

24, KINGS: A GAME

# 24, KINGS: A GAME

by

Dr. Ryan Matthew Thurman

## INTRODUCTION

My name is Dr. Ryan Matthew Thurman and I'm a bit of a mathematician. I also make and do so many other things. Here, I have made an exciting card game, from two standard card decks. This implies an initial card count of 104 for this game. It means that there are 13 face cards in 4 suites, each doubled, in play. As with many other games, the overall objective is to form hand(s) having some value in relation to other hand(s).

To form this game, I began by placing twelve of the thirteen faces into a grid or matrix. Thus forming natural hands. One can picture this grid easily by placing Aces and 2's at the top-left, 3's and 4's next below, 5's and 6's at the bottom-left. Then, we may picture 7's and 8's at the top-right, 9's and 10's next, and finally J's and Q's at the bottom-right. This leaves only the Kings. I chose to place Kings at cardinal directions along the grid, so as to form hands.

I used a few concepts from poker to form a few of these hands, namely those not occurring naturally within my grid. I have chosen to call the most natural hands Unholy. These are the hands that form directly from the grid system itself: Aces and 2's, 5's and 6's, 7's and 8's, and J's and Q's, respectively. The other, holier, hands follow a more artificial forms. For instance, the Kingdom hand is related to a Royal Flush (from Poker) while the Southie hand is similarly defined. There are also the East-to-West hands, consisting a little more naturally of 4's and 10's for an Even Steven and 3's and 9's for an Odd Todd.

This all makes up 8 separate hands. I then formed a Super version of each by placing restrictions on the suites involved. The restrictions are based on the placement of relevant Kings. For example, the Super Kingdom consists of the highest non-king cards in the suite of the First King. Some of the Supers have a little bit stranger of a definition. A Super 7's, for instance, consists of three 7's and three 8's, half coming from the First King, and half from the Third King. Note: The First King is at the northern-most point of play, from the perspective of The Turn, while the Second King takes West, the Third takes East and the Fourth King takes the South position.

With the Super and standard version of each hand total, so far, we're up to 16 hands. We're almost there.! So, to round out the 24 hands possible within this game, I added half hands, consisting of certain subsets of corresponding Super hands. For instance, a Half Todd consists of either {3, 9, 9} or {3, 3, 9} all in the Second or Third King's relevant suite. These half hands allowed me to carry certain players along in tournament play. The idea here is that players will hedge their point losses by forming half hands as they, overall, attempt to form more profitable hands. In order to call "HAND!" by way of half hands, one must have exactly two half hands, in addition to the always-required Pointer.

As if all of this wasn't complicated enough, I then worked certain King rules into the game. In each turn, one can dump a King, play a King, dethrone a King, or even pretend to others that they don't have a King by discarding said King face down. That's four unique ways to influence the game, via Kings, each turn. They MUST be pretty important.

I sincerely hope that all of this makes sense and is actually fun :-)

By the way, the name is short of: "24 HANDS, 8 KINGS."

Here's to having some fun.

Ryan, November 8th '25

## OFFICIAL RULES

Unlike many other games, this one has three intertwined phases. In the first phase, known as the Castle Phase, we set up the initial state of the game, by drawing cards to form an initial structure. In the second phase, the Kingdom Phase, this structure is then used to create incentives around a set of predefined hands, each having a rather dynamic number of points associated with it. To wit, some of the hands, like the Unholy hands, have a value based on the *difference* between two castle values. The rest of the hands make their points from either a single castle value (like the East-to-West hands) or the sum of two castle values (like the North-to-South hands). This makes the Kingdom Phase very interesting. Each player ends up chasing some hand or set of hands, only to have the value of each castle change, rendering their hand(s) meaningless. This, I find to be a thing of beauty, call it chaos.

At some point, *some* player will correctly call a set of hands. Then, the game moves into its final phase, The Calculus. Here we assign points to each player, sometimes negatively. I find negative points to be quite cool. They *should* have the tendency to make tournaments more interesting. And so I have made it this way. Once points are determined and a winner is crowned, sometimes *not* the person calling us into The Calculus, the game is over. Generally, I expect players to follow some sort of tournament format, where points travel in sum across a predetermined number of games, say three, five, or seven. Now, let's see how each phase of this game works in detail.

### The Castle Phase

When the game begins *some* player must act as The Turn. Their initial responsibility is to shuffle the exactly 104 cards coming from two standard playing-card decks. Once this overall deck is shuffled, The Turn then works to form castles. This is known as the Castle Phase of the game. This phase sets the order of each suite in relation to each King, as well as the initial value of each castle, and therefore the number of points associated with each hand. The first card drawn becomes the First King with value provided by the face value of this card. This card is placed northerly along the playing field with respect to The Turn. Next, we seek to establish the Second King by drawing until the next suite shows. As we draw, we discard all irrelevant cards into a face-up discard pile; those cards having the *same suite* as already-established castles. The Second King is placed westernly, to the southwest of the First King. We continue this process until each castle has a value. Specifically, the Third King is placed easternly, to the southeast of the First King and parallel to the Second King. The Fourth King is placed southernly, due south of the First King and southeast the Second King, southwest the Third King.

At this point, we are ready to begin the Kingdom Phase.

### The Kingdom Phase

Next, in the Kingdom Phase, The Turn distributes seven cards to each player, one per player at a time. Each player now has a set of cards with which to form a set of partial and/or complete hands (see THE HANDS below). Sometimes a complete hand may happen to form initially, but this is unlikely. What is more likely is that each player will start with a set of partial hands, some partial half hands or an overlapping collection of partial six-card hands. For example, Jasper, a hypothetical player of this game, may have, at initial draw, the queen of hearts, an ace of spades, two diamond Kings, a 2 of hearts, a Jack of hearts, and a 6 of clovers. Suppose that Jasper's hypothetical Castle Phase resulted in First King 2 of hearts, Second King 3 of clovers, Third King Queen of diamonds, and Fourth King 7 of spades. Now, we may create a set based on Jasper's cards, one that better reflects the structure of this game:  $\{Q_1, A_4, K_3, K_3, 2_1, J_1, 6_2\}$ .

We see from his cards that Jasper has two cards of an Aces High, but only one for Super Aces. He has single card from a Super Special (i.e., the 6 of clovers). He has nothing to make up a Lucky 7's. He has a single Queen, which is not part of a Super Royalty (because it is not Third or Fourth King) and he has a single Jack also not of Super Royalty. He has nothing to make up an Even Steven or Odd Todd, as he lacks 3's, 9's, 4's and 10's. Finally, he has two Kings two play in several different ways. This may a good time to bring back reality, and continue with our own *real* game.

Once cards have been dealt, each player will have seven cards with which to form hands. The first turn of the game goes to the player next in line to be The Turn. For instance, if Misty is sitting to the left of Veronica, The Turn, and everyone has agreed to move clock-wisely, then Misty shall be next, The Turn, meaning that she goes first, in the current game. Misty, AKA whomever is sitting to the left of your current *dealer*, in real life, goes first. If you all had chosen to play counter-clock-wisely, then the player to the right of the turn would have gone first. I'm sure you get it, so let's play.

Each player must do exactly one of the following each turn:

- DISCARD ONLY:
  - FACE-DOWN DISCARD:
    - Discard a card face-down, then draw a card
  - FACE-UP DISCARD:
    - Discard a non-king card face-up, then draw a card
- DUMP A KING:
  - Discard a King face-up, then draw two cards; discard one
- PLAY A KING:
  - One may play a King by following the rules:
    - The suite of the King must match the suite of the relevant castle
    - If the current value of this castle is less than King, the previous value card becomes a Subject of the played King, and is therefore placed beneath this King in the playing field
    - If the current value is King, then the played King forms a Double King with the current, doubling the value of the relevant castle
    - Draw two cards; discard one
- DETHRONE A KING:
  - One may revert a castle back to its Subject by placing a King of the same suite onto a (King, Subject) pair then discarding both Kings face-up
  - Draw two cards; discard one
- CALL "HAND!":
  - Hands may be called according to the following rules:
    - The player calling "HAND!" has a collection of hand(s) and a Pointer
      - In this case, the game is called and points are assigned as described in detail below
    - The player calling "HAND!" has no such collection of hands
      - In this case, the calling player has their points assigned, based on current values, and the game continues without them

Here, we have assumed the presence of two separate discard piles: one face-up and one face-down. Along with the draw pile, these piles should be placed conveniently within the field of play, so that each may easily reach said piles. Finally, *to draw* is to draw from the draw pile, not the discard piles. We now move to The Calculus, a phase were points are assigned, and a winner is crowned, because someone correctly called "HAND!"

Note: discard piles are to be shuffled into the draw pile by The Turn whenever there is a need for more cards.

## The Calculus

Here, we assign points according to the following rules:

- The value of each castle becomes fixed once a player has correctly called “HAND!”
- The player calling “HAND!” must compute their points first, publicly, so that all may see
- Each player receives the same points for the same hands, as determined by the table below
- Each player must designate, at the outset of computation, a Pointer card for which they receive face value
- Each King may take down one other card without penalty
- Holding two or more Kings at computation nullifies the need for penalty
- All non-king cards that a) do not form a hand and b) have not been saved by the presence of one or more Kings will receive negative face value

Now, based on the rules above, each player will end up with a certain number of points. These points can then be used across tournament play as a sort of traveling sum. Too bad for those whose calculus leads to the negative.

Table 1. THE HANDS ( $K_i$  is the value of the  $i$ th castle)

Hand	Structure	Points
Super Kingdom	$\{Q_1, J_1, 10_1, 9_1, 8_1, 7_1\}$	$3*(K_1 + K_4)$
Kingdom	$\{Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7\}$	$2*(K_1 + K_4)$
Half Kingdom	Any Consecutive Half of Super	$1*(K_1 + K_4)$
Super Southie	$\{A_4, 2_4, 3_4, 4_4, 5_4, 6_4\}$	$2*(K_1 + K_4)$
Southie	$\{A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$	$1*(K_1 + K_4)$
Half Southie	Any Consecutive Half of Super	$(1/2)*(K_1 + K_4)$
Super Steven	Even Steven with 3 $K_2$ and 3 $K_3$	$2*K_2$
Even Steven	$\{4, 4, 4, 10, 10, 10\}$	$1*K_2$
Half Steven	$\{4, 10, 10\}$ or $\{4, 4, 10\}$ from Super	$(1/2)*K_2$
Super Todd	Odd Todd with 3 $K_2$ and 3 $K_3$	$2*K_3$
Odd Todd	$\{3, 3, 3, 9, 9, 9\}$	$1*K_3$
Half Todd	$\{3, 9, 9\}$ or $\{3, 3, 9\}$ from Super	$(1/2)*K_3$
Super Aces	Aces High with 3 $K_1$ and 3 $K_2$	$2* K_1 - K_2 $
Aces High	$\{A, A, A, 2, 2, 2\}$	$1* K_1 - K_2 $
Half Aces	$\{A, 2, 2\}$ or $\{A, A, 2\}$ from Super	$(1/2)* K_1 - K_2 $
Super Special	The Special Case with 3 $K_2$ and 3 $K_4$	$2* K_2 - K_4 $
The Special Case	$\{5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6\}$	$1* K_2 - K_4 $
Half Special	$\{5, 6, 6\}$ or $\{5, 5, 6\}$ from Super	$(1/2)* K_2 - K_4 $
Super 7's	Lucky 7's with 3 $K_1$ and 3 $K_3$	$2* K_1 - K_3 $
Lucky 7's	$\{7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8\}$	$1* K_1 - K_3 $
Half 7's	$\{7, 8, 8\}$ or $\{7, 7, 8\}$ from Super	$(1/2)* K_1 - K_3 $
Super Royalty	Pure Royalty with 3 $K_3$ and 3 $K_4$	$2* K_3 - K_4 $
Pure Royalty	$\{J, J, J, Q, Q, Q\}$	$1* K_3 - K_4 $
Half Royalty	$\{J, Q, Q\}$ or $\{J, J, Q\}$ from Super	$(1/2)* K_3 - K_4 $

## ALTERNATIVE PLAY

Now that you've seen how to play the game in a sort of standard way, let's explore some alternative rules, beginning with those related to THE HANDS. In general, the length of time it takes to play a round of this game is directly related to the hands permitted, and how strict one wishes to be with these hands. As such, here are some alternatives:

- **THE QUICK:**
  - Here, we choose to relax the need for half hands to be Super. This makes the game faster by making the formation of hands quicker.
- **THE STANDARD:**
  - Here, hands are as outlined on the previous page. Half hands must be Super and must follow certain King/suite rules too, as outlined so far.
- **THE ELDERS:**
  - Here, we make things MORE strict and say that half hands are omitted altogether. We still allow the other 16 hands.
- **THE TIME-SINK:**
  - Here, we choose to permit only Super hands, thus restricting the game to a total of 8 possible hands.

In addition to the variants above, one may also wish to apply the following:

- **SUBJECTS COUNT:**
  - Here, we allow the value of the Subject to be added to that castle's value, much like we already do for a Double King.
- **NO HARM-NO FOUL:**
  - In the assessment of points, we may choose NOT to deduct for spare cards.
- **SHUFFLE ME OUT:**
  - Here, we restrict the game to a single shuffle. When the cards run out, we begin computing points.
- **FACE-UP CONSEQUENCES:**
  - In this version, the face-up discard pile is removed from shuffling, making the cards within removed from game play.
- **STATIC CASTLES:**
  - Here, the value of each castle is fixed to its original value, regardless of our still following the rest of the rules above.
- **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY:**
  - Now, what if ANY King of ANY suite were allowed to play as if were of the correct suite? This is the game.
- **GHOUL-RAISER:**
  - Here, Kings can be used to draw either the top card or some other card within the face-up discard pile. This creates an incentive to discard face-up throughout the game, strategically.

Finally, we may choose not to play this game at all, instead choosing to play something like Poker.

If, after all of this, you still have questions: [rythur@analytllc.com](mailto:rythur@analytllc.com).

This game and its rules are the creative works of Dr. Ryan Matthew Thurman. If you enjoy this game, then maybe find a way to support me.

With love and fun.