

Court of the Medici

Rules

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- 50 Playing Cards
- 1 Rules Sheet

Game Play Information

Number of Players:	2
Recommended Age:	12+
Time per Game:	25 min

Reading the Cards

Each card contains the following information:



(1) Rank - Each card represents a noble. The number on each card shows the rank (or the value of influence) associated with that noble. Each house contains 2 nobles for each number between 2 and 10, as well as 2 Ladies-in-Waiting (Rank = 1), 2 Ministers (Rank = 0), 2 Jesters (Rank = 1-10) and 1 Duke (Rank = 15).

(2) Crest - The Yellow Acorn is the crest of House Della Rovere. The White Lion is the crest of House Gonzaga.

(3) Title - The title of nobility or occupation associated with each card. Each house contains a different title for each noble with a rank between 2 and 10.

(4) Name - The name of the noble from Renaissance Italy portrayed on each card.

(5) Text - The nobles from House Della Rovere with a rank between 2 and 10 contain quotes from Francesco Guicciardini's *Ricordi*. The nobles from House Gonzaga with a rank between 2 and 10 contain quotes from Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The red text on the Minister, Lady-in-Waiting and Jester contains special directions for how each card can be played.

Before You Begin

- Set aside the 2 Duke cards (Rank = 15) from the game. Once you have played the game a couple of times, you may add them back into each deck for more challenging play.
- Clear a space large enough for at least a dozen cards to lie flat so that the Grand Duke can hold court.
- Choose either House Gonzaga or House Della Rovere for each player.
- Shuffle all the cards in your house together and make a deck from the cards.
- Take 4 cards off the top of your deck and place them in the middle of the play area. As long as a card is in play, it is at court. However, these original 8 cards (4 from each player) also make up the Grand Duke's Inner Circle. (see *Inner Circle* below).
- Draw 5 cards from the top off your deck to make a hand.
- Add up the total value of all the nobles in your house at court (Jesters count as 1).
- The player with the highest total goes first. If there is a tie, flip a coin to see who goes first.
- Take turns playing cards one at a time until someone wins.

The Goal of the Game

To gain more influence at court than your opponent by the time the game ends.

The End of the Game

The game ends whenever either House (or both) no longer has a noble in the Grand Duke's Inner Circle. When this happens, add together the value of influence provided by all the nobles in your house that are at court. The player with the highest total wins the game. If there is a tie, then the player with the most nobles at court wins. If there is still a tie, it is a draw.

Inner Circle

While a noble is in play, it is considered to be at court. The 8 nobles that begin the game at court are also considered to be part of the Grand Duke's Inner Circle. Keep them, along with any other nobles that join the Inner Circle, in the middle of the play area. Other nobles may join the Inner Circle over the course of the game if they are played as part of an alliance or a conspiracy with a noble that is already a member of the Inner Circle. (see *Play* below) Otherwise, a noble that is played to court goes to the Grand Duke's "Outer Court." Keep the nobles that are in the Outer Court separated from those in the Inner Circle.

Play

When it is your turn, you must play a card. Choose among the four following ways to play your card:

Possible Actions

- (1) Send a Noble to Court** - Place a card on the table in front of you.
- (2) Build an Alliance** - Place a card on top of any card or stack of cards on the table.
- (3) Conspire** - Place a card on top of any card or stack of cards (ie. an alliance) on the table. Then eliminate any one other card or one alliance on the table whose value equals the total value of all the cards in your conspiracy. Place all cards that have been eliminated by the conspiracy in the discard pile for their respective houses. Once the conspiracy has eliminated the other noble or alliance, it becomes a normal alliance.

- (4) Plan for the Future** - Place a card face down on the bottom of your deck.

Once you have played a card and completed your action, draw a card. After you have drawn a card, your turn is over and it is the next player's turn.

Alliances

Whenever two or more nobles are stacked one on top of the other(s), they form an alliance. You may play a noble to build an alliance or conspire with any noble, even if that other noble is a member of the other house. To figure out the value of an alliance add up the values of all the nobles in the alliance.

Empty Deck

If you draw the last card from your deck, you must reveal that card to the other player. For the remainder of the game, you may not play any noble with a value GREATER than that noble. Whenever either player cannot play a card, the game ends immediately. If you draw the last card from your deck, you may no longer perform the "Plan for the Future" action.

Special Cards



Minister - If the Minister builds an alliance with an existing alliance that contains two (2) or more nobles, discard all the nobles in the alliance except the Minister, no matter how large the alliance. If the alliance used to be in the Inner Circle, then the Minister joins the Inner Circle. The special ability of the Minister has no effect if he is played to build an alliance with only one other noble or to conspire.



Lady-in-Waiting - If the Lady-in-Waiting builds an alliance with a solitary noble or an alliance of nobles, all the nobles are separated from each other. Unstack all the cards (including the Lady-in-Waiting) and lay them side-by-side. If a Lady-in-Waiting separates an alliance in the Inner Circle all the nobles which have been separated, along with the Lady-in-Waiting, remain in the Inner Circle. The special ability of the Lady-in-Waiting has no effect if she is played to conspire.



Jester - When you play the Jester, you must choose a value for him between 1 and 10. Once the Jester is at court though, the value of the Jester may be changed. Whenever anyone plays a noble, that player may determine new values for any and/or all Jesters at court. The values for different Jesters may be different. If one or more Jesters become part of an alliance, then the value of the alliance can change each round as well, within the range of possible values for the Jester(s) in the alliance. If you draw a Jester as your last card, you must choose a value for him between 1 and 10 at that moment, but you may choose a different value when you play him. A Jester is worth 1 point at the end of the game.

Rules Clarifications

- You may eliminate your own noble(s) as part of a conspiracy.
- At least 2 nobles are required to perform a conspiracy. You can only perform a conspiracy if you play a noble onto another noble or alliance of nobles.
- You can only perform actions by actually *playing* nobles. A noble that is already at court cannot be used to perform an action.
- Once a card has been discarded, it is no longer at court.
- If both players consecutively "Plan for the Future" 3 times each, the game is a draw.

Optional Rules

If you start the game with a pair of nobles of the same rank from your house (for example, a Lord and a Lady or two Jesters), you may draw another card to replace one of them until you do not have any matching nobles. Reshuffle the replaced noble(s) back into your deck before you begin.

Example of How to Arrange Cards



Credits

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