



# the great big game in the teeny-weeny box



**rules, FAQs and more**

## rules

2 to 4 players. Ages 8 and up.  
Playing time: About 30 minutes.



### Contents

64 different cards, 2 Wild Cards  
plus instructions.

### The object of the game

To score the most points by  
adding cards in a **line** connected  
to cards already played.

A **line** consists of 2, 3 or 4  
cards in a row in which each  
individual property (color,  
shape and number) is **either**  
the same on each card  
**or** different on each card.

### The set up

You'll need a pencil and paper  
for scoring. Each player draws a  
random card. Highest face value  
goes first. Tied players redraw.  
Return cards, shuffle, and deal 4

cards face down to each player.  
Remaining cards, face down,  
form the draw pile. Place its top  
card face up in the center of the  
playing area. That's the starter  
card. Players pick up and look  
only at their own cards.

### How it works

Players take turns adding cards  
to the grid established by the  
starter card. All cards played  
must connect to the grid and be  
played in the same **line**.

Although on any one turn  
cards must be played in the  
same **line**, additional **lines**  
may be created and/or  
extended as a result.

Cards needn't be in any  
particular sequence, nor do they  
need to be placed right next to  
each other. In other words, on  
one turn, a **line** can be created  
and/or extended by adding  
cards to both ends of it.

Maximum allowable **line**  
length is 4 cards. If there are  
any gaps, it's not a **line**... and  
some spaces on the grid will be  
impossible to fill.

A 4 card **line** is called a **lot**.  
Creating one earns extra points.  
*See other side for examples.*

### On your turn

Add 1,2,3 or 4 cards to the  
grid, in the same **line**,  
connecting to cards already  
played. As a result, additional  
**lines** may be created and/or  
extended. Then, replenish your  
hand to 4 cards...

**or**

Pass... and trade some, all or  
none of your cards back to the  
bottom of the draw pile and take  
new ones.

**Play moves clockwise.**

### Easy as 1 2 3

*Since any 2 cards have some  
or no properties in common,  
**any 2 cards will work** to  
begin a **line**. The 3rd and 4th  
cards in that **line** must satisfy  
the requirements set by the  
first 2 cards.*

*Therefore, before adding  
the 3rd card to a **line**, look at  
the 3 cards that would be in  
that **line** and ask yourself:*

**1** Are the **colors** either all  
the same or all different on  
each card?

### Scoring

After each turn, add up the face  
values of all cards in each **line**  
either created or extended on  
that turn. If a card is part of 2  
**lines**, it is counted twice. Double  
points for the **entire turn** for  
each **lot** completed. Double  
again for playing all 4 of your  
cards on one turn.

**The game ends** when the  
deck has been depleted and one  
player plays his or her last card.  
Double points for that turn.

**High score wins!**

**2** Are the **shapes** either all  
the same or all different on  
each card?

**3** Are the **numbers** either  
all the same or all different on  
each card?

*If your answer to **any** of  
these is **no**, then it's not an  
allowable move.*

*Ask yourself these same  
questions before adding the  
4th card to create a **lot**.*

## examples

### Examples of a **Lot**



**Same color** on each card.  
**Different shapes** on each card.  
**Same number** on each card.



**Same color** on each card.  
**Same shape** on each card.  
**Different numbers** on each card.



**Same color** on each card.  
**Different shapes** on each card.  
**Different numbers** on each card.



**Different colors** on each card.  
**Same shape** on each card.  
**Same number** on each card.



**Different colors** on each card.  
**Different shapes** on each card.  
**Same number** on each card.



**Different colors** on each card.  
**Same shape** on each card.  
**Different numbers** on each card.



**Different colors** on each card.  
**Different shapes** on each card.  
**Different numbers** on each card.

### Wild Cards



A Wild Card substitutes for any other card and has a face value of 0 points. It may be “recycled” prior to a player’s turn by exchanging it for any other card allowable in that position. It may then be

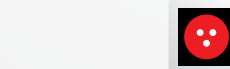
replayed on any turn. While a Wild Card needn’t represent a specific card, it must represent a single card. In other words, it’s allowable for it to represent one card **or** another card, not one card **and** another card.

### Play Example



starter

**Turn 1** 2 cards are played.  
 Same number, different colors,  
 different shapes. **6 points**



**Turn 2** 2 cards are played  
 creating a new 3 card **line**.  
 Same shape, different colors,  
 different numbers. Cards must  
 be played in a single **line**,  
 though they needn’t touch.  
**6 points**



**Turn 3** 2 cards are played.  
 The yellow square 2 completes  
 a **lot**. 2 new **lines** of 2 cards  
 each are also created. 12 points  
 for the 2 lines across (8+4). 5  
 points for the **line** up/down.  
 Double for the **lot**. **34 points**



**Turn 4** 4 cards are played  
 completing 2 **lots**. Face value of  
 each **lot** is 10 points. A second  
**line** down worth 6 points is also  
 extended for a total of 26. Double  
 all points for **lot** 1. Double again  
 for **lot** 2, and double again for  
 playing all 4 cards! **208 points**



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## Reviews



"Thank you for creating such a fun game to play! I have been getting all of my friends to play and they love it too! The rules are simple enough that anyone of any age can pick up quickly yet it is a very strategically challenging game."

**Linda Nguyen** Boston, MA

"We are addicted!"

**David Masher** Rowley, MA

"Great game!"

**Alyce Kaprow** Newton, MA

"My friend Gene Mackles has created a rather addictive little game... Fun! and it's cute. Buy some."

**Marilyn Rea Beyer** Lexington, MA

"After we spoke the other day I ordered **iota**. It arrived today and my wife and two sons (5 & 11) played after dinner. We had fun figuring out the rules and cards. By the way, the cards are beautifully designed and very appealing.

My 11 year old who is very good at chess, checkers, poker and Words with Friends, was particularly creative in making lots.

We'll keep playing and enjoying."

**Scott Brook** Somerville, MA

"Very fun game! Go get yourself a set."

**Jennie Kroll Hollister** Acton, MA

"I love the game! It's perfect."

**Joshua Musick** Brooklyn, NY

"**iota** is my new favorite game!"

**Jennifer Andrews** Fargo, ND

"Played this last week and really enjoyed it!"

**Joey Backer** Boston, MA

"**iota** has just the right mix of simplicity and challenge. Keeps you intrigued & engaged in the lighthearted use of your analytical skills. Plus the game is just so damn cute!"

**Pamela Stubbs DeColo** Newton, MA

"I came home, called Suzy down from her office and we played the game - she loves it and so do I."

**Lorene Jean** Hudson, MA

"**iota** is a GREAT game. We've played it a lot since we bought it last month, and even my wife, who hates games, got into it. My adult daughters loved playing it, and loved that they can carry it around in their pocket or purse..."

**Jeffrey Hutchins** Black Mountain, NC

## FAQs frequently asked questions



### Is there any significance to 64 different cards?

Yes. Since there are 4 colors, 4 shapes and 4 numbers,  $4 \times 4 \times 4$  or 64 is the number of possible combinations of those 3 properties. The Wild Cards, however, often make it possible for there to be an alternate way to complete a **lot**.

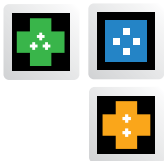
### What do you mean “face value”?

“Face value” is simply the number on the card. It appears on the corners of the cards and is also the number of smaller white shapes inside the larger colored shape. The face value of a Wild Card is 0.

I’ve read the instructions and  is the starter card. The 4 cards in my hand are



What next?

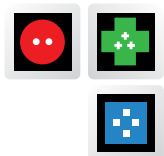
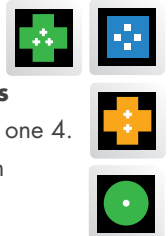


You can always add **any** 2 cards to the starter card in this sort of arrangement. This move would be worth 13 points. The blue square 4 is counted twice because it is part of 2 **lines**. It generally makes sense to play your hand so that the higher face value cards are counted twice. You could also add the green circle 1 to the same **line** either above or below the other 2 cards. Here it is below.

It’s allowable because the colors, shapes and numbers individually are all different on each card in that **line**. That would increase your score on this turn to 14 points. Adding the red circle 2 to that **line** would **not** be allowed because then the **numbers** would **not** be either all the same or all different on each card. You’d have two 2s and one 4.



This **would** be an allowable move. In this case, even though the 2 cards played aren’t right next to each other they are being played in the same **line**.



### Can I do this?

No, because the cards you’re adding aren’t in the same line.



## FAQs continued

### **“While a Wild Card needn’t represent a specific card, it must represent a single card.” Huh?**

OK... this does sound a little confusing. Actually, it’s quite straightforward. Let’s say you add a Wild Card to **line** that’s only 2 cards long. There would then be **at least** 2 cards which would satisfy the requirements set by the first 2 cards in that **line**. At that point, the Wild Card could represent, therefore be replaced by, **any** of those cards. If the Wild Card is the 4th card in a **line** with no other Wild Cards, then it would only represent one specific card and could be replaced only by that card, assuming it hasn’t already been played. Let’s say, for example, that in this case the Wild Card represents a red square 4. That would mean you could connect cards to that Wild Card in the other direction only if they would work were it a red square 4 in that position. In short, if the result of a move is that the Wild Card becomes theoretically unreplaceable by another single card, it’s not allowable.

### **We just noticed that an earlier move should not have been allowed. What to do?**

Hmmmm. You could just keep on playing knowing that that particular line can never be extended to be a **lot**. If that is deemed intolerable, just starting over is an option. Or, you could make any of the problem cards replaceable, like the Wild Card. Of course it would have to be replaced by a card that rectified the error. That option would be available prior to your turn and not count **as** your turn.

### **The scoring seems complicated. Is there a more basic version we can play?**

Absolutely! You could score 1 point for each card in a **line** that’s either created or extended on your turn, again, counting a card that’s part of 2 lines twice, and doubling points for creating a **lot** and also for playing all 4 of your cards. A doubling bonus would also be awarded to the first player to play his or her last card. You could even take it a step further by not scoring **except** for awarding 1 point for completing a **lot**, playing all 4 of your cards and/or being the first player to play his or her last card. While the scoring described in the rules adds excitement by making it more possible for a come from behind win, first and foremost, **iota™** should be fun! Enjoy.

## origins of **iota**™



First off, I'd like to thank you for being interested enough in **iota**™ to be reading this.

For a long time now, I've felt that my calling was to invent an ultimate game. I remember seeing Monopoly for the first time when I was about 5 years old. Having never left Brooklyn until then, we were visiting dear relatives in Maryland and early one morning I went into the study, opened up the intriguing, mysterious game box and was immediately transported into a magical world that just looked like so much fun. Even though I had no idea how it worked, a seed had been planted.

In the early 1970s I made a prototype of a game called MAXE, a hybrid of checkers and chess which could be played by up to 4 players. People seemed to have a lot of fun with it, however due to the realities at the time, I had no choice but to abandon it. Oh well...

Then in the mid 70s I created a table top baseball game using painted masonite and adorably nostalgic baseball player cake decorations. It too, was a lot of fun. My therapist suggested I have it molded out of plastic. Oh well...

In 1980 I produced a short video puzzle at WGBH called *Quizzler* which used images as answers to multiple choice questions. Each question would supply a letter to the overall quiz which was woven into the experience. At the time, I was very clear that this was a prototype, and I hadn't cleared the rights to use the images... it was aired anyway... and the station ended up having to settle with a woman from New Jersey who took a picture, in the 1950s, of the audience at an early 3D movie.

Also in the very early 80s, and at WGBH, I developed a game and a TV pilot called *Quickdraw*. That was before *Pictionary* and another TV show called *Win, Lose or Draw*. My favorite part was the bonus round where one player would direct the other on how to move his or her marker. The player doing the drawing would have to identify what it was they were drawing within 60 seconds. They passed on it.


## origins of continued

Not too long after that, I had the pleasure of cobbling together *Minute Mysteries*... animated fillers for the PBS series *Mystery*, which were based on the book of the same name by Austin Ripley.

In the early 90s, and also at WGBH I took on the assignment to produce about 2 hours of animation for the TV game show version of *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* With a ridiculously tight deadline and budget, the only possibility for this to work at the time involved purchasing half a dozen Macintosh computers and assembling a team of animators using Macromind Director to get it to happen. Amazingly enough it worked, and Chris Pullman and I won a daytime Emmy for our effort.

Then there was *Going, Going Gone*, *The Public Television Auction Game*.... 'nuff said.

So now, about 20 years later, my wife, Kathy and I purchased a game called *Qwirkle* on the way back from vacation in Maine, and took to it immediately. Then, it occurred to me that it would be interesting if, instead of matching only... it could also work in the opposite direction... completely unmatching (an idea borrowed from the game *Set*). Adding a third attribute to the mix also promised to provide a more 3 dimensional experience... and it did. The game worked quite well, and though a hybrid of sorts, playing it was a very different experience from either *Set* or *Qwirkle*. It also had cuteness and portability going for it. It was, however, just a bit too tight and frustrating. Enter the Wild Cards!

So here we are. I hope by now you have learned to play and enjoy  and will continue to do so long into the future.

I also welcome any comments, questions, suggestions or stories you might like to share.

– Gene Mackles

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