

Dragon's Bluff by Martin Wallace

Number of Players: 3 to 4

Summary: A game of bluffing and cunning misdirection. Try to get the most cards aligned to your secret identity, or work to end the game early for a win with a Hydra.

Mechanic: Bluffing, Secret identities

Objective: Have the most Victory Points (VP) at the end of the game.

Pick out 6 pairs of dragon cards – it does not matter which ones, apart from the three-headed Hydra. Pick out 1 three-headed Hydra. Take 1 dragon from each of the 6 pairs, and place them on display, face up, in a row where all players can reach them. Take the other 6 cards, and shuffle together with the three-headed Hydra card. Deal out 1 to each player randomly. These cards can be looked by their owners, but remain secret from other players. They should be placed face down in front of the player's position. This card represents each player's secret scoring objective. Take ALL of the remaining cards, including the ones not dealt out earlier, and shuffle them together. Deal out seven cards to each player. Remaining cards are not examined.

The first player to claim they are the first player, becomes the first player. Otherwise the youngest player is the first player.

Gameplay:

In player order, each player plays 1 card face down below 1 of the cards in the display. After a player has placed a card, each player in clockwise order from the active player has the option to call their bluff. If called, the active player reveals the card. If it does not match the face up card it was played under, that player must retrieve the card, and place it face up in front of their position. If it does match the card, then the challenger takes the card and places it face up in front of their position. This card is now a penalty card.

Alternatively, a player can choose not to play a card under a display card, but instead place it face down in front of their position. Be careful not to confuse this card with your secret ID.

If a player has the three-headed Hydra card as their secret ID, and 3 or more face up penalty cards in front of them, they can reveal themselves, and end the game. However, they can only do this if they do not have the most penalty cards (Total: face up and face down).

Game End:

The game continues until all players have either played all of their cards, or the three-headed dragon player has chosen to reveal themselves.

Players reveal their secret objective cards. Each card under your objective card in the display is worth 3VPs (they do not have to match).

If a three-headed Hydra player ended the game early, then they score 10VPs. Otherwise, they score 1 VP per face up card in front of all other players combined.

Each face-up penalty card in front of your position loses you 2VPs. Each face down card loses you 1 VP.

The highest final score wins, even if the highest score is 0 or a negative number.

Long variant: Play 3 rounds with the highest total score from all 3 rounds winning.