HOCUS

Introduction

Hocus is a classic card game beloved by ancient folk, now redesigned for modern humans who may or may not have the gift of magic. It is about managing a limited hand of cards and wielding spells to create ranked sets of cards that are superior to your opponents' sets. Using elements from classic Poker games, Hocus expands and revises them to create a fresh and magical experience.

In Hocus, 2-5 players build the best Sets by combining shared Communities of 4 cards with 2 personal Pocket cards. Unlike in traditional Poker, players build Communities, Pockets, and Pots using cards from their Hands on individual turns. There are multiple Communities, each with a Pot, and two Pockets per player.

Components

62 Cards — 24 Advanced Spells — 5 Ref. Cards — 10 Score Cards

Strength · Suit · Points · Special Text

Setup

① Give each player a Reference card and set of 2 Score Tracking cards. Poker chips also work well!

② Each player takes a set of 3 Advanced Spell cards of the same type (e.g., Chaos) and places the cards face up in front of them.

③ Set up the deck: In a 5 player game, use all cards. In a 2-4 player game, remove the 0 and 14 Strength cards. In a 2 player game, also remove the 1 and 13 Strength cards. Set aside the Jokers. Shuffle the cards.

④ In a 2-3 player game, deal 10 cards face down to each player. In a 4-5 player game, deal 9 instead. The remaining cards form a draw deck.

⑤ Randomly determine a first player.

Here is a 3 player game at the start of the game. Every player has a hand of 10 cards, 3 Spells in front of them, and the remaining deck is set to the side.

How to Win

The game ends when at least one player has 25 or more Points at the end of a Round. The player with the most Points at the end of the game wins. In the event of a tie, tied players share the victory.

For a longer or shorter game, modify the number of Points required to end the game.

How to Play

The game is played in Rounds, which consist of a series of individual player turns. Each Round, beginning with the first player and continuing clockwise, players take turns in which they must use any one Spell, as well as optionally one Owl they own (before or after the Spell). Spells and Owls are explained in their own sections below.

Spells, generally speaking, add cards to the Communities, Pockets, and Pots. Each Community is a pool of cards shared by all players. Every Community has a Pot, which determines its Point value. And finally, every player can have up to 2 Pockets, which are their private cards they combine with a Community to form Sets to win the Pot.

There is no limit to the number of cards that may be in a Hand. Players with no cards in Hand at the start of their turn must pass and use no additional Spells. When only one player remains, that player can no longer draw cards using any method.

There are two Communities in games with 2-4 players, and three Communities with 5 players. The end of the Round is triggered when all Communities have four cards. When this happens, every player, including the one who triggered the end of the Round on their turn, plays one final turn. The Round also ends immediately in the rare case no players have cards in their Hands. After the Round ends, move to Resolve Showdowns.

Here is a Round in progress, with 3 players. An Owl card has been played to Community 1. A Sword and Cup card have been played to Community 2, which also has a single card played face down to Pot 2. Read Spells: Basic, Advanced, and Owls for more details.

Resolve Showdowns

Players use their Pockets with the Communities to build Sets to try to win the Points in each Pot. There is one Showdown per Community. First, reveal all face down cards in all Communities. Then, the first player chooses the order to resolve Showdowns. For each Showdown:

① **Commit Pockets:** Beginning with the first player and continuing clockwise, each player chooses one Pocket to commit to the current Showdown. Players may pass instead, or might be forced to pass if they have fewer Pockets than there are Communities.

② **Reveal Pockets:** Players reveal the committed Pockets.

③ **Determine Winner:** The player with the best Set built using at most 5 cards from their Pocket and the Community wins. See the list of Sets on the next page for more information and tiebreaker rules.

④ **Score Points:** The winner adds the Point values shown on the cards in the Pot to their current Score. They adjust their Score Tracking cards such that the highest value revealed on the Tracker is the Score.

⑤ **Claim Owls:** The winner places any Owl cards from the Pot in front of them. In the event of a tied Showdown, no players claim Owls, although their Points are still allocated as normal.

Here is a Showdown being Resolved in a 3 player game. The players are resolving the lower Community (surrounded in red). The bottom and left players have pushed forward Pockets (face down) to use with the Community to build Sets. The right player only has 1 Pocket and has declined to play in this Showdown. They'll compete for the other Community. The lower Community has 3 cards in the Pot.

Beginning a New Round

If any player has 25 or more Points, the game is over and the player with the most Points wins. Otherwise, gather and shuffle all cards except claimed Owls. Deal 10 cards (9 for 4-5 players) to each player. The player with the fewest Points becomes the first player for the next Round, breaking ties to the left of the previous first player.

Sets

These can be played in a Showdown and are ordered from best to worst. Some Sets are only possible with five cards.

⑨ Straight Flush Ascending Strength sequence of five cards of the same Suit. Ties are resolved by comparing the highest Strength cards. *(Ex: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 beats 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)*

⑧ Four of a Kind Four cards of the same Strength. Ignore Suit. Ties are resolved by comparing the Strengths of the 4 of a Kind. *(Ex: Four 6s beats four 1s)*

⑦ Full House Three cards of the same Strength and two cards of a different matching Strength. Ignore Suit. Tied Full Houses are resolved by the highest 3 of a Kind, then, if still tied, by the highest Pair.

⑥ Flush Any five cards of the same Suit. Ignore Strength. Tied Flushes are resolved by comparing Strengths of the highest cards, then the next, until one Set has a higher card.

⑤ Straight An ascending Strength sequence of any five cards. Ignore Suit. Ties are resolved by comparing the highest Strength cards. *(Ex: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 beats 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)*

④ Three of a Kind Three cards of the same Strength. Ignore Suit. Ties are resolved by comparing the Strengths of the 3 of a Kind. *(Ex: Three 6s beats three 1s)*

③ Two Pair Two pairs of two cards each of the same Strength. Ignore Suit. Ties are resolved by comparing the highest pairs, then the other pairs if still tied.

② Pair Two cards of the same Strength. Ignore Suit. Ties are resolved by comparing Strength of Pairs. *(Ex: Two 11s beats two 7s)*

① High Card The highest Strength card wins. Ignore Suit.

Ties: If there is still a tie after observing the tiebreaker rules for the Set, players split the Pot evenly. Any uneven Points are not awarded.

Spells: Basic, Advanced, and Owls

Each turn, players must choose any one Spell they have access to and resolve its text. There are 3 Basic Spells that all players have access to, as well as their 3 Advanced Spells.

For all Spells, if the entire text of the Spell cannot be executed as written, the Spell cannot be used. There is no limit to the number of times a Spell can be used during a Round.

Basic Spells

Build Community: Place 1 card from your Hand in any Community. Cards are placed face up in Communities so all cards are visible. The Communities each contain 4 cards at maximum, and there are multiple Communities: 2 in 2-4 player games and 3 in 5 player games.

Build Pot: Place 1 card from your Hand sideways in a stack next to a Community as part of a Pot. Cards are placed face down in Pots. Every Community has a Pot, which can contain unlimited cards. Players cannot examine Pots unless a Spell specifically allows it.

Build Pocket: Place 1 or 2 cards from your Hand in one of your Pockets. Cards are placed face down in Pockets. Every player can have up to two Pockets, each with up to two cards. Players may only place cards in their own Pockets. Players may always examine their own Pockets, but may not move a card from a Pocket once placed.

Advanced Spells

In some cases, Advanced Spells will explicitly break the rules mentioned above. When this occurs, Advanced Spells override only the rules that are explicitly broken.

Common Spell Terms

Hand: The cards in a player's Hand. There is no maximum limit to the number of cards in a player's Hand.

Draw: Draw the top card of the deck into your Hand. If the deck is empty, no more cards can be drawn.

Return: Place a card from your Hand face down on the bottom of the draw deck.

Enchantment and Chronomancy

These Spells are truly advanced and add strange and wondrous concepts to the game. It is recommended you do not play with them until you are fully comfortable with Hocus.

Enchantment allows the player to place the Spell card next to a Community, Pot, or Pocket to gain bonuses as indicated. For example, once Power Siphon is played next to a Community, any time any player plays to that Community (such as Build Community), the Enchantment player draws 1 card! At the end of a round, the Enchantment player reclaims all played Enchantment Spells.

Chronomancy introduces **Shift**, which is a bonus action. At the start of their turns, the Chronomancy player may choose any 1 Shift to use. Then, like everyone else, the Chronomancy player uses one Spell and possibly one Owl. If a player chooses to use a Shift, their chosen Spell does not have to be the one on the same card as the Shift.

Owls

Owls are one of the four Suits of cards in the deck. Owls are claimed by the winner of each Showdown. If Owls are present in the Pot, not only does the winner score the Point Value of all cards, Owls included, but they also place the Owls in front of them face up. Claimed Owls are not part of a Hand and will not be shuffled into the deck for the next Round.

Owls grant bonus Spells. On a player's turn, before or after using any one normal Spell, a player may resolve the text on one Owl in front of them and then Return the Owl. Owls are only kept for a single Round. If not used in the Round after they are claimed, they are Returned to the deck before Resolve Showdowns.
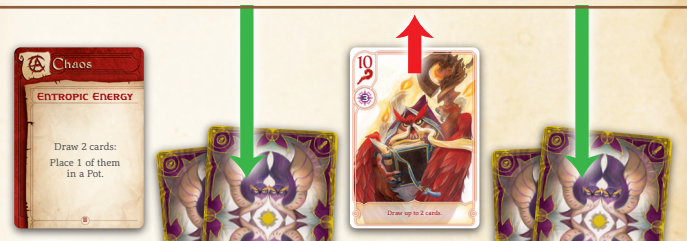
On her turn, Morgan chooses the Chaos Spell Entropic Energy. After fully resolving it, she draws 2 Cards, then Returns the 10 of Owls. Note that she could have Returned the Owl first, then chosen her one Spell.

Classic Hocus

For new players and a simpler experience, we recommend Classic Hocus. Play only with Basic Spells: do not use Advanced Spells and do not claim Owls from Pots (they become just like every other Suit).

Credits

Game Design & Development:
Joshua Buergel and Grant Rodiek

Artwork:
Tiffany Turrill

Graphic Design & Layout:
Adam P. McIver

Playtesters:
Miranda Antonelli, Ori Avtalion, Eric Batchelder, H.P. Canwell, Jarrett Carberry, Jerome Collin, Jonathan Cox, Marguerite Cottrell, Andrew DeBenedictis, Chevee Dodd, Darcy Dixon, Jennifer Freeman, Kevin Gibson, Megan Ginter, Dave Gordon, Megan Hazen, Colum Higgins, Patrick Hillier, Robin Lees, Cory Loewen, David Miotke, Mike Mullins, Graham Nardone, Justin Neddo, Mike Pelayo, Marc Prindle, Tiffany Ralph, Dylan Rodiek, Morgane Rodiek, Melinda Rodiek, Antonio Romeo, Julia Sabin, Mathew Tate, Matt Yang

Visit HyperboleGames.com for more information, a How to Play video, and an official Guide, including ways to use your Jokers.