

King Arthur's Court

Version 1.2

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Number of Players 2-4

Game Length 45-90 minutes

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Equipment to play: 1 piecepack (see <http://www.piecepack.org>)

Design note: The role-choosing game mechanic is similar to that seen in games such as Puerto Rico and Citadels, the bidding mechanism has some similarities to Ra and the scoring mechanism is similar to that seen in Tigris and Euphrates. However, I think there are enough original aspects to King Arthur's Court to make it a different game entirely.

Introduction

Tired of the constant stress of running his kingdom and worrying about the backstabbing of supposedly faithful knights such as Lancelot, King Arthur has decided to delegate the day to day affairs of royal life to a Grand Vizier.

Each potential Grand Vizier must demonstrate his or her ability to attract courtiers to his or her court. The successful candidate will have the largest and most balanced court at the end of the game.

Setup (see diagram below)

The rules for setup and play assume that 4 players are playing. Where the rules differ for * 2- and ** 3-players this is noted in *Italics*.

The ace and numbered tiles represent money with aces counting as 1. Each player takes three tiles with values 3, 4 and 5 placing them face up on the table to form his or her starting treasury. Money tiles are always visible to all players. The suits on the tiles have no game relevance.

The coins represent courtiers. They are always played with the suit facing up, the numeric values having no relevance in the game. Each suit represents a different type of courtier:

Moon – jester

Sun – maiden

Crown – king's guard

Arms – knight

All the courtiers are placed suit side up in a pile to one side known as the peasantry.

Each player then chooses any 1 courtier from the peasantry and places it in his or her court.

A set of one of each type of courtier is removed from the peasantry and placed in the middle of the play area forming a row of four aspirants. Roll all four dice. Place an additional courtier in the row of aspirants corresponding to the suit of the highest value die. Roll again if two or more dice share the high value. In a 4-player game there are five aspirants at the start. (*2-player game – instead of adding a courtier to the row of aspirants, remove one instead. Therefore in a 2-player game there are three aspirants at the start of the game) (** 3-player game – do not roll the dice or add a courtier. In a 3-player game there are four aspirants).

The aspirants are courtiers who are available to join the players' courts.

The red, blue and black dice are set aside and not used in the game. (**In a 3-player game the red and blue dice are now set aside and the green and black dice are used in the game.)

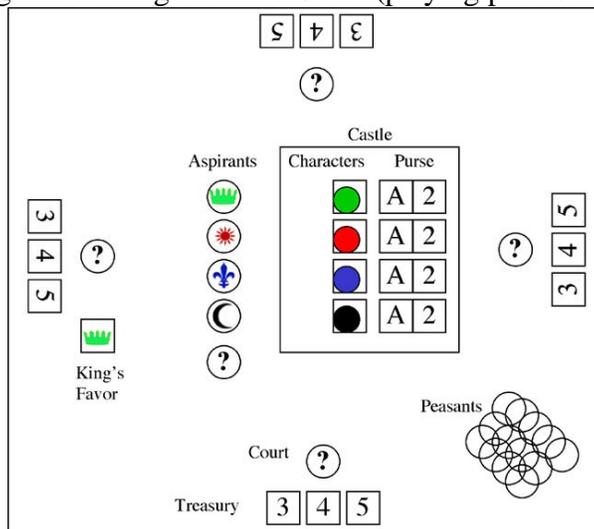
The pawns represent the main characters and are placed on the appropriate playing card near the aspirants:

- Black pawn (on moon null tile) – Merlin the Magician
- Red pawn (on sun null tile) – Lady Guinevere
- Green pawn (on crown null tile) – King Arthur
- Blue pawn (on arms null tile) – Sir Lancelot

Place two money tiles with values 1 and 2 next to all of the characters. The money tiles next to a character are referred to as that character's purse. The characters and their purses form the castle. Any remaining tiles are set aside and are not used in the game.

Each player rolls the green die and the player with the highest roll gains the King's Favor. Roll again to break any ties. The green die is placed in the court of the player with the King's Favor during the game.

Setup for a 4-player game of King Arthur's Court (playing pieces not to scale):



Game play

The game is played in several rounds. In each round a player will take the role of one of the characters from the castle (** In a 2-player game each player takes two roles per round*). Therefore in each round all four roles will be chosen, although the order in which they are chosen is not necessarily the same. (*** In a 3-player game only three roles are chosen per round*).

Bidding for character roles

Players must first bid for the privilege of choosing a character using the money tiles in their treasuries.

Bidding starts with the player who has the King's Favor (green die), and progresses clockwise. If the player who has the King's favor has already successfully bid for and selected one character this round (** two characters in a 2-player game*) then the first player to his or her left who is eligible to bid starts the bidding for the next character.

The first player who can bid **MUST** make a bid by playing at least one tile, even if it is that player's last tile; the player may not pass. A player placing a bid may bid any amount they can make from their tiles. e.g. Player A has a 3, 4 and 5 tile. That player's bids are limited to 3, 4, 5, 7 (3+4), 8 (3+5), 9 (4+5) and 12 (3+4+5).

After the first bid has been made all players have the option to bid or pass. A bid must be higher than the previous one otherwise a player is forced to pass. Once a player passes he or she may not rejoin the bidding. Once all players pass in succession bidding ends. The player with the successful high bid then chooses one of the available characters from the castle and takes the character's pawn as well as the purse of money tiles next to it. The pawn is placed in the player's court, and the purse is added to the player's treasury. The money tiles that were bid then replace the purse that was taken, forming the purse for the next round. Unsuccessful bidders keep their money for the next auction. All money tiles in the purses are visible to all players at all times.

Then the player who chose the character carries out the character's special role (see below).

Once the player carries out the role another bidding session starts. Any player who has already chosen one character in a round does not participate in subsequent bidding (** In a 2-player game, once a player has chosen two characters he or she does not participate in further bidding*).

This continues until all four characters have been chosen (*** In a 3-player game this continues until 3 characters have been chosen*). The round then ends. (*** In a 3-player game, one character will not be chosen in each round. Place the black die on the character that was not chosen this round before replacing the pawns*). The pawns are

now moved back to the castle unless it is the last round, in which case they remain as part of the players' courts.

*(** Special rule in a 3-player game: A character with the black die **MUST** be chosen in the next bidding round by one of the players. Frequently the last player to choose a role will be forced into choosing the character with the die assigned. The black die is not placed in the first round.)*

Character roles:

Merlin – Master of magic and wizardry, things are not necessarily what they seem!

- Exchange up to three of the courtiers in your court with the aspirants.

Guinevere – Lady of grace and beauty, she attracts aspirants to the court!

- Take any TWO aspirants and place them in your court. Each remaining player in clockwise order takes ONE aspirant and places it in his or her court.
- After each player has taken an aspirant, you choose any 5 courtiers from the peasantry and form a new row of aspirants. (** choose 3 courtiers in a 2-player game*)(*** choose 4 courtiers in a 3-player game*). If there are not enough courtiers left in the peasantry, place all that remain in the row of aspirants (if there are no courtiers left in the peasantry then the aspirant row is left empty). The game ends at the end of the round that the row of aspirants could not be completely filled.

Arthur – King of England, he rakes in the taxes!

- Each opponent gives you one money tile. If an opponent has only one tile remaining he or she does not give it to you. Place the tiles in your treasury.
- At the end of the complete round, the King's Favor is transferred to you. (*** If King Arthur is not chosen in a round in a 3-player game then the player who has the King's Favor keeps it for the next round.*)

Lancelot – Knight of the Round Table, Knave of Treachery!

- Starting with the player to your left and moving clockwise exchange one of your courtiers with one courtier belonging to each opponent.

'Exchange' ALWAYS means take one courtier and swap it with one of a DIFFERENT type. If this action is not possible for a player then that player does nothing.

Ending the game

The game ends in the round that it was not possible to fill the aspirant row. At the end of the round, when all players have bid for and chosen a character (** two characters in 2 player game*) the game ends. Each player should now have one character pawn (** two character pawns in 2-player*) and a number of courtiers in their court. Scoring now commences.

Scoring

Sort the courtiers into three groups: maidens, knights and king's guard. Jesters are wild and are placed as each player wishes into any of the groups, but may not be moved to other groups once scoring has started. A group may not consist entirely of jesters.

The groups are modified by the pawn(s) each player has as follows:

- Merlin the Magician: any group may consist entirely of jesters; Merlin also acts as one additional jester.
- Guinevere: acts as two additional maidens.
- Arthur: acts as two additional King's Guard.
- Lancelot: acts as two additional knights.

Each player's score is equal to the number of courtiers in the smallest of the three groups. The highest score wins. If there are ties, the next smallest groups are compared. In the case of an overall tie, the player with the King's Favor wins.

Scoring example of a 4-player game

Andrew ends the game with 2 King's Guard, 1 Knight, 1 Maiden, 2 Jesters and King Arthur

He sorts out his courtiers as follows:

$$2 \text{ King's guard} + 0 \text{ Jesters} + \text{Arthur} = 4$$

$$1 \text{ Knight} + 1 \text{ Jesters} = 2$$

$$1 \text{ Maiden} + 1 \text{ Jesters} = 2$$

Score = 2

Phillip ends the game with 1 King's Guard, 3 Knights, 2 Maidens, 0 Jesters and Sir Lancelot.

He sorts out his courtiers as follows:

$$1 \text{ King's guard} + 0 \text{ Jesters} = 1$$

$$3 \text{ Knights} + 0 \text{ Jesters} + \text{Lancelot} = 5$$

$$2 \text{ Maidens} + 0 \text{ Jesters} = 2$$

Score = 1

Jacky ends the game with 1 King's Guard, 1 Knight, 3 Maidens, 2 Jesters and Guinevere

She sorts out her courtiers as follows:

$$1 \text{ King's guard} + 1 \text{ Jesters} = 2$$

$$1 \text{ Knight} + 1 \text{ Jesters} = 2$$

$$3 \text{ Maidens} + \text{Guinevere} = 5$$

Score = 2

Irene ends the game with 2 King's Guard, 1 Knight, 0 Maidens, 2 Jesters and Merlin

She sorts out her courtiers as follows:

2 King's guard + 0 Jesters = 2

1 Knight + Merlin = 2

0 Maidens + 2 Jesters = 2 (a group may not consist of entirely jesters, but Merlin's end-game ability allows Irene to do this)

Score = 2

Andrew, Jacky and Irene are tied at 2

Comparing the next smallest groups, Andrew scores 2, Jacky scores 2 and Irene scores 2, so the players are still tied.

Comparing the last group, Andrew scores 4, Jacky scores 5 and Irene scores 2.

Jacky wins the game!