

ALPHABETICKELL

Assemble an alphabetical sequence

20-30 minutes **2-5 players**

by Andrew 'Lasblast' Dennison

Overview

Take cards to arrange in alphabetical order in your own personal lines. You can skip letters, but can never take any of the letters you skipped. Think about the letter distribution, others' lines and the discarded cards. Compete to get 11 cards in your line! Play until someone reaches 30 pts.

Setup - choose your starting cards

Deal each player 3 cards. Starting from the dealer and going clockwise, choose 1 to keep face up in front of you, starting a personal line of cards. Shuffle the others back into the deck.

For the first round of your first game, I suggest you keep a card with letters somewhere in the middle of the alphabet. Anything before I or after S might be a bad choice.

Play a round - assembling lines

Begin the game by dealing a card face up. In turn order (clockwise), starting from the dealer, each player either passes or takes that card to add to either end of their line. *When the game begins, your 'line' is just one card. When taking your 2nd card, you must immediately choose which letters on those 2 cards you are using. To make it obvious, perhaps raise/lower your cards.*

The line of cards must be in alphabetical order based on 1 letter from each card. Letters can be skipped. No letter may be repeated.

Cards must be added only to the left and right. Never in the middle. *If a card cannot be placed at either end of your line, you cannot claim it. This means that once you skip a letter, you cannot ever take it again.*

[[NH][AP][SC]

EXAMPLE: Jen has the sequence 'NPS'. She cannot place another N, P or S (cannot repeat letters). She cannot place an O, Q or R (cannot place cards into the middle of a sequence). She can use any letters before N and those after S.

If a card is taken by someone, the player to their left becomes the next dealer. *I.e. The player to the left of whoever took a card has the first 'right of refusal' on the new card.*

If everyone passes on a card, it is discarded and the same dealer turns over a new card.

Ending the round - scoring

Everyone scores when the deck runs out or if anyone takes their 11th card.

Each card is worth 1 point. *If you end the round by taking your 11th card, you will score 11 points.*

EXAMPLES:

[eK][iL][Nu][Oc][aP][iQ]

Maria has 6 points. She waited to long for the 'K'.

[AL][IB][EW][TH][IU][EL][EM][NB][OD][SC][OU]

Ed gets 11 points. He carefully considered letter distribution.

[AW][TC][SD][NF][SG][RH][TM][RW][TD]

David has 9 points. He sometimes skipped too many letters.

Play multiple rounds - reach 30pts

Stop if anyone has 30 points or more. Whoever has the most points is the winner! *Congratulations!*

Otherwise, start a whole new round – whoever scored 11 pts in the previous round is the first dealer. If the deck ran out, the dealer is whoever dealt the final card of the previous round.

For your reference, the alphabet, and distribution is:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
6	4	4	5	6	2	3	5	6	1	1	5	4	6	6	2	1	6	6	6	3	1	3	1	2	1

EXAMPLE TURNS

Aiden and Cat are playing. They chose 'SG' and 'AJ' as their starting cards.

[sg] [aj]

Aiden begins and flips over 'EW', placing it to the right as a 'W', to form the sequence 'S', 'W'.

[Sg][sW]

Cat flips 'AM', using it to make 'J', 'M'.

[aJ][aM]

Aiden flips 'OH', placing it to the left. This is almost certainly a bad move, as he is skipping 9 cards fairly early on! The line is 'O', 'S', 'W'.

[Oh][Sg][sW]

Cat flips 'AP' and passes. Aiden takes it, placing it to the left of his line. This is definitely a blunder.



Since Aiden took the last card, Cat flips over the next. She flips over 'EL' and passes. Aiden is forced to pass - with an A on the left, cards can only be placed on the right. The only letters he can now take are X, Y or Z.

Cat flips another card. She will probably win. Aiden realises that he made some big mistakes but is just learning and feels OK.

Several turns later, Cat takes an 11th card and scores 11 points, whilst Aiden only has 5 cards for 5 points.



Now, all the cards are shuffled back into the deck to begin a new round. Aiden now understands how to play!

CREDITS/THANKS/HISTORY

Originally invented and designed by Andrew Dennison at UKGE 2015. I (Bez) had just shown Andrew **Wibbell**, and an early version of **Faybell**. Andrew had a spark of inspiration and excitedly revealed an idea for the central push-your-luck mechanism that underpins **Alphabeticell**. Andrew, Gokce Balkan and I tried it out.

Originally a realtime game, the judgement call of how many letters to skip had to be made quickly and the first person to shout would get the card. Mistakes were possible (costing you negative points) and knowing the alphabet was a vital skill.

I developed the game with the help of numerous playtesters, mostly at Playtest UK events. It seemed that only the target sequence length and negative value of mistakes needed modification.

However, it was radically changed after Rules of Play's Tabletop Day event in April 2016. Drunken convention goers played in an unusual way and the game broke down. Everyone shouted to take a card before even seeing what it was! Only afterwards did I realise that everyone was actually playing optimally and 'locked' in a Nash equilibrium.

The 'turn based' method was first discussed and then tried with Marta Borowiecka and Konrad Borowiecki the following day. Immediately, it was clear that this allowed everyone to ponder the deeper ramifications of their choices. Do you need to take a card to block the person to your left? Alternatively, if no-one else wants a card, you can pass on an 'OK' card, hoping for a 'great' card.

There was a massive amount of potential emergent depth that had simply not been accessed over the previous year of playing the realtime version.

Thanks to everyone who playtested - at conventions, PlaytestUK meetups, or in the pub.

In the 1st edition rules, the target score was 26 - a reference to the number of letters in the alphabet. This was confusing for most people, though, so was changed to 30 for this edition. In a close game with 3+ players, you might get a 4th round!

These rules were proof-read by _____ .

If you ever have any feedback, questions or comments, please don't hesitate to get in touch.
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