simply stay in your hand until you decide to play them into your row (replacing one of your four cards) or discard them. Playing a number card into your row will affect your total score.
- Rat cards: When you draw a Rat, you must immediately place it in your discard pile and then draw two more cards. This can ruin your strategy, but sometimes a Rat can be used to your advantage if you are low on points.
- Tat cards: A Tat allows you to look at one of your own face-down cards or one opponent's face-down card. This is crucial for memory.
- Cat cards: A Cat lets you steal a face-up card from an opponent's row and add it to your own row, replacing one of your cards.

Ending the Game

The game ends immediately when any player yells "Rat a tat cat!" after completing their turn. That player must have the lowest total score among all players. To calculate your score, flip all your face-down cards face-up and add up the numbers. The player with the lowest total wins. But be careful—if someone yells prematurely and does not actually have the lowest score, they are penalized by adding 10 points to their total.

Strategies to Win at the Rat A Tat Cat Game

While luck plays a role, a good memory and smart bluffing can turn the odds in your favor. Here are some proven strategies for dominating your next **Rat A Tat Cat game** session.

1. Memorize Everything You Can

Use your Tat cards wisely. Peek at your own face-down cards early to know your starting position. Then focus on opponents' cards. The more you remember, the better you can predict when to call "Rat a tat cat." Some players even use a mnemonic system, like associating a number with a player's color or seating position.

2. Keep Your End Cards Low

Since your two end cards are visible, try to keep them as low as possible (preferably zeros and ones). This discourages opponents from stealing them with a Cat card. If you have high numbers on the ends, consider swapping them with lower cards from your hand.

3. Bluff by Discarding High Cards?

An interesting tactic is to discard a high number card (like a 8 or 9) into the discard pile loudly, as if you are bragging. This may make opponents think you have a high total, causing them to delay calling "Rat a tat cat." Meanwhile, your hidden cards might be all zeros. Bluffing works best when combined with a neutral expression.

4. Use Cats to Sabotage the Leader

If you suspect a player has very low cards, use a Cat card to steal one of their visible low cards. This can disrupt their score and give you a better chance to win. However, Cats are rare, so use them strategically.

5. Know When to Call

Calling early is risky, but if you have a strong memory and know your total is exceptionally low (e.g., 2 or 3), go for it. But if the game is still early and many face-down cards remain unknown, wait. The perfect moment is when you are confident that your total is lower than everyone else's.

Popular Variations of the Rat A Tat Cat Game

Rat A Tat Cat game fresh, many players introduce house rules or official variants. Below are some popular twists.

“Pyramid” Style

Instead of a row of 4, players arrange cards in a pyramid: 3 cards on the bottom row (all face-up) and 2 on top (face-down). This changes the dynamics of peeking and stealing. The scoring remains the same, but it adds a layer of complexity.

“Team Rat A Tat Cat”

For larger groups, players can team up in pairs. Each team shares a memory of their combined cards. This cooperative version is great for kids and encourages communication. The winning team is the one with the lowest combined total when a player calls.

“No Peeking” Challenge

For a true memory test, remove all Tat cards from the deck. Now you can never peek at face-down cards. This variant forces players to rely on deduction and recall of which cards have been played or swapped. It’s much harder but highly rewarding.

“Speed Round”

Set a timer for 10 minutes. If no one calls “Rat a tat cat” by then, the player with the lowest total automatically wins. This speeds up the game and prevents overly cautious play.

Why the Rat A Tat Cat Game Is Perfect for All Ages

The **Rat A Tat Cat game** is often recommended for ages 6 and up, but it entertains adults just as much. Here’s why it appeals to such a wide audience.

Simple Rules, Deep Gameplay

Children can grasp the basic mechanics in minutes, yet the memory and bluffing aspects provide enough depth to keep adults engaged. The game’s short duration also makes it ideal for quick breaks or as a warm-up for longer board games.

Encourages Memory and Math Skills

For younger players, the game subtly reinforces addition (scoring), spatial memory (remembering card positions), and probability (which numbers are likely to remain). Parents and educators often praise the **Rat A Tat Cat game** as an “educational” fun activity.

High Replayability

Every game is different due to shuffling and player decisions. No two rounds feel identical. The tension of not knowing your own cards combined with the possibility of a sudden call keeps everyone on edge.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Even experienced players fall into traps. Here are pitfalls to watch out for in the **Rat A Tat Cat game**.

- Calling too early: You might think you have the lowest total, but an opponent could have a hidden zero. Always double-check your memory.
- Ignoring the discard pile: The discard pile offers valuable information. If you see a 9 or 8 being discarded, that player might be trying to lower their hand.
- Overusing Cat cards: Stealing a high card from an opponent may seem beneficial, but you might end up with a high score yourself. Sometimes it’s better to use a Cat to swap a low card you have with an opponent’s hidden card (if you suspect it’s high).
- Forgetting to track swaps: When you use a Cat card to swap two face-down cards, remember where the

cards are now. Many players lose track and misjudge totals.

Frequently Asked Questions About the Rat A Tat Cat Game

Is the Rat A Tat Cat game out of print?

As of 2025, Gamewright still produces the game, and it is widely available online and in toy stores. There have been multiple editions, including a “30th Anniversary” version. Check major retailers or the publisher’s website for availability.

Can you play with more than 6 players?

Officially, the game supports up to 6, but with two decks, you can accommodate more. Just ensure each player gets 4 cards and the deck is shuffled together. The game may take longer, but it works.

What is the lowest possible score?

Since number cards go from 0 to 9, the lowest possible total for a 4-card hand is 0 (all zeros). But with the special cards (Rats, Tats, Cats) not having numbers, the practical lowest is 0 if you manage to collect four zeros.

Conclusion: Why You Should Add Rat A Tat Cat to Your Collection

The **Rat A Tat Cat game** is more than just a memory card game—it’s a laughter-filled experience that challenges your brain and your poker face. Its simple rules make it accessible to young children, while the strategic depth keeps adults coming back for more. Whether you play the classic version or try out new variations, each round is a fresh adventure of bluffing, remembering, and calculating. If you haven’t yet added this gem to your game shelf, now is the perfect time. Gather your family, prepare your best memory tricks, and get ready to shout “Rat a tat cat!” at just the right moment. Happy gaming!

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