

## Alphabet King

**Players:** three or more; Ages 6-9

**Materials:** One deck composed of four of a kind of one letter of the alphabet for each player; plus, 4x K, I, N, and G for scoring purposes.

The goal of this version of Pig (a common parlour game with regular playing cards, which can easily be adapted for use with alphabet cards) is to win four rounds and collect one each of the K, I, N, and G cards to become the Alphabet King.

For every player, there should be four identical letter cards in the play deck (ie., eight players require a 32 card deck). Cards are shuffled and dealt to players face down. Players pick up their four cards and keep them in their hands.

The goal of play is to collect four of the same alphabet card in one hand. Players are not given particular letters to collect, but decide after the cards are dealt which letter they will try for. One card each turn is passed to the player on the left and one card is received from the player on the right.

At the start of the game, the referee calls, "Go!" That signals players to pass one card and receive another. Play continues without interruption until a player has four of a kind. He/she then collects a "K" as winner of that round.

A new round follows, as the cards are gathered, shuffled and dealt again. Every time a player manages to collect four of a kind first, he/she "scores" a letter from the word "KING." Once a player has scored all four letters, he/she is declared the supreme winner!

**Slower Pace (optional):** when playing with younger children who are finding the swapping a little overwhelming, try this approach. For every card exchange, the referee calls "Swap!" This allows the referee to set the pace of play, depending on how the players are managing their hands. The referee ensures that everyone is prepared for the next change and also declares the winner as the first player to lay down four alphabet cards between "Swaps."

**Scoring Variation:** if it impossible to have enough K-I-N-G cards for scoring and play, have paper and pencil handy for each player to mark out their winnings.

**K-I-N-G draw:** players can also draw from a pool of K, I, N, G cards with every win and attempt to “spell” their way to winning. In this version, if a player draws a card he/she already has (for example, if this is the third round Sarah has one, and she currently holds a G and an I card, and then draws another I) the duplicate letter is returned to the pool, and play resumes.

**About Alphabet Cards:** A deck of 52 alphabet cards will contain two of each letter of the alphabet. Cards can be a mix of upper and lower case, can be done in cursive writing, can be printed by hand with a simple black marker, or can be made on business card stock using a desktop publishing program. For cards with a recycled flair, use the inside of cereal or tissue boxes (boxboard) for sturdy play pieces with no extra expense. Old file folders or Bristol board will also work, as will index cards (though trimming them somewhat will make them friendlier for small hands). Ensure that any recycled cards are the same size. Covering cards in inexpensive mactac (or laminating them) will also ensure their durability for classroom play.

It is also wise to decorate cards at either the top or bottom of the each card, to designate which end is “up.” Letters such as p, d, q, b, n, and u can be confusing for players when looked at upside down.