

Manipulation

A free Piecepack game for 2-4 players by Adam B. Norberg

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Want a game with a plot? With the great story so many Piecepack games have? That's too bad! This game has none at all. This challenging game of bidding, bluffing, and sheer chaos bears no resemblance to the real world in any way whatsoever.

GOAL: To make the Master Code in the middle of your board equal your Goal Value.

SUPPLIES:

One Piecepack set

Paper and pencil (for players to record Goal Values)

NOTE: Nulls are 0. Aces are 1.

SETUP:

1. Turn all the coins value-down. Shuffle them within their suits.
2. Each player takes one coin of each suit.
3. From the remaining coins, one coin of each suit is selected by some arbitrary means and turned face up.
4. The tiles corresponding to these centrally-selected coins are located and placed in the center of the table, visible to all players. These tiles form the initial Master Code.
5. Each player looks at his or her coins and writes down which ones they are. This is that player's Goal Value, and is kept secret from all other players.
6. Coins are returned to the center of the table.
7. Each player gets one full suit of coins.
8. Shuffle the remaining tiles and distribute three, face-down, to each player.
9. Arbitrarily select one player to go first.

PLAY:

Players take turns making one Action, in an attempt to set the central Master Code equal to his or her Goal Value. If any player discovers the Master Code to match his or her Goal Value at the end of **any player's** turn, that player reveals his or her Goal Value and has won the game.

If the Draw Pile is empty at the end of any player's turn, the Discard Pile is shuffled and becomes the new Draw Pile.

Actions are as follows:

Push a number: If a player holds a tile exactly one greater or one less than the tile of the same suit in the Master Code (5 “wraps around” to null), he or she may replace the tile in the Master Code with the tile from his or her hand. The tile in the Master Code is discarded. The player then draws a tile, and it is the end of his or her turn.

Pull a number: The top tile in the deck is revealed to all players. An Auction (see Auctions, below) occurs, and the winner of the Auction decides whether or not the Pulled tile should replace the tile in the Master Code. Whichever tile is not chosen to be in the Code is discarded, and the turn is over.

Try a number: The current player chooses a card in his or her hand that, because it is too far off from the number of the matching suit in the Master Code, cannot be Pushed. An Auction occurs, and the winner of the Auction decides whether or not the tile Tried should replace the tile in the Master Code. Whichever tile is not chosen to be in the Code is discarded, the player who Tried a number draws a card, and the turn is over.

Force a discard: The current player chooses an opponent. That player must discard a card at random. That player then draws a card, and the turn is over.

Pass: The current player chooses and discards a card from his or her hand, then draws a card. He or she then takes the lowest-value coin that he or she spent, if any, at an Auction back to his or her stock. (Spent coins should be kept sorted by suit to facilitate this.)

Obviously, Auctions are a critical part of the game. Except for when a player Pushes a number, an Auction occurs whenever the Master Code would change.

AUCTIONS:

Some actions in the game call for an Auction. In an Auction, the following occurs:

1. Each player chooses a coin from his or her stock and places it, face-down, in front of him or her.
2. All coins are revealed.
3. If one player has a highest coin (there are no ties), that player has won the Auction. His or her coin is now spent- removed from that player’s stock for future auctions until he or she chooses to Pass to retrieve the coin- and makes the decision as to whether or not the Code is changed.
4. If there is a tie for first, the tying players both spend their coins. A sub-Auction, under these rules, between only the tying players occurs.
5. If a sub-Auction ties, the tying players both spend their coins. The remaining coins of each player are placed value-down and shuffled; one coin of each suit is selected, and the player with the higher value wins the Auction. The randomly selected coin is NOT spent. If the players tie, all tying players roll one die; the highest number wins (null is low). Ties on dice are resolved with more die rolls.

6. One special rule: Null coins are NEVER spent. If a null coin would be spent, its owner simply keeps it. The only time a null coin would regularly be spent is if all players tie with nulls, as nulls are low.

GAME OVER:

After every player's turn, each player should check to see if his or her Goal Value is equal to the Master Code. If it is, that player reveals his or her Goal Value, and that player has won the game.

A BIT OF STRATEGY:

Bluff. That which drives this game to its conclusion is determining what other players' Goal Values are from how they act- and if you give bad information, you can go a long way to confusing your opponents.

Conversely, don't over-bluff. If the code is pretty much yours, bid strongly to keep it that way- or put the last number into place.

Save your 5 for when you really, really, really need it.

Bid moderately strongly on numbers one higher or one lower than your target number- even if you don't have the needed number, somebody else may Push it anyway.

If you never even see a particular number in your code, even after a few reshuffles, somebody has it in hand and it's time to start forcing distiles. But if you stop forcing distiles as soon as you find it, it might be a dead giveaway as to what the number is- so perhaps a few more are in order?

Remember which tiles are placed out in the initial Master Code. Nobody has any of these tiles in his or her Goal Value.