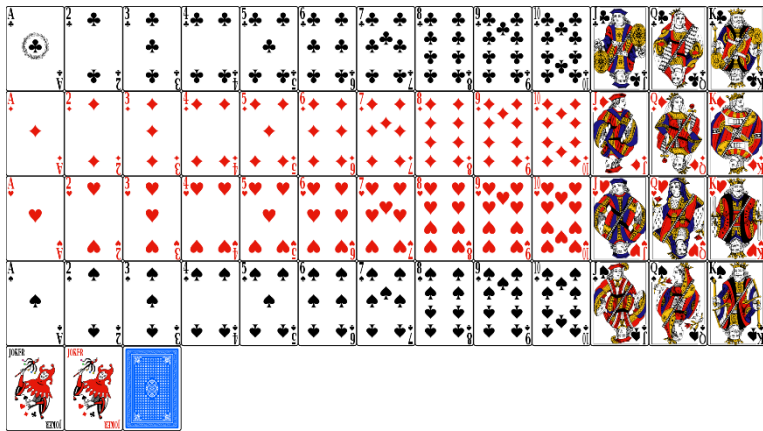


Deck Formats

Contemporary playing cards are grouped into three broad categories based on the suits they use: French, Latin, and Germanic. Latin suits are used in the closely related Spanish and Italian formats. The Swiss-German suits are distinct enough to merit their subcategory. Excluding jokers and tarot trumps, the French 52-card deck preserves the number of cards in the original Mamluk deck.



French decks come in a variety of patterns and deck sizes. The 52-card deck is the most popular deck and includes 13 ranks of each suit with reversible "court" or face cards. Each suit includes an ace, depicting a single symbol of its suit, a king, queen, and jack, each depicted with a symbol of their suit; and ranks two through ten, with each card depicting that number of pips of its suit. As well as these 52 cards, commercial packs often include between one and six jokers, most often two.

In England, the lowest court card was called the "knave" which originally meant male child, so the character could represent the "prince", son to the king and queen. Queens appeared sporadically in packs as early as 1377, especially in Germany. Although the Germans abandoned the queen before the 1500s, the French permanently picked it up and placed it under the king. Packs of 56 cards containing in each suit a king, queen, knight, and knave (as in tarot) were once common in the 15th century.



The United States introduced the joker into the deck. It was devised for the game of euchre, which spread from Europe to America beginning shortly after the American Revolutionary War. In euchre, the highest trump card is the Jack of the trump suit, called the right bower (from the German Bauer); the second-highest trump, the left bower, is the jack of the suit of the same color as trumps. The joker was invented c. 1860 as a third trump, the imperial or best bower, which ranked higher than the other two bowers. The name of the card is believed to derive from juker, a variant name for euchre. The earliest reference to a joker functioning as a wild card dates to 1875 with a variation of poker.

In a standard deck in the US or Britain, there are usually two Jokers. In other countries, such as Germany, there are usually three Jokers in a pack. The Joker's use varies greatly. Many card games omit the cards entirely; as a result, Jokers are sometimes used as informal replacements for lost or damaged cards in a deck by simply noting the lost card's rank and suit on the Joker. Other games, such as a 25-card variant of **Euchre** which uses the Joker as the highest trump, make it one of the most important in the game. Often, the Joker is a wild card, which allows it to represent other existing cards. The term "Joker's wild" originates from this practice.

