# Duel of Law

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**Version 100830a**

**Required:** Rainbow Deck Deluxe 1.16 or later (including tokens)
**Players:** 2 players (more strategic) to 4 players (more chaotic)
**Time:** 45-60 minutes

Duel of Law is a card game in which players define patterns of cards based on aspects of the Rainbow Deck. Laying out cards in an imaginary grid resembling Scrabble, players define and refine patterns, scoring for creating new patterns and for finding ways to redefine existing patterns.

## Before you play

**PLEASE READ ALL OF THE RULES BEFORE TRYING TO PLAY THE GAME.** It will save you a lot of frustration in the long run!

Please familiarize yourself somewhat with the Rainbow Deck, if you're not already familiar with it. These webpages are a good resource if you're confused about the arrangement of suits, numbers, and other features of the deck.

- http://ludism.org/rainbow/HomePage
- http://ludism.org/rainbow/Specification

So that you can understand gameplay better, we're going to define a few terms before we go into the actual mechanics of the turns. You'll need to know about the *tableau*, *branches*, and *laws* first.

### The tableau

The **tableau** is a shared playing area in the middle of the table. It consists of cards played in an orthogonal "grid" pattern, much like a chess board or Scrabble board. As in Scrabble, all the cards in play on the tableau must be connected to each other. See the diagram on the last page for an example of a mid-game tableau.

Players place new cards on the tableau during their turns. Cards shouldn't overlap, so that players can easily see all aspects of the cards and easily lay other cards next to them.

### Branches and twigs

You score points by playing cards to the tableau to create and extend branches. A **branch** is a vertical or horizontal line of at least three cards that follow a law, such as "All cards in this branch must be yellow". Branches may extend to any number of cards, as long as all cards in the branch follow all laws that apply to that branch. Branches in Duel of Law are similar to words in Scrabble; the tableau will develop into a pattern of interlocking branches as the game continues.

A **twig** consists of two adjacent cards. You may play cards that form twigs, but you may not claim and score them until you extend them to three or more cards and they become branches.

### Laws

A **law** defines the pattern of a branch, using features of the Rainbow Deck, such as color, number, dice suits, poker suits, letters, letter values, and so on, or some combination. Here are some example patterns, along with the laws that define them.

- 1, 2, 3... any color. (Law = Increasing integers, starting with 1.)
- 2, 4, 6, 8, all red (Law = Red even numbers.)
- 67, 2, 23, 17 (Law = Prime numbers.)
- 03, 14, 15... (Law = Digits of pi in order.)
- pink, dark blue, yellow, red (Law = Alternating light and dark suits.)
- heart, diamond, diamond, heart (Law = Light poker suits.)
- I, N, S, E, C, T (Law = Spells an English word.)
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, 3... (Law = "Wrapping" or "cycling" dice suits.)
- N, O, N, O, N, O... (Law = Alternating letters.)

Every branch has at least one law that defines it. As play progresses, laws may be combined in the same branch to create more specific and complex patterns. This is called **narrowing** the law. For example, the second law in the list above combines two laws, "Must be red" and "Must have even numbers."

> **Note**: The **level** of a law indicates how many features of the cards it invokes (such as dice suits or poker suits) plus how many restrictions it places on each feature (for example, by narrowing "odd numbers", a level 1 law, to "*increasing* odd numbers", a level 2 law).

## Setting up

Be sure you've chosen a large table; Duel of Law can require some space, especially with four players.

Shuffle the entire Rainbow Deck. Deal out 12 cards to each player, and set the rest of the deck within reach. Let each player choose one of the six colors of Rainbow Deck token and take all tokens of that color.

Determine who will start; this is normally the player to the left of the dealer.

Turn over the top card in the deck and lay it in the middle of the table. This becomes the first card of the tableau.

## Playing

Play begins with the player to the left of the dealer and continues to the left; on your turn, you will:

1. Add at least one card to the tableau according to the rules of the game.
2. Explain laws and claim branches.
3. Check for the win condition; if the win condition isn't met, draw one card.

**or**

- Play no cards and draw six.

Here are the steps again with details, in order.

## Add at least one card to the tableau

If you choose to play any cards, you *must* play one card, but you *may* play as many more as you like, although you will only draw one at the end of your turn. All cards you play on one turn must lie in a single straight line, connected to the tableau.

You may play cards that create new branches **or** extend branches on the table. If you extend a branch, it must follow the laws that already apply to the branch, but you don't need to define a new law unless you want to claim the branch (see below).

To create a branch, you must make a line of at least three cards. You may use cards already on the table as part of your three-card minimum. You must also explain a law for the new branch and claim it (see below).

If you create or extend more than one valid branch on the same turn, and you can explain laws for all of them, claim all the new branches.

If you cannot apply a law to a new branch you would create, you may not play there. You may, however, play in a way that creates twigs, but these may not be explained and claimed as branches until someone extends them to at least three cards.

## Explain laws and claim branches

You must explain laws for any branches you created so you can claim them, and you must explain laws for branches you extended if you want to duel and steal them.

To **claim** a branch, you must narrow its laws by exactly one level. This means that if you are creating a new branch, you must add a level 1 law.

If you are extending a branch, you may do so without claiming it, but to claim it, you must duel the owner (see below).

Always check whether the other players agree that your new law is valid.

### Duels

A **duel** means stealing someone else's branch by explaining a narrower law. If the other players agree your new law is valid, claim the branch by placing your own token on top of the previous owner's token. If the other players don't agree, retrieve your cards and try to play again.

> **Note**: The color of the top token will show who owns the branch, and the number of tokens there will show how many levels its law has. (See the diagram at the end of these rules.)

You must add *only one new level* to the law that's already part of the branch. If, for example, there is a level 1 law there already, your new law must be level 2, and you must duel the current owner to gain control of it.

> **Example**: If the law for a branch is "All cards in this branch must be yellow", you might notice that the cards in the branch have even numbers in addition to being yellow. If you have another even yellow card, you may play it on the branch, explain the narrower, level 2 law "All cards in this branch must be *both* even *and* yellow", and claim the branch.

When you narrow a law, you may not completely redefine it; all previous parts of the law must be included.

> **Example**: You may not duel against a level 1 law such as "All cards are odd" with a level 2 law such as "Spells an English word, and contains increasing dice suits", even if the second law describes that branch perfectly well. However, you may duel against the old law with a level 2 law such as "All cards are odd *and increase*" or "All cards are odd *and purple*".

### Check for the win condition

At the end of your turn, check to see whether anyone has won, as explained below.

## Winning

After *anyone* runs out of cards, *from then on*, *anyone* who has two or more branches than everyone else at the end of someone's turn wins the game.

> **Example**: In the diagram at the end of the rules, Red wins, because she has three branches, and Green and Blue have only one branch each.

If no player meets this win condition, the current player draws a card as usual and all players continue drawing and playing cards until someone is ahead by at least two tokens.

## Frequently asked questions

**Can I just name some specific cards or suits that fit the cards I have and call that a law?**
No. An arbitrary list is not a law; a law should define a pattern, not a group of specific items. "Contains odd numbers" is a valid law, but "Contains 17, 23, 81, 57" is not. In the same way, the law "Spells THIN" is an arbitrary list of letters, but "Spells an English word" is valid.

A law that cobbles together two or more specific features of cards in a branch using "or" is considered an arbitrary list. For example, "Must have a black poker suit" is a valid law, but "Must have either a hearts or spades poker suit" is not.

Merely extending a word, such as extending DRY to LAUNDRY, is not sufficient to narrow a law, but specifying that all the cards must also be odd would be. "Spells a *palindromic* English word" is also a valid level 2 law, although probably not playable in this case.

**What about laws that exclude certain cards instead of including them?**
Negative laws, such as "Must not have the letter A", are considered arbitrary lists. In this case, the law appears to refer to only one item - the letter A - but it actually creates a list of 25 arbitrary items, encompassing practically every card in the deck: B, C, D, E... everything but A. Inequalities such as "Must be greater than 1" are invalid for similar reasons.

**Can I use the same law on two different branches?**
Yes. You may reuse any law anywhere on the table. For example, more than one branch may implement the law "Must be red".

**Can I extend and narrow a branch I already own, to make it harder to steal?**
No. You may extend a branch you already own, but if you do, you may not narrow the law further.

**Can I reference anything I think of to define a law?**
No. Laws may not refer to elements or definitions outside the the game. For example, "Every card in this row must be of a color from Superman's cape" is not a valid law. Mathematical entities such as the number pi *are* considered to be part of the game.

**Can I play cards on different parts of the board on the same turn?**
No. You may play cards on either or both ends of a branch, and you may bridge gaps between branches to connect them, but you must play all your cards in a straight line on a turn.

**If I play a law that uses a limited feature (such as numbers on the dice) does the branch have to end when I reach the last number (such as 6)?**
No. By default, branches are considered to "wrap" or cycle. Thus, if you start a branch of sequential dice suits with 3, 4, 5, the next player may extend it with 6, 1, 2, 3, so that the sequence runs 3, 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, 3 - wrapping between the 6 and the 1.

**What if there are gaps in the sequence, such as 1, 2, 4, 5... ?**
Yes, such sequences also cycle, but you may not start over until you "max out" the sequence by playing its last card, such as dice suit 6. So you could extend your sequence like this:
1, 2, 4, 5, **6, 1, 2...**
but not:
1, 2, 4, 5, **1, 2...**

**If I play a law that uses the poker suit numbers, should I assume face cards (J, Q, and K) to have numerical values such as 11, 12, and 13?**
No. The J, Q, and K characters on face cards generally may not be used in numerical laws. For example, if the law of a branch is "All even numbers," a J is simply not playable on that branch, since it has no numerical value.

**Can I play a law that spells a word backwards?**
Yes. Sequences of cards, including words, may be played in any consistent orthogonal direction (forwards, backwards, up, or down).

**How do I use Jokers?**
Jokers are wild. They may be used as any other card or kind of card.

Jokers may represent "impossible" cards, such as a Red card with the poker suit of Clubs (the poker suit on Red cards is normally Spades). You might do this to intersect Red and Clubs branches.

The actual printed features of Jokers take precedence over the features given to them by laws. For example, if there is any question about which dice suit a Joker belongs to, it's the dice suit printed on the Joker (see the Joker in the diagram at the end of these rules).

**Can I pass my turn instead of playing a card or drawing?**
No. Unless you choose to draw six cards instead, you must play at least one card on your turn, but you may play as many more cards as you like, if you follow the rest of the rules above.

**Is there a hand size limit?**
No. There's no maximum hand size, but since you probably want to try to play all your cards eventually, a huge hand might be a bad strategic choice.

# Strategy Tips

You may write laws down to help remember them.

In case of leader bashing, where no one player can get ahead long enough to win, consider setting up a move in which you claim multiple branches (more than two), preferably stealing some of them from other players. With careful planning and some luck of the draw, some spectacular moves can be made.

Play defensively. Make your branches hard to steal. It's possible to make them impossible to steal if you're careful. Example: some English words can't be extended.

# Example Diagram

**Figure 1** shows a mid-game tableau, in a Duel of Law game that has had several moves.

**A**: This branch has three tokens on it (Red, Green, and Blue), showing that three players have defined and narrowed it in turn. Since the Red token is on top, we can see that Red owns the branch currently. Notice that the three tokens are stacked in the center of the top edge of the topmost card; this is to show that it applies to the law extending downward from that card. The level 3 law for the branch is "Must have a dark suit color, must have a vowel, and must have increasing card numbers top to bottom." (All other laws in this example are level 1.)

**B**: This branch shares a card with branch A; since the Red claiming token is located at the center of the left edge of the card, we can see that it belongs to Red and applies to the branch extending to the right. The law for this branch is "Must show dice suit 2". This branch contains a Joker with the dice suit 2. The Joker may be further defined by someone adding a branch to it or dueling to steal this branch later.

**C**: This branch is also owned by Red. Its law is "Must follow an increasing dice suit cycle." (See FAQ for details.)

**D**: Owned by Blue and extending left to right, the law for this branch is "Must have a poker suit of spades."

**E**: Owned by Green and extending top to bottom, the law for this branch is "Spells an English word." (The word is THEN.)

**(F)**: This is not a branch, but is an example of a twig running top to bottom. A player can claim this as a branch by adding more cards and defining a law for it.

## Playtesters

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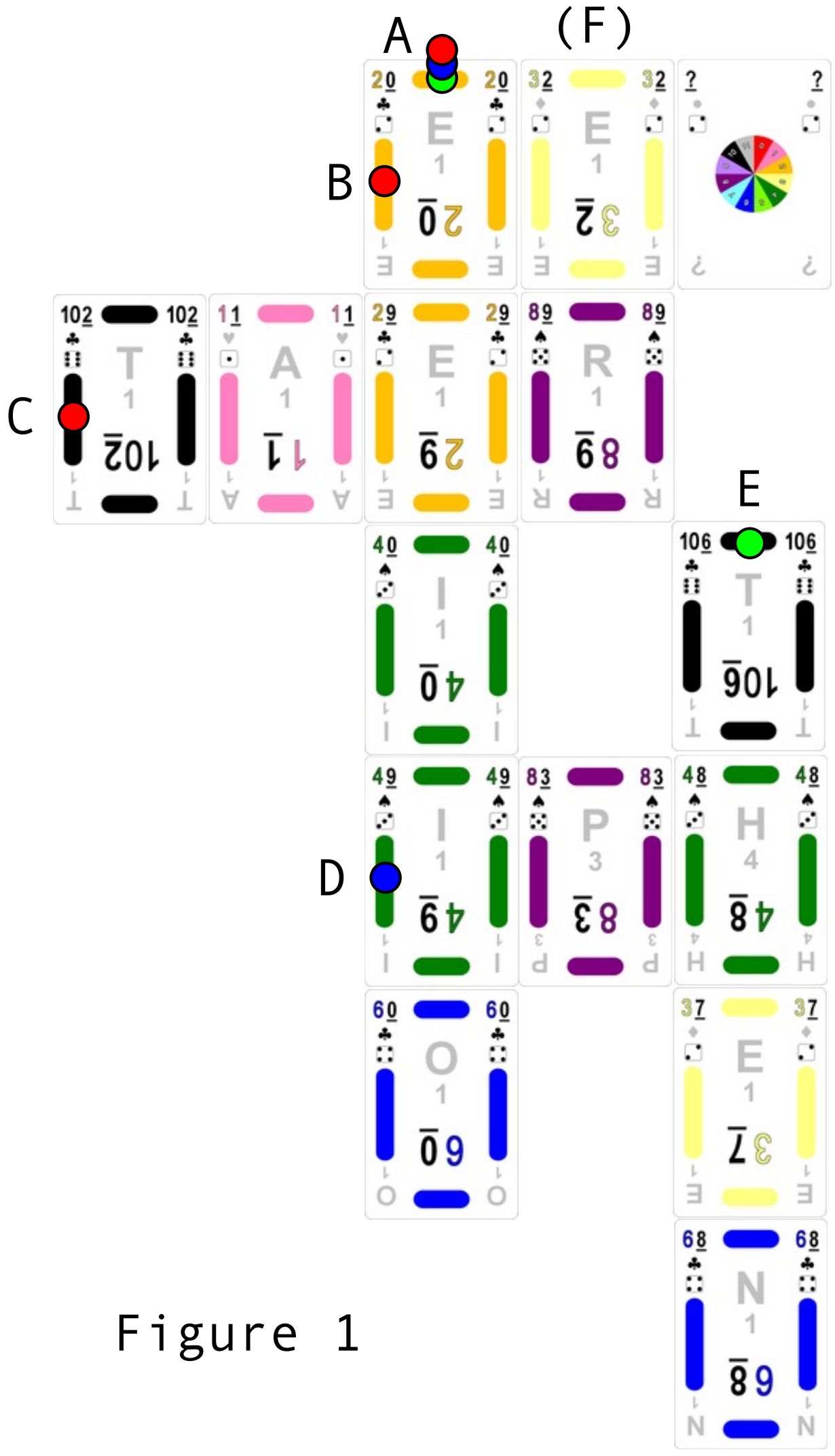


Figure 1