

Game for 5 or More

LIAR'S POKER

Set Up

Liar's Poker can be an interesting way to pass some time with friends or to make a decision, such as who pays for lunch. All that is needed is one piece of U.S. paper currency per player. The denomination does not matter. It is better if the players use a different bill for each round. If U.S. currency is unavailable, you can use any things with eight-to-ten-digit numbers printed on them. Lacking such, have everyone write their phone number and street address (or some other combination of numbers) on slips of paper, put them in a pile, and then randomly draw a slip to use as their number.

The Action

The lead player (chosen randomly) begins by declaring a poker hand (making a bid) of a particular rank, say, a pair of fours. By doing so, he is betting on there being at least two fours among all the digits of the serial numbers on the bills currently held by all of the players. He might have two fours on his own bill, or one or none. The next player must then either challenge the first player's claim (*i.e.* call the bidder a liar) or declare that she holds some combination that out ranks the previous bid. This bidding process continues — with the next player and the next each claiming that a higher ranking poker hand can be made from the combined digits — until someone makes a bid that all the other players challenge. Then the numbers are revealed.

For example, if player A makes a bid and player B challenges, than player C may either challenge also or make a higher bid. The next player may then either challenge C or increase the bid again. Once player C has bid, player B's previous challenge is ignored.

If the high bidder can construct her bid hand from the digits in the numbers, than she has won. Otherwise she loses.

Rank Variations

Some people play zeros are low and nines are high. Others treat ones as aces (highest rank) and zeros as tens (next highest). It's a good idea to know what system is being used prior to playing.

The Stakes

This game can be used to make a decision such as buying a round of drinks, or it can easily be turned into a drinking game. When played for money, there are virtually endless possibilities. Often, players bet a set amount of money per round. If the highest bidder wins, he takes the pot and everyone antes again. If the highest-bid hand cannot be found, various options are employed, such as the next-highest bidder found to be accurate is the winner, or the pot stays the same and the loser pays each of the other players a set amount, or the other players take back their antes and the loser replaces the pot.

Number of Players

Although, in theory, any number can play, more than five or six are not feasible because the odds become pretty good that there will be at least five of every digit. Of course, you could play with "seven-card hands," but accurately determining the number of digits gets to be rather difficult — especially during drinking games. ■



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