

Short Changed

Short Changed is a deduction game for two to six players, ages eight and up. A typical game lasts 20 to 30 minutes.

Goal

The goal of *Short Changed* is to deduce and correctly guess the *total value* of the chips held by any other player by carefully observing the transactions other players make with a central pot.

Components

- A set of 30 gaming chips in four colors: 9 white, 8 red, 7 blue & 6 green;
- An opaque bag large enough to mix all the chips.

Before You Begin

1. **Determine first player.** Randomly choose someone to go first. Play proceeds clockwise.
2. **Mix chips.** Depending upon the number of players, mix a number of chips in the bag according to Table 1.

Table 1.

Number of Players	Green Chips	Blue Chips	Red Chips	White Chips	Total Chips
2	2	3	4	5	14
3	3	4	5	6	18
4	4	5	6	7	22
5	5	6	7	8	26
6	6	7	8	9	30

3. **Draw hands.** Each player draws a hand of *five chips*. These should be kept hidden from other players (*e.g.*, in a closed fist, behind a paper screen or inside the cover of a book). In a game with fewer than six players, there are chips left in the bag. These extra chips are *not in play*, and no one is allowed to examine them.
4. **Start the pot.** Finally, each player chooses *any one chip* from his or her hand and donates it to the center of the table to start the pot.

Individual chips have the values shown in Table 2. The total value of all of the chips (including any remaining in the bag after the draw) varies depending upon the number of players as shown in Table 3.

Table 2.

Chip Color	Value
Green	25
Blue	10
Red	5
White	1

Table 3.

Number of Players	Total Value of Chips	Chips Remaining in Bag after Draw
2	105	4
3	146	3
4	187	2
5	228	1
6	269	0

Game Play

Each player in turn must take *one* of the following actions, in the priority order shown:

1. **Guess a total value.** If you believe you have deduced the total value of chips that any other player holds, you may announce this guess. If you are incorrect, you must *take two actions* on your *next* turn, *neither* of which may be to guess a total value. If you are correct, you *win the game*.
2. **Short change the pot.** If you do not wish to guess a total value, then if able, you *must* short change the pot. Set aside one or more chips from the pot, replace them with an *unequal number* of chips from your hand having a *lower total value* than the chips that you set aside. Then take the chips that you set aside into your hand.
- 3a. **Donate to the pot.** If you cannot short change the pot, and if you have *four or more chips* in your hand, you may donate any one of your chips to the pot.
- 3b. **Steal from the pot.** If you cannot short change the pot, and if you have *four or fewer chips* in your hand, you may steal any one chip from the pot and take it into your hand.
4. **Pass.** Passing your turn is only allowed in the extremely rare instance when *none* of the other actions are legal.

Clarifications & Tactics

- Donating to and stealing from the pot have the *same priority*. A player with four chips who cannot short change the pot may choose *either* action.
- If someone steals the last chip from the pot, the pot will contain zero chips. If you are presented with this situation and are unable to donate to the pot (due to having fewer than four chips in your hand), you can be forced to guess a total value before you're ready. This type of forcing move is an essential part of the game, and leaving a small or empty pot for your neighbor may occasionally be a good tactic!
- Be careful, or you may find yourself with only one chip in your hand, usually a 10 or 25 that's not easy to get rid of by short changing the pot. If the other players are paying attention, someone will almost certainly guess the correct value for your hand and win. Try not to let yourself get into this situation!
- Hoarding a large number of chips may help your opponents more than it hinders them. Winning depends upon correctly guessing a total value of an opponent's hand, not upon having lots of chips in your own hand. The fastest way to gain information about what your opponents hold is to present them with a pot that they can short change.
- When short changing the pot, you may *not* set aside zero or a negative number of chips (to get around the hand limit for donating), nor may you replace the chips that you set aside with zero or a negative number of chips (to get around the hand limit for stealing). Nice try.
- If you incorrectly guess a total value, have three or four chips in your hand *and* cannot short change the pot on your next turn, a sneaky tactic is to steal from the pot, then donate the same chip back. This is a legal but rarely available play.

Play Test Team

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