

# Create Jam Fall 2023 - Texas House'em



This is a card game inspired by Texas Hold'em Poker, reinterpreting the cards and trumps into a town-building and settling context.

The theme of the jam is "Wild West", and the prompt is "This town ain't big enough...", which made me think of poker games, particularly the "Full House", and stories of family feuds, old grudges and tragic outcomes.

The final game is quite abstract and very much *not poker*.

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## How to play

The goal is to build up a town, and ensure that your Townsfolk have the strongest presence in the town (ie. "This is our town!").





To this end, individual houses must first be constructed, before they can be Settled.

Victory Points are scored based on the Quality of the house, and the Townsfolk that reside inside the house.

Settled houses aren't completely safe, however. A stronger family can Evict the inhabitants, dirty tricks can kill Townsfolk, and (rarely) an entire house may be reappropriated!

## Setup

You will need:

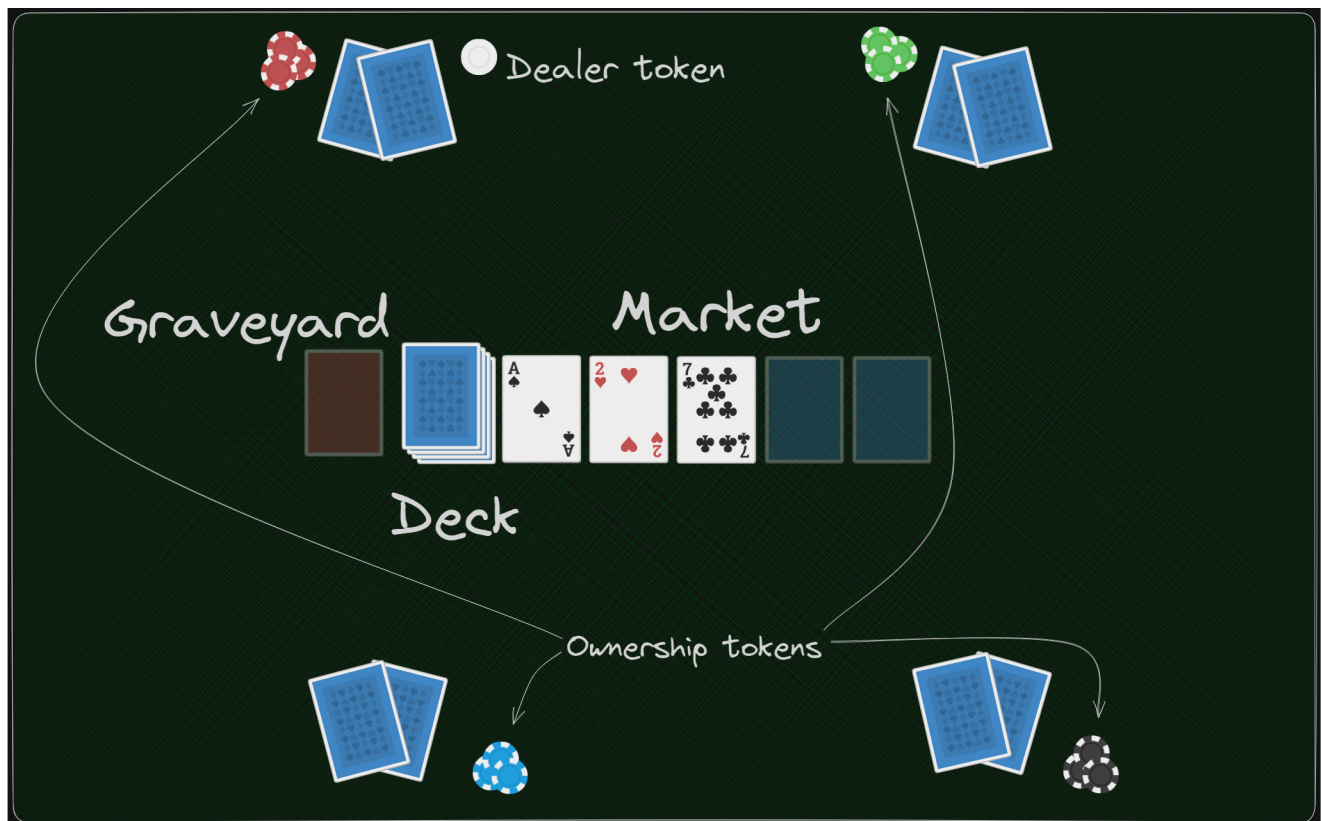
-  A standard 52-card deck of French-suited playing cards (ie. poker cards)
  -  Jokers are optional, see the [Strange Folk](#) variant
-  A set of tokens for each player to indicate ownership (poker chips are good)
-  Optional dealer token
- Table space (a bit more than regular Texas Hold'em)

Pick a player to be the initial Dealer (and consider using a separate token to keep track of who it is).

Shuffle the deck of cards. Deal two cards to each player. Then place the deck in a central location that is reachable by the players.

Ensure to leave space in the middle of the table for up to 5 shared cards (the Market), a Graveyard pile on the opposite of the deck, and Houses.

Finally, Restock the Market with 3 face-up cards.



## Order of play

The game is played over a series of rounds, where each player takes a turn. The first player to take a turn is the first player clockwise to the Dealer.

During a player turn, in order:

1. If the Market has less than 3 cards, the Dealer Restocks it up to 3.
2. The player draws a card from the deck

- If the player has no cards, they draw two
  - There is no hand limit
3. The player takes one of the following actions:
1. Play a Trump
  2. Draw another card

Once all players have taken a turn, the round ends, and the Market is Restocked by the Dealer. Unless you are two players, next player clockwise becomes the Dealer.

The game continues until the deck is exhausted. When this happens, a final round with no additional card draws or Restock is played.

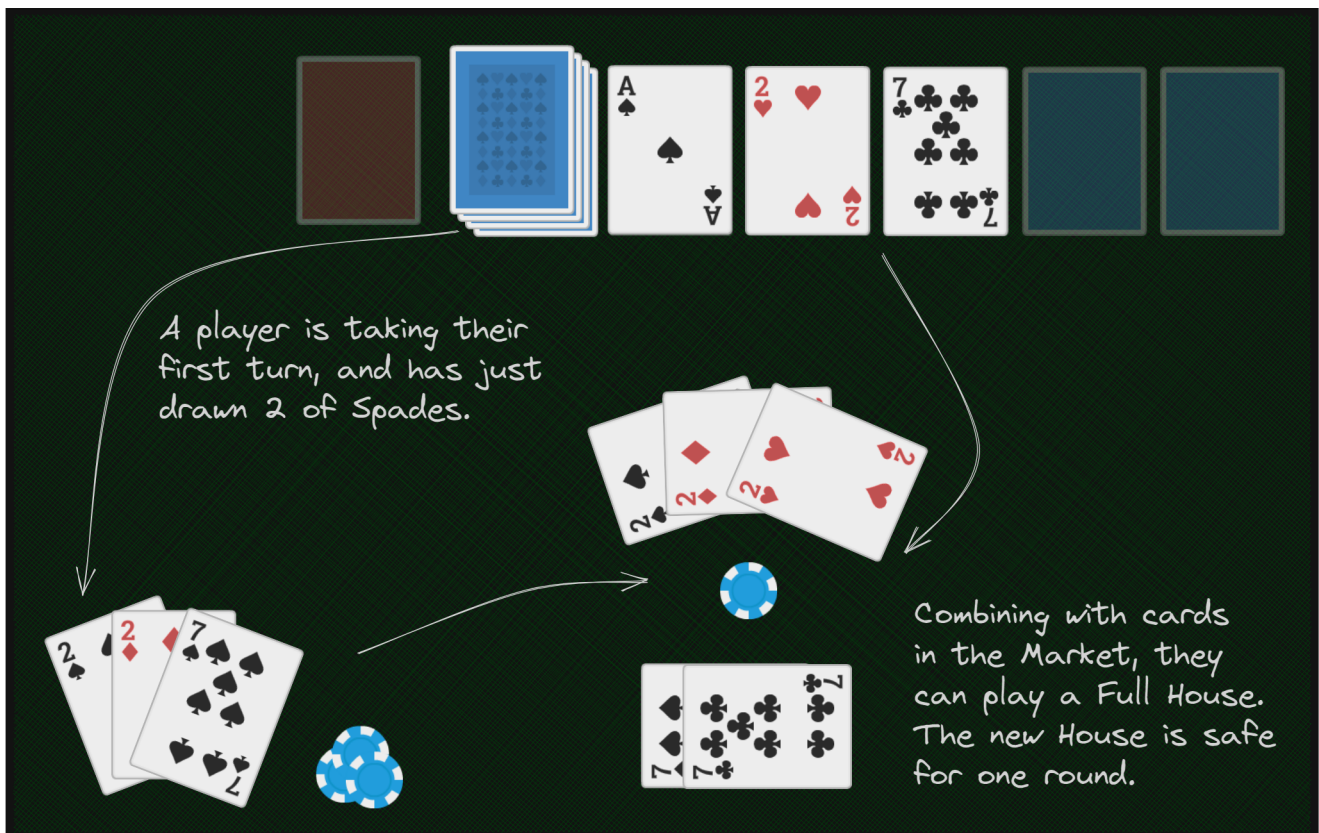
## The Market

The Market is a shared pool of up to 5 face-up cards at the center of the table.

At the end of each round, the Market is Restocked. In priority, do the following:

1. If the Market contains less than 3 cards, deal face-up cards until there are 3.
2. Else, if the Market contains less than 5 cards, deal 1 face up card.
3. Else, do nothing.

During a players turn, they may use any cards from the Market as part of playing a Trump.



## Points and Values

For the purpose of scoring Victory Points, this game follow the usual conventions of 2 being the lowest card, and Ace being the highest (14 Points).

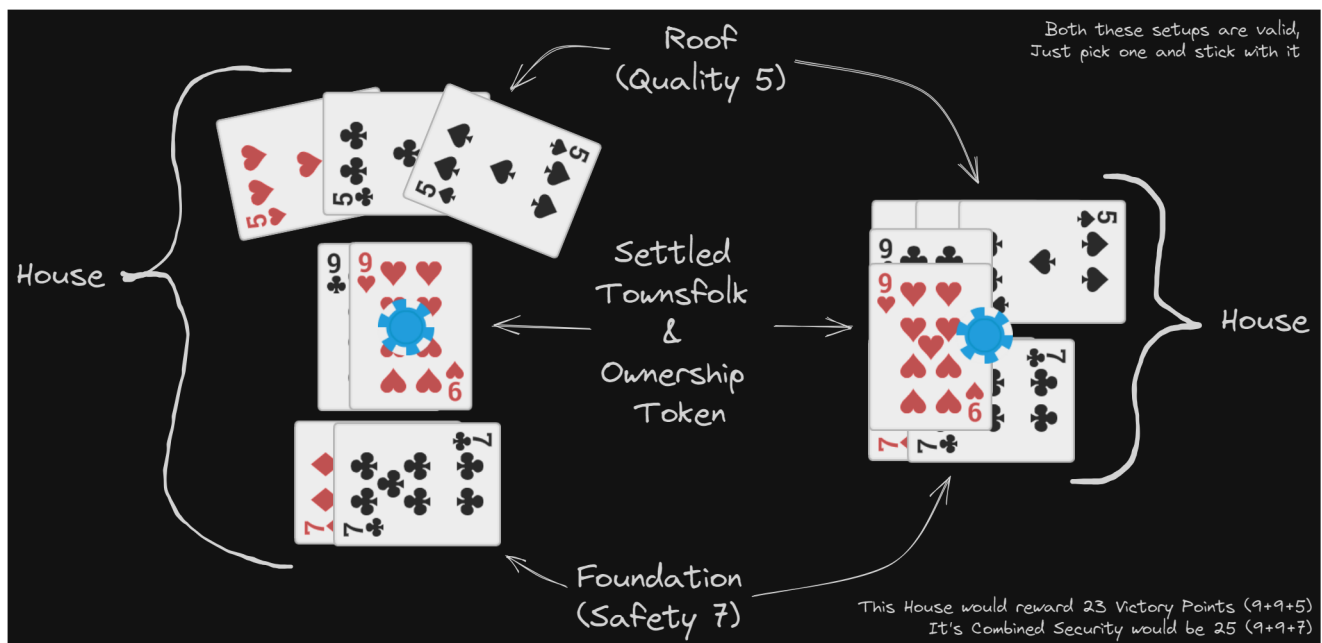


For the purpose of Settling (see [Safety and Eviction](#) and [Settling and Settling Trumps](#)), the Value of Aces is 1, but any Settling Suit containing Aces beats any King-card Townsfolk, and Kings never beats Aces. See [Ace Shooter](#).

## Houses and House Trumps

Houses needs to be built for Townsfolk to move into town. A completed House consists of a "Full House", placed on the table with cards turned sideways (horizontal) in a way so the **Foundation** and **Roof** are both clearly visible.

- The **Foundation** of the House is the "Pair" at the bottom. The shared value determines the Safety of the House, which makes it harder to Evict Settled Townsfolk
- The **Roof** of the House is the "Three of a Kind" at the top. The shared value determines the Quality of the House, making Settled Townsfolk score more Victory Points.



"Pair", "Three of a Kind" and "Full House" are **House Trumps** used to build Houses.

A House can be built in one turn by playing a "Full House".

Alternatively, a House can be built in stages by playing "Pairs" and "Three of a Kind".

When building in stages, the Foundation must be completed first, then the Ceiling.

Any other combination than a "Full House" is invalid.

When a House is first built, the player who completed it places one of their tokens on it - it is considered safe until that players next turn. At that time, the token is removed, leaving it open for Settling.

A vacant House awards nothing. To claim it and score Victory Points, it must be Settled by Townsfolk.

## Safety and Eviction

Players can attempt to Evict Settled Townsfolk. They will of course resist, and a sturdy House helps. To Evict Townsfolk, a player must play a Settling Trump of a higher value than the **Combined Safety** of the House.

To determine Combined Safety, add together the Values of the Settled Townsfolk and the Safety of the Foundation cards of the House.



## Quality and Points

Well-settled Townsfolk in high-quality housing are better off than those living in a drafty shack.

To determine the Victory Points of a Settled House, add together the values of the Settled Townsfolk and the Quality of the Roof of the House

## Settling and Settling Trumps

A player claims ownership a House by Settling it with Townsfolk. "High Card", "Pair", "Three of a Kind" and "Four of a Kind" are **Settling Trumps** can be used to Settle Townsfolk into a House. Only completed Houses can be settled - partially built Houses are invalid.

Settled Townsfolk are indicated by placing cards vertically against a House, along with a token to indicate the owning player.

To Settle a House:

- If the House is vacant, simply place the Settling Trump vertically against the House, and add one of your tokens to indicate ownership.
- If you already own the House, and you are playing a "High Card" of a value matching the existing Townsfolk, add it to the existing Townsfolk.
- If the House is owned (any player), and your Trump beats the Combined Safety of the House, you Evict the existing Townsfolk, replace them with your Trump, and replace the token with yours if needed.
  - Aces have special rules, see [Ace Shooter](#).

## Elimination

Sometimes, people do really horrible things to each other, be it out of greed, envy og vengeance. "Flush", "Straight" and "Straight Flush" are **Dirty Trumps** that are used to Eliminate Townsfolk.

When Townsfolk are Eliminated, they do not come back to a players hand, but are discarded to the Graveyard Pile. If a House is left vacant after this, the player who played the Trump can then take one of

the cards from the Trump and Settle the house with it. The remaining cards from the Trump are discarded. See the [Trumps overview](#) for details.

## Ace Shooter

 Aces have additional functions:

- Ace-Townsfolk are worth 14 Victory Points, but only have 1 Value for Settling and Security.
- Any Settling Trump containing Aces can Evict any King-card Townsfolk, and Kings can never Evict Aces.
- Playing an Ace on its own can, Like Dirty Trumps, be used to Eliminate a single occupant in a House. When played in this way, the Ace is discarded afterwards.

## Trumps overview

Trump	Type	Effect
High Card	Settling	Settle Townsfolk <i>OR</i> Expand an existing matching family.
Pair	House Settling	Settle Townsfolk <i>OR</i> Build House Foundation.
Three of a kind	House Settling	Settle Townsfolk <i>OR</i> Build House Roof on Foundation.
Four of a kind	Settling	Settle Townsfolk.
Full House	House	Build complete House.
Flush	Dirty	Flush em' out: Eliminate Townsfolk of the matching suit. If this empties a House, you may Settle it with one of the Trump-cards. Discard the rest.
Straight	Dirty	Straight shooting: Eliminate Townsfolk of one of the matching ranks of the Trump, then Settle the House with one of the Trump-cards. Discard the rest.
Straight Flush	Dirty	Pillage: Eliminate all Townsfolk of any one House of your choice, then Settle the House with one of the Trump-cards. Discard the rest. <i>OR</i> Play as a Straight <i>OR</i> Play as a Flush
Royal Straight Flush	Special	Reappropriate: Remove any House of your choice, along with its Townsfolk. Take these cards to your hand. Discard the Trump afterwards. <i>OR</i> Play as a Straight Flush

## End of the game

Whenever the last card of the deck is drawn for any reason, the deck is exhausted. When this happens, the **next** round becomes the final round, giving players a last chance to use their remaining cards.

Once that round has concluded, it is time to count points.

# Scoring Points

As mentioned earlier, only Settled Houses award Points. Each player adds together the combined value of all their Townsfolk, and the Quality of their Houses.

Highest score wins!

In case of tie, use the following as tiebreakers, in order:

- Greatest amount of Townsfolk
  - Greatest amount of owned Houses
  - Most cards on hand
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## Variants

You can add these additional rules to shake up the game.

### Hidden Neighbors

When Settling a House, cards are played face-down . The player still needs to state the Trump, and the number of cards, but the Townsfolk are placed face-down.

As long as Townsfolk are face-down, they cannot be targeted by "Flush", "Straight" or "Straight Flush".

A player can still try to Evict Townsfolk, with the following added rules:

- The current player must clearly declare that they are trying to Evict Townsfolk, which House is targeted, and reveal the Trump they are using.
- Once declared, the owning player reveals the targeted Townsfolk face-up. They remain face-up for the rest of the game.
- If the revealed Townsfolk are of different values, they are Evicted by default.
- If the Trump does not beat the Townsfolk, the Trump is returned to the player's hand, and their turn ends.

### Stand your ground

A subvariant rule to Hidden Neighbors: If the Trump does not beat the revealed Townsfolk, the Trump is discarded instead of going back to the players hand.

### Renovations

When the deck is first exhausted, discarded cards are reshuffled into a new deck. The game ends as normal once that deck is exhausted again.

### Harsh Lands

Whenever you would return cards to your hands, they are instead discarded.

## Captives

Whenever you Evict Townsfolk, *you* take the cards instead of the original owner.




## Strange Folk



Jokers can be added as wildcards that stand in for missing cards in a Trump, with the exception that Jokers cannot stand alone: When playing "High Card", it can neither be a lone Townsfolk, nor the first part of a House.

It is not possible to have more than 4 Townsfolk in a House.

## Proper People

Only face cards ( Jack,  Queen,  King) can be used to settle Houses, and face cards cannot be used to build houses.

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## Credits and acknowledgements

Thanks to all who helped playtest the game during the Jam!  
Extra credit goes to Fabian Demeter.

These rules were written using Obsidian, with illustrations made using the Excalidraw plugin.

Card and poker chip images are from Kenney Vleugels Boardgame Pack V2, which can be found here:  
<https://kenney.nl/assets/boardgame-pack>