



# CAPTAIN'S ORDERS

A Pirately Game  
for 4 to 8 Players



**Captain's Orders** is a game of bluffing and deduction. The players are mutinous pirates, each trying to gather a crew of allies (their cards) and overthrow the Captain. But the Captain and his allies may hide among you, and they aim to foil your plans!

This game was designed for Brett Bean's **Pirate Pairs Deck**, but of course you can play with any Pairs deck.

Be patient with this one! There are some unusual choices, and players will take a few rounds to figure out what they are doing.

**Players:** 4 to 8

**You Need:** A Pairs deck and a way to keep score

**Definitions:** The **Captain** is a secret player, the person who holds the **lowest card**. The identity of Captain can change throughout the game, whenever cards are played or passed.

All non-Captain players are **Mutineers**.

The Mutineers can win the round in two ways: either by discovering the Captain, or by having the most points in their hands when the round is over.

The Captain wins the round by **running out of cards**.

**Multiple Captains:** Sometimes there will be a tie for lowest card, in which case there is more than one Captain.

These players are *not* on the same team. The Mutineers can win by discovering either of them, and either of the Captains can singlehandedly win the round.

**Each Round:** To begin each round, shuffle the deck and deal a hand of six cards to each player. Play begins on the dealer's left and proceeds clockwise.

Pass the deal to the left after each round.

**On Your Turn:** Your options depend on whether there is an *order* on the table. Orders are cards played in the center of the table as described below.

**No Order:** If there is no order on the table, you must take one of the following actions: ***play an order***, ***pass a card***, ***ask for a card***, or ***discover the Captain***.

**Play an Order:** Play a card from your hand face up in the center of the table. This card becomes the new *order*, and you are its *owner*.

**Pass a Card:** Pass one card from your hand to another player, face down. That player takes that card into their hand, and then must then discard one card face down.

**Ask for a Card:** Ask another player to pass you a card from their hand, face down. You take this card into your hand, and must then discard one card face down.

**Discover the Captain:** If you think you know who the Captain is, you may accuse that player. This action ends the round, and all players must immediately reveal their hands to discover the true identity of the Captain(s).

If you are a Mutineer, and you correctly identify a Captain, you win the round. If not, then you can't win the round, and the other Mutineer with the most points in their hand wins the round.

**Standing Order:** When an order is already on the table, you must either ***follow*** the order, ***belay*** the order, or ***discover the Captain*** as described above.

**Exception:** If the order is yours, and the turn has traveled all the way around the table, then you take no action on this turn. Instead, discard the order, and the turn passes to your left.

**Follow the Order:** To “follow” the order, you must pass a card face down to its owner. The rank of the card you pass must be ***equal to or higher than*** the rank of the order. (There is no discarding after this pass.)

**Belay the Order:** To “belay” the order, play a new order of a *lower rank* than the current order. The previous order is discarded, and the new order now belongs to you.

**Discover the Captain:** This works the same as above.

**Ending the Round:** The round ends when any player runs out of cards, or when any player tries to discover the Captain.

**Running out of Cards:** Whenever you *empty your hand*, either by passing a card or by playing an order, you may reveal the card, and declare that you are the Captain. This ends the round, and if you’re right, you win. If you were passing that card away, but you are not the Captain, then the card goes into that player’s hand for scoring.

**Multiple Captains:** If more than one player holds the lowest card, then either one of them can win by running out of cards, and any Mutineer can win by accusing *either one of them*. However, one Captain *can’t* win by identifying another one.

**Winning:** There are three ways to win the round: Either to be the Captain and empty your hand; to correctly identify the Captain; or (if neither of those happen), to have the most points in your hand at the end of the round. Each card is worth its face value in points.

Regardless of how you win, you earn a single “win” for the victory, and the first player to win three rounds wins the game.

If two or more Mutineers win the round with the same score, they each score a win for that round.

**Strategy:** Because you can pass any card when there is no standing order, you can pass away your low card and change the identity of Captain. Then it’s up to the player who receives that card, whether to remain the Captain or throw the low card away.

Table position, play order, the history of the hand, and even a player’s previous decisions are all part of understanding what choices they will make, and this is part of why this one takes a while to get off the ground. But stick with it, because the games are short, and playing correctly is worth the wait!