

Rummikub Crisscross Variations

Standard Rummikub:

Rummikub is based on the “Rummy” card game and is sometimes called “Tile Rummy”. It replaces playing cards Ace to King in four “suits” with plastic tiles numbered 1 to 13 in four “colors”: red, blue, black and orange (or sometimes yellow) but with two each of the four colors. Besides these 104 numbered tiles, two wild “Joker” (☺) tiles are added to make a complete four-player game of 106 plastic tiles and four racks to hold the tiles. Each player selects fourteen tiles to place on their rack without seeing the value of the tiles beforehand.

The object of the game is to end the game by being the first to “play” all your tiles onto the board as legal groups of three or more tiles vertically or horizontally arranged as either

“Sets” of three or four same numbered tiles of different colors (e.g., **5 5 5**) or as

“Runs” of three or more consecutively numbered tiles of the same color (e.g., **2 3 4**).

The two Joker tiles (☺) are wild and can be played in place of any tile, and they can be “stolen” by another player who replaces the Joker by the tile it represents from their rack (or from freeing it) and uses it to form a legal group. A play can consist of merely adding tiles to those already played by others. Rearranging played tiles is allowed, so long as the remaining groups are all “legal”. Any player who can make a play may volunteer to play first if all agree, otherwise each player picks a tile from the unused ones, and the player with the highest numbered tile plays first. A player’s turn ends after they have stopped playing tiles, and play continues in clockwise rotation. If a player fails to play any tile, their turn ends, and they must draw another tile from the unused tiles as a penalty. (The standard forbids a player from playing until the sum of the numbers on the tiles they play adds to thirty or more, and forbids runs that pass the 13 tile.)

Crisscross Variations:

For most players, the fun of Rummikub is playing tiles, so the following rules try to increase the opportunities for playing tiles:

Crisscross: When adding tiles to those already played, they can be added perpendicularly crossword style using the tile at the intersection as part of the new group. For example, add blue 7 and red 7 tiles vertically to a horizontal run of black 6, 7, and 8:

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      7
     6 7 8
      7
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Extended Runs: Runs can pass 13. For example: **12 13 1 2**

Initial Duplicates: When first selecting tiles for a player’s rack, any exactly duplicated tile may be exchanged for another from the unused tiles but only before the first turn.

Immediate Play: On a player’s turn, they may play any tiles that complete legal groups, without the “standard” delay of thirty points.

Optional Play: On a player's turn, they can play any number of tiles that complete legal groups or none at all as they wish. If they choose to play no tile, they must draw one tile from the unused tiles as a penalty. (A player might choose to save a play for their next turn.)

Extended Turns: Although the game officially ends when one player plays their last tile and wins, the fun can be extended by continuing turns as desired. Here players can show their remaining tiles and the other players can help find legal plays for them, providing more fun and instruction for less experienced players. The goal of this cooperative playing is to see all tiles legally played.

Exhausted Unused Tiles: If a player needs to draw a penalty tile from the unused tiles but there are none left, that player's turn ends and play passes to the next player.

Additional Players: More than the "standard" limit of four players are accommodated by adding additional racks as needed. For more than eight players, adding another color of twenty-six tiles and one joker is recommended, and beginning with only twelve tiles instead of the usual fourteen may be helpful.

Controversial Rules: The players must agree on whether to include these additional rules that some players might consider too confusing:

Sixes and Nines are identical: The 6 and 9 tiles are exactly the same, so these examples are legal: **6 9 6** and **6**

4 5 9
9

Jokers Remain Wild: A Joker tile (☺) remains wild after being played, permitting the following legal plays:

Of course, stealing the Joker is now more difficult, because replacing it by a 4 would break the set of 7s and replacing it by a 7 would break the run, so tiles must be rearranged to ensure that remaining groups are legal. These legal plays: make the Joker "Super Wild"!

2 3 ☺
7
7

5
5
1 2 ☺ 12 13
9
10

Starting: Before starting, a Joker wild card is placed in the center with more face-down tiles as needed to provide one tile for each player. After mixing the tiles, each player selects a tile for their fourteen tiles, and the player who chooses the Joker becomes the first player. The Jokers provide more fun and opportunities for making legal plays, but in many games, no joker is ever played. This starting method guarantees at least one Joker will be played.