Card games for kids by age: what to play from 3 to 10

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Card games for kids by age with one ordinary deck, from Memory at three to Rummy at eight and up, with how to teach each one and free rules pages.

With one ordinary deck: Memory from about three, Snap and War from four, Go Fish and Old Maid from five, Crazy Eights from six, and Rummy and Golf from about eight. Each step adds one new idea (matching, bigger numbers, asking, choosing, planning), so a child grows into the next game. Every game here has rules in plain words on Peabody's Game Night, free through the end of 2026.

Ages 3 and 4

- Memory. Cards face down; turn two; keep pairs. Start with five pairs.
- Snap. Turn cards one at a time; shout snap on a match.
- War. Higher card wins. Counting in disguise.

Ages 5 and 6

- Go Fish. Ask for cards to make sets of four. Asking, listening and taking turns.
- Old Maid. Make pairs; don't get stuck with the odd queen.
- Slapjack. Slap the jack first. Gentle hands!

Ages 6 and 7

- Crazy Eights. Match the suit or the number; eights are wild. The first real choices.
- Spoons. Four of a kind, then grab a spoon. Best with a crowd.

Ages 8 and up

- Golf. Lowest score wins; memory and a little strategy.
- Rummy. Sets and runs: the game that leads to all the others.

The ten best card games for kids ranks them by age in one list.

How to teach a card game in two minutes

1. Say how you win first.
2. Say what you do on a turn, in one sentence.
3. Play one round with every hand face up, talking it through.
4. Play for real; explain rare rules when they come up.

Small hands can use a card holder, or a shoebox lid with a slit. The guide to teaching card

games to young kids has more.

Lost the dice?

For dice games like Yacht and Pig, Peabody's dice roller rolls one to six dice and picks who goes first. After game night, there's a story waiting in the library.

Why card games are good for kids

Card games are full of small skills. War compares numbers. Go Fish asks a child to remember what someone else asked for. Crazy Eights asks them to match by suit or by number and to choose between them. Rummy is planning: keep this card, throw that one, wait for the run. And every game practises taking turns, following rules and losing without a fuss, which are skills a child uses far beyond the card table.

A deck for the car, the café and the waiting room

A deck of cards fits in a pocket and works anywhere with a flat surface. Memory and War work on a café table; Go Fish works in a hotel room; Spoons is the best thing at a family gathering with too many cousins. Keep a deck in the car and one in the bag, and a long wait becomes a game.

House rules for little ones

Change the rules to fit the youngest player, and say so out loud: "for Maya, eights and twos are wild." Play Go Fish with the cards face up for the first few games. Let a four-year-old play War with only the number cards. A game bent to fit a child is still the game, and they'll grow into the real rules soon enough.

Questions grown-ups ask

Should I let my child win?

Sometimes. Mix games of luck (War, Snap) where anyone can win with games of skill where you play fairly and explain your moves.

My child cries when they lose. What helps?

Lose cheerfully yourself, often and out loud. Shake hands after every game, and praise a clever move more than the win.

Are these games really free to play?

The games themselves are traditional and public domain. Peabody's rules pages are written in its own words.

What if we only have half a deck?

Many of these games still work. Memory needs only pairs; War and Snap work with any cards; Go Fish works with fewer sets of four.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/card-games-for-kids-by-age