

SKYJO Rules

Complete Official Rules — Free Printable Guide

www.skyjo.info

2-8

Players

8+

Age

15-45

Min / Game

150

Cards

Objective

The goal of SKYJO is to have the lowest total score when any player reaches 100 points or more after a round. Low-numbered cards are good; high-numbered cards are bad. Negative cards (-2, -1) are excellent and help reduce your score.

Card Values & Distribution

Card Value	Count	Significance
-2	5	Best card in the game — greatly reduces your score
-1	10	Excellent for lowering your total
0	15	Good — adds nothing to your score
1 to 9	10 each	Neutral — replace with lower cards when possible
10 to 12	10 each	Very costly — replace immediately when possible

Setup

1. Shuffle all 150 cards thoroughly.
2. Deal 12 cards face-down to each player.
3. Each player arranges their 12 cards in a 4-column × 3-row grid without looking at the card values.
4. Each player flips any 2 cards in their grid face-up. The remaining 10 cards stay face-down.
5. Place one card face-up in the center to start the discard pile. The remaining cards form the draw pile.
6. The player with the highest sum of their two face-up cards goes first. If tied, the oldest player starts.

12-Card Grid (4 Columns × 3 Rows)



■ = Face-up (2 initially)

■ = Face-down (10 initially)

On Your Turn

On your turn, you must choose one of the following two actions:

Option A: Draw from the Draw Pile

Draw the top card from the draw pile and look at it (do not show it to other players). You then have two choices:

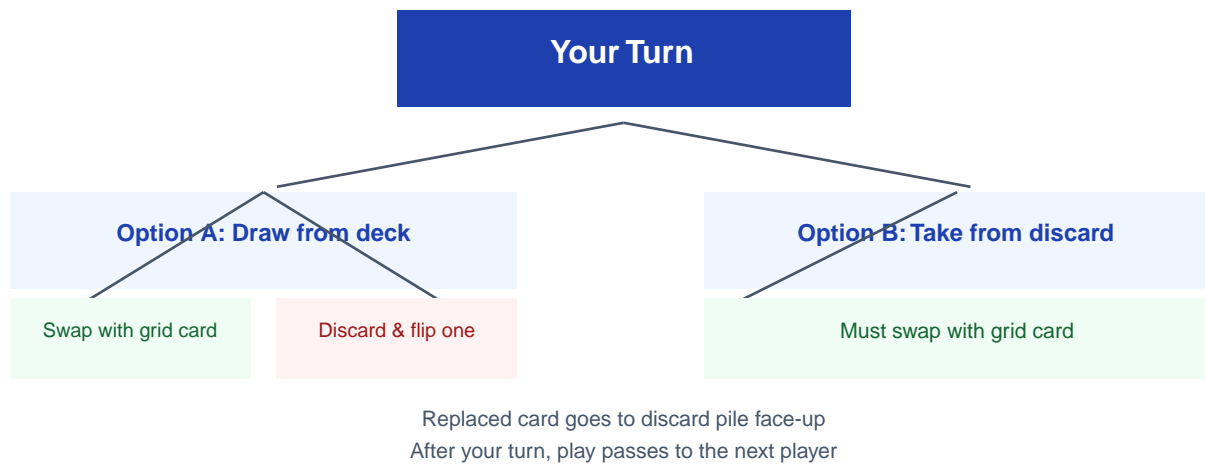
- Swap: Exchange the drawn card with any card in your grid (face-up or face-down). Place the replaced card face-up on the discard pile.
- Discard: If you do not want the drawn card, discard it face-up and then flip any one face-down card in your grid face-up.

Option B: Take from the Discard Pile

Take the top card from the discard pile (this card is visible to everyone). You must swap it with any card in your grid. The replaced card goes to the discard pile face-up. You cannot discard the card you just took — it must be used.

Strategic Tip:

Taking from the discard pile gives your opponents information about what card you took. Drawing from the deck keeps your new card secret, but you risk getting a high-value card that you may need to discard.

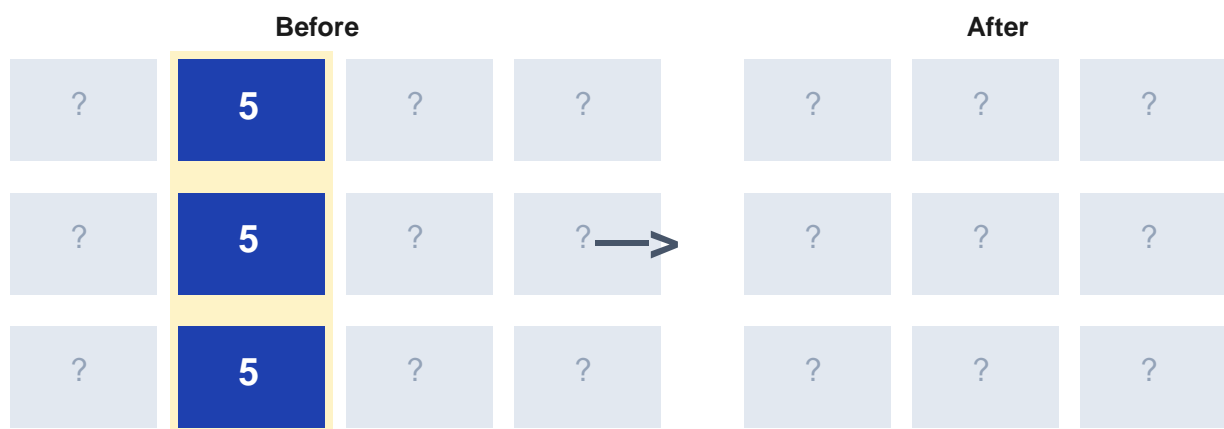


The Column Rule — Key Mechanic

If you ever complete a vertical column of 3 identical cards (same number, same column only), that entire column is immediately removed from your grid and placed on the discard pile. Those three cards score zero points at the end of the round. This is the most powerful move in SKYJO and a key strategy for winning.

Important:

A column must be exactly 3 cards in a vertical line. Horizontal rows or diagonal matches do not count. The match must be by number, not color.



Column with 3 identical cards is removed and scores 0 points

Ending a Round

A round ends when one player flips over their last face-down card (their entire grid is revealed). All other players then get one final turn each. After that:

1. Everyone flips all remaining face-down cards face-up.
2. If any columns of 3 identical cards exist after flipping, those columns are removed (scoring zero).
3. Each player sums the values of all remaining cards in their grid to get their round score.

Doubling Penalty:

If the player who ended the round (by flipping their last card) does not have the strictly lowest score that round, their round score is doubled. You must have the uniquely lowest score to avoid the penalty — a tie for lowest still triggers doubling. This penalty applies only to the current round score, not the cumulative game total.

Scoring & Winning the Game

After each round, add each player's round score to their cumulative game total. The game ends when any player reaches 100 points or more after a round is complete. The player with the lowest total score wins the game.

If two or more players tie for the lowest total score, they share the victory. There is no tiebreaker in the official SKYJO rules.

2-Player Rules

SKYJO plays excellently with 2 players using the standard rules above. Here are some tips and variations specific to 2-player games:

- Same setup: Each player gets 12 cards in a 4x3 grid. Flip 2 cards to start, same as usual.
- Faster pace: Games typically take 15–20 minutes per round with 2 players.
- More strategy: You can see more of your opponent's cards over the course of the game, making memory and deduction more important.
- Doubling penalty impact: The doubling penalty is more punishing in 2-player games since there are only two players — be cautious when deciding to end the round.
- Optional house rule — Dual Hands: Each player manages 2 separate 12-card grids for a longer, more complex game. You must track both grids independently.

Common Questions (FAQ)

Can I look at my face-down cards during the game?

No. Once a card is placed face-down in your grid, you may not look at it until it is flipped during play. The memory element — remembering which cards you have and where they are — is a core skill in SKYJO.

Does the doubling penalty apply if I tie for the lowest score?

Yes. You must have the strictly lowest score to avoid the doubling penalty. A tie for lowest still results in your score being doubled.

Can I score negative points?

Yes! Cards with values of -2, -1, and 0 give you negative or zero points. Having negative points is excellent because your goal is the lowest possible score.

What happens if the draw pile runs out?

Shuffle the discard pile (leaving the top card) and use it as the new draw pile. This happens rarely since there are 150 cards in the deck.

Can I choose which card to flip when discarding?

Yes. When you draw a card and choose to discard it (Option A, second choice), you may flip any face-down card in your grid — you choose which one.

What if there is a tie at the end of the game?

If two or more players share the lowest cumulative total score, they all win. There is no tiebreaker in the official rules.

Quick Reference — Turn Summary

Action	What You Do
Draw from deck	Look at the card. Swap with any grid card (discard replaced card) OR discard it and
Take from discard	flip one face-down card Take the visible top card. You must swap it with any grid card. Replaced card goes to
Column match	When 3 identical cards form a vertical column, remove the entire column. Scores 0
End round	points. Flip your last face-down card. Others get one more turn. Score doubles if you don't have the lowest.

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