

Ladder 29 by Ben Pinchback and Matt Riddle

2 - 5 Players, 30 min, Ages 13+

Overview

Ladder 29 is a hot game of ladder climbing firefighters extinguishing their hands of cards.

Each round, players are dealt 13 cards each, pass 3 cards to the player on the left, and in reverse scoring order select a Hot Spot Card. The Hot Spot Card details the number of points awarded depending on the position the player goes out and a challenge that applies only to that player for the round. The first player to extinguish their hand by playing all thirteen cards wins the round. Play continues until all but one player have also extinguished their hands.

The first player to score 29 points triggers the end of the game. The player with the most points wins.

Components

65 Firefighter Cards (four suits/colors # 1-15) and 5 Special Personnel Cards

16 Hot Spot Cards

3 Score Track Cards

5 Reference Cards

5 Score Trackers

Setup

Place the Score Track Cards off to the side of the player area building a single score track.

Each player receives a Score Tracker and Reference Card of the same color. Place a randomly selected score tracker on the “door” of the score track and then randomly place the remaining score trackers one at a time, one space higher than the previous score tracker.

Note: In a 3p game, place markers on the “door”, 1, and 2.

Place the Start Player Hot Spot Card face up near the center of the play area. Shuffle the remaining hot spot cards and place them face down in a stack near the play area.

Reveal additional hot spot cards equal to the number of players. Including the start player card there will be one more hot spot card than the number of players.

Example: 2p = 3 score cards, 3p = 4 score cards, 4p = 5 score cards, 5p = 6 score cards

Shuffle the Firefighter deck and deal each player 13 cards. Unused cards are placed out of play for the round.

Gameplay

Ladder 29 is played in rounds. Each round, players will:

1. Pass Firefighter Cards
2. Backdraft Hot Spot Cards
3. Play Firefighter Cards

1. Pass Firefighter Cards

At the beginning of each round, all players will simultaneously pass 3 cards to the player on their left.

2. Backdraft Hot Spot Cards

In reverse score order (lowest to highest on the score track), each player selects one face up hot spot card.

The hot spot card contains the potential points players may earn this round and a challenge that applies **only to them** for the round.

Once all players have selected a hot spot card, the player that selected the start player hot spot card will begin play. If no one selected the start player hot spot card, the player with the lowest score begins play.

3. Play Firefighter Cards

Players may lead and play Singles, Pairs, Triples, Four-of-a-kind, or Runs of three or more. The start player begins the round by leading any legal play of their choice. *See Legal Card Plays.*

After a player leads, play continues in clockwise order, with players either choosing to play or pass.

To play, players must play card groupings of the same type that was led **and** are higher than previously played cards

Example: If a pair was played, the next player may only play a higher pair or if a three card run was played, the next player may only play a higher three card run.

Note: **Subsequent runs played on a lead must be of the exact length of what was led** so if a four card run is played, subsequent runs must also be four cards. *Exception: See Flashovers.*

Players may pass even if they have a legal play, but once a player has passed they may not play any more cards until a new lead is played.

Play continues until all players except one have passed. That player may continue playing on the current lead as long as possible and then begin a new lead or immediately begin a new lead.

If a player extinguishes their hand during a lead, play continues as normal until all but one player has passed and that player now starts a new lead. **If the player that went out is also the last player to play (all other players pass), the player to their left inherits the lead and starts a new lead.**

The round ends once all players except one have played all of their cards.

Round End

Points are scored based on each player's hot spot card and the position they finished the round. The first player to go out receives the 1st place points on their hot spot card; the second player to go out receives the 2nd place points and so on.

The player who finished last (did not go out) ALWAYS receives 0 points and is the dealer for the next round.

Example: In a 3p game, the second player will receive the points printed on their hot spot card for 2nd place and the third player will receive 0 points, not the 3rd place points on their hot spot card. In a 2p game, whomever did not go out receives 0 points.

Points are tracked on the score track. The player currently highest on the score track scores points first, then the second highest and so on. **There may not be a tie on the score track.** If a score tracker would land on a score track space that is occupied, move to the next highest open space.

Players discard hot spot cards to the discard pile except the start player card which is returned to the play area for use in every round.

Reveal additional hot spot cards equal to the number of players. If there are not enough hot spot cards, shuffle the discarded hot spot cards and continue as normal.

The new dealer (whoever was last and scored 0 points in the previous round) collects the firefighter cards, shuffles them and deals 13 cards to each player.

Continue playing new rounds until a player **reaches or passes 29 on the score track**.

Game End

The game ends immediately after a round in which any player reaches or passes 29 on the score track. If more than one player passes 29 during scoring, the player that went the furthest past 29 wins the game.

Variant: For a **shorter** game, play four rounds. The player with the highest score after four rounds wins.

Legal Plays

Legal plays are Singles, Pairs, Triples, Four-of-a-kind and Runs of three cards or longer.

Higher must be either numerically higher (5>4>3>2>1) or higher by suit/color. Blue > Green > Red > Yellow

When playing on a lead, players **MUST** play exactly what is currently led. This means only pairs can be played during a pairs lead or only four card runs can be played during a four card run lead.

Single: A single played card. Singles can be defeated by a higher single.

Example: If a Blue 2 is played, any single card 3 or higher may be played on it. If a Red 5 is played, a Green or Blue 5 and any card 6 or higher may be played on it.

Pair: A combination of exactly two cards of the same number.

A pair can only be defeated by a pair containing a higher card than the highest card of the previous pair.

Example: If a pair of 9s is played containing the Red 9 and Green 9, a pair of 9s containing the Blue 9 and Yellow 9, or any pair of cards 10 or higher may be played on it. When playing a pair of the same numerical value, the highest suit/color card in the pair defines its rank (strength).

Triple: A combination of exactly three cards of the same number. Triples can only be defeated by triples of a higher number.

Example: If a triple 4s are played then triple 5s or higher may be played on it.

Run (sequence): A combination of at least three cards in sequential order i.e. 2-3-4 or 4-5-6-7. The order of the cards must be in sequential order, but can be any suit/color. A run can only be beaten by a higher run of the same length. i.e. a run of the same length to a higher ending card. The highest possible ending card in a straight is a 15.

Example: If the four card run 1-2-3-4 is played using the Green 4, a four card run 1-2-3-4 using the Blue 4 may be played on it because the Blue 4 is higher than the Green 4. In addition, any four card run ending with a higher number (2-3-4-5 or 6-7-8-9 etc) may be played.

Four-of-a-kind: A combination of exactly four cards of the same number. A four-of-a-kind can only be defeated by a four-of-a-kind of a higher number.

Flashover

Four-of-a-kind can be played as a Flashover on any lead provided it is the player's turn and they have not passed.

Flashovers are considered higher than whatever is played (except another higher 4-of-a-kind). Most of the time it ends the current lead, but a higher four-of-a-kind can be played by another player who has not passed to flashover the flashover.

Example: If a four-of-a-kind of 12s are played then a four-of-a-kind of 13s or higher may be played on it. As a flashover, if a 3 card run is played, 13-14-15, a player that has not passed may play any four-of-a-kind as a flashover. Another player that has not passed may play a higher four-of-a-kind as a flashover.

Special Personnel Cards

Chief - Chief may only be played as a single and has a value of 21. The Chief is the highest single.

Lieutenant - Lieutenant may only be played as a single and has a value of 18. The Lieutenant is the second highest single.

Dalmatian - Dalmatian may be played as a single or in runs as a value of 0. It may also be played as the 2nd card in any pair - it is wild in pairs. The strength of the pair is set by the other card. Example: If a Red 10 is played with the Dalmatian, it is a pair of 10s.

Rookie - Rookies may be played as a single or in runs as a value of 0, but a pair of Rookies is the highest pair. The Female Rookie (Blue) is the higher card of the two Rookies .

Example: If a pair of 15s (or any pair) is played then a pair of Rookies may be played on it.

Credits

Game Design: Ben Pinchback and Matt Riddle

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