

The Great Dalmuti™ - Designed by Richard Garfield (an adaptation of the drinking game, "Asshole", itself an adaptation of a traditional Chinese card game).

Introduction

The Great Dalmuti is easy to learn and quick to play. A game is best played with five to eight players, though you can play with four people, or with more than eight, if you desire. The faster you get rid of your cards, the higher your social class will be in the following hand. Since your social class is indicated by your seating, each hand ends with players changing seats to reflect the new social order. The Great Dalmuti is definitely an enjoyable pastime for adults, but it can be played by anyone over eight years old.

The Deck (80 cards)

The number that appears on a card is called its rank. The lower the rank, the better the card (see the chart below). For example, the Baroness (4) is better than the Abbess (5). A card's rank also corresponds to the number of cards of its type in the deck. The only exceptions are the Jesters, which are wild cards. When played alone, Jesters are the worst ranked cards (13), but when played along with one or more other cards, Jesters take on the value of the other cards.

Peasants	12 (Queen)	Knight	6
Stonecutter	11 (Jack)	Abbess	5
Shepherdes s	10	Baroness	4
Cook	9	Earl Marshal	3
Mason	8	Archbishop	2
Seamstress	7	Dalmuti	1 (Ace)

Object of the Game

In each hand of The Great Dalmuti, the object is to get rid of your cards as soon as you can. The faster you get rid of your cards, the higher your social class will be in the following hand. If you get rid of your cards first, you have the title Greater Dalmuti. If you get rid of all your cards second, you take the seat to the left of the Greater Dalmuti during the next hand, and so forth (see "Setup" below). If you are the last person to get rid of all your cards you become the Greater Peon during the next hand and are responsible for shuffling, dealing, and collecting the played cards during the hand.

Setup

Shuffle and fan the deck, and let each player draw and reveal a card. The person who drew the best card wins and takes the seat of his or her choice. To that person's left sits the person who drew the second best card, and so forth around the table. Treat the Jesters as the worst cards possible.

The winner of the draw is the Greater Dalmuti. The person to his or her left is the Lesser Dalmuti. The loser of the draw is the Greater Peon. The person to his or her right is the Lesser Peon. All other players are varying classes of Merchants.

Example:

Amity, Sondra, Anton, Cherise, and Dana are playing The Great Dalmuti. Amity spreads the cards and draws a Peasants card (12); Cherise draws a Knight (6); Sondra draws a Dalmuti (1); Dana draws a Peasants card (12); and Anton draws an Archbishop (2). Amity and Dana break their tie by drawing an Abbess (5) and a Jester respectively. So Sondra chooses the most comfortable seat and becomes the Greater Dalmuti. Anton sits to the left as the Lesser Dalmuti. Then comes Amity, as the Merchant, Cherise as the Lesser Peon, and Dana as the Greater Peon.

The Deal

The Greater Peon collects and shuffles the cards and deals them to all the players, starting with the Greater Dalmuti, one at a time, clockwise around the playing area until the deck is exhausted. Some players may get more cards than others. Players may collect and organize their cards.

Taxation

Tax time gives the Greater and Lesser Dalmutis warm fuzzy feelings, though it is a somewhat less pleasant time for the Peons. After examining his or her cards, the Greater Dalmuti passes any two cards from his or her hand to the Greater Peon and in exchange gets the Greater Peon's best two cards. The Jesters are considered the worst cards; otherwise, the lower the rank, the better the card. At the

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same time, the Lesser Dalmuti passes the Lesser Peon any card from his or her deck and receives in exchange the Lesser Peon's best card.

Example (Taxation):

Sondra, the Greater Dalmuti, gets dealt the following hand of 16 cards: one Earl Marshal (3), two Knights (6), one Seamstress (7), three Cooks (9), two Shepherdesses (10), four Stonecutters (11), and three Peasants (12).

Dana, the Greater Peon, gets dealt the following hand of 16 cards: one Jester, one Archbishop (2), one Baroness (4), one Knight (6), three Seamstresses (7), two Masons (8), two Cooks (9), two Stonecutters (11), and three Peasants (12).

Sondra decides to pass the two Shepherdesses to Dana. Dana must pass the Archbishop and Baroness. Similarly, Anton, the Lesser Dalmuti, passes a single card to Cherise, the Lesser Peon, and Cherise passes her best card to Anton.

Revolution

If a player is dealt both Jesters, he or she may call a revolution.

A revolution means there is no taxation, to the disappointment of the Dalmutis, and to the ill-concealed delight of the Peons. If the player declaring a revolution is the Greater Peon, then the revolution is called a greater revolution. In a greater revolution all players exchange seats with their opposites. That is, the Greater Peon becomes the Greater Dalmuti, the Lesser Peon becomes the Lesser Dalmuti, and so forth.

The Play

Each round starts with the player with the lead playing face- up a set of one or more cards of the same rank. Each player in order to the left has the option of either playing a set of the same number of cards of better rank, or passing. Playing a better-ranked set of cards is called topping the previous play. [Note that a player may choose not to top the previous play. See "A Strategy Tip" on page 4.] Players continue topping the previous plays or passing until all players have opted to pass a particular play. This ends the round, and the Greater Peon collects the cards from the table. The player who made the last play then gets the lead for the next round. The Greater Dalmuti has the lead in the first round of play.

The Jesters are wild cards and can be used to extend sets. A Jester played by itself counts as a card with rank (13), that is, a card ranked worse than even a Peasants (12).

Example:

Sondra, being the Greater Dalmuti, has the first lead and plays four Stonecutters (11) to the table. Each player in order of seating has a chance to top Sondra's four-of-a-kind. Anton, Amity, Cherise and Dana all pass, indicating either that none of them has a better ranked four-of-a-kind than Stonecutters, or that none chooses to play it if he or she has it. [Note that because Sondra has led the round with a set of four-of-a-kind, only four-of-a-kinds may be played. For example, a player with five Cooks (9) could choose either to play four of them on the Stonecutters or to pass, but could not play all five.] Dana, as the Greater Peon, clears the table.

Since no one topped the Stonecutters, Sondra gets to lead the second round. This time, Sondra plays three Peasants (12). Anton chooses to top these with three Shepherdesses (10). Amity passes. Cherise plays three Masons (8). Dana passes. Sondra plays three Knights (6), using a Jester as a Knight. Anton and Amity then pass, and Cherise plays three Abbesses (5). All players pass Cherise's three Abbesses, and so Cherise has taken the lead. Dana clears the table.

Cherise leads the third round with a single Cook (9). Dana passes. Sondra plays a Mason (8). Anton plays an Archbishop (2). Amity has a Jester but cannot play it because Jesters played alone count as rank (13), so she passes, as do the other players. Dana clears the table, and since no one topped the Archbishop, Anton takes the lead.

Going Out

A player who has played his or her last card is said to have gone out. The player who goes out first wins the hand and becomes the Greater Dalmuti in the next deal. The second person to go out sits to the left of the Greater Dalmuti and becomes the Lesser Dalmuti, and so on around the table.

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If no one tops the last play a player makes when going out, then the lead passes clockwise to the next player who still has cards in his or her hand.

Example:

Anton has just the Dalmuti (1) card left and has been waiting for someone to play a single card so he can top it. Amity plays a single Baroness (4), her last card. She is the first one to get rid of all her cards, so on the next hand she will be the Greater Dalmuti. Cherise and Dana pass. Sondra has only an Archbishop (2) and two Peasants (12) left, and plays the Archbishop. Anton gleefully tops the Archbishop with his Dalmuti. Anton has played his last card, and since he is the second player to go out, he will keep the position of Lesser Dalmuti next hand. No one can top a Dalmuti card since (1) is the best rank, so the lead would normally be Anton's, but since he is already out, the lead passes clockwise to Cherise, the next player who still has cards.

Winners and Losers

Each hand of The Great Dalmuti is played for its own sake: becoming the Greater Dalmuti is winning and becoming the Greater Peon is losing, and all the other players are somewhere in between. The Great Dalmuti, like life, is not fair, and so it is often difficult to hold your position, let alone move up in rank. For players who want a scoring system, see the section "Optional Rules," on page 3.

Players are encouraged to act out their status as they see fit, making the Dalmutis arrogant, or perhaps magnanimous. The Peons may be played as subservient or defiant, while the Merchants may try and schmooze with the upper classes while snubbing the lower.

Joining a Game in Progress

The Peons should not be deprived of the joy of working themselves out of the lower classes. Therefore, a player wishing to join a game enters as a Merchant, halfway between the Greater Dalmuti and the Greater Peon. If there is a choice of positions, the Greater Dalmuti decides which will be taken by the newcomer.

Optional Rules

Players may wish to incorporate one or more of the following variations into their game:

First Deal Revolution

The first deal automatically has a revolution, and so no taxes are collected. If the Greater Peon is dealt both Jesters, he or she may still call a greater revolution as usual.

Stripped Decks for Four or Five Players

When playing with few players you may want to strip out some cards so you have fewer to hold. When playing with four players, strip out all the Peasants and Stonecutters, bringing your deck size down to 57 cards. With five players, strip out the Peasants so you are playing with a deck of 68 cards.

Scoring

After each hand, a player scores 1 point for every person he or she beat going out. Set a predetermined number of hands to play, and the person with the highest score at the end wins. Twenty games is a fine number to play, though thirty or forty are good if you have a whole night to fill.

Example:

In a five-person game, the first person to play all of his or her cards becomes Greater Dalmuti on the following hand and gets 4 points. The second player to go out becomes Lesser Dalmuti and gets 3 points, and so forth, with the last player out getting no points.

Philanthropic Scoring

Use the scoring rules above. In addition, the Greater Dalmuti gets 1 point if the Greater Peon goes up in status, and the Lesser Dalmuti gets 1 point if the Lesser Peon goes up in status.

More Appropriate Seating

Arrange the playing area with ranked seating, so the Greater Dalmuti has the most desirable or comfortable seat, the Lesser Dalmuti, a nice seat as well, the Merchants, fairly ordinary seats, and the Peons,

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less comfortable seats. Some players have the Greater Peon sit on something improvised, such as a suitcase or box, or even on the floor.

Other Status Symbols and Perks

Give all the players hats indicating their ranks: a crown for the Greater Dalmuti and a straw hat for the Peon, for example. Give the Greater Dalmuti a carnation. Allow the Greater Dalmuti first choice of the jellybeans, the Lesser Dalmuti, second choice, and so forth, so that the Greater Peon only gets the bubblegum-flavored jellybeans.

Merchant Exchange

Instead of the Merchants doing nothing during taxation, the highest-class Merchant may choose to exchange a single card blindly with another Merchant.

Misdeals

If the Greater Peon accidentally exposes a card while dealing, the Greater Dalmuti decides whether it goes to the person to whom it was dealt to or to the Greater Peon. If the card is given to the Greater Peon, the Greater Peon then replaces the card with one randomly drawn from his or her hand.

A Strategy Tip

Most of the time you should play your worst cards when you can, but don't be afraid to pass even when you can play. Often a good player who is in a lower position won't play a card until there are several people out, hoping only to move up one rank, perhaps, or to hold on to his or her seat. Your good cards should be used to try to take the lead; so saving them until they are the highest cards around may not be a bad idea.

Glossary of Game Terms

- Greater Dalmuti: The player who won the previous hand. This position is filled randomly on the first hand.
- Greater Peon: The player who lost the previous hand. This position is filled randomly on the first hand.

- Greater revolution: When the Greater Peon is dealt both Jesters, a greater revolution may be called: all players exchange seats with their opposites.
 - Hand: Each time the Greater Peon deals, a hand begins. The hand ends when the last player has gotten rid of his or her cards.
 - Lesser Dalmuti: The player who went out second on the previous hand. This position is filled randomly on the first hand.
 - Lesser Peon: The player who went out second-to-last on the previous hand. This position is filled randomly on the first hand.
 - Merchants: The players who went out between the Lesser Dalmuti and the Lesser Peon. These positions are filled randomly on the first hand.
 - Rank: The number on a card. The lower the rank, the better the card.
 - Round: Whenever a card is led, a round has begun. When each player has declined the opportunity to top a card, a round ends.
 - Revolution: When a player is dealt both Jesters, a revolution may be declared. In a revolution no taxes are collected.
 - Topping: When a set of cards is played to the table, each player has the opportunity to play a set of the same number of cards with better rank. This is called topping the play.
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Hints for The Great Dalmuti: Usually, you should not break up a set. At times it's tempting, especially during a round when everyone is able to play cards except you, but it's usually advantageous to hang on to those multiples until you can play them together. It's not always wise to top the previous play. You should use your good cards to try to take the lead, so saving them until they are the highest cards around can be a very effective strategy. While you're the Greater Dalmuti, take advantage of your power and play the part to the hilt. After all, you may be the Greater Peon in no time at all!