

ABUSE

by Greg Stolze

GOAL

Abuse is a fast-playing game of instant gratification at its most base – serving up heapin' helpings of nastiness on your friends, before they can do the same to you. To quote that eminent sage George Carlin, it's all about "doing the dozens".

As in most such contests, the winner is the one who sinks the lowest. In this case, there is a handy numerical scoring system. At the end of each game, you can easily tell who did the best job of keeping the others from getting a word in edgewise.

COMPONENTS

You should have a deck of eighty cards for every four players. You also need a pen and some paper to keep score. (Not included – sorry.)

SETUP

Before starting, the players should cordially decide how many rounds they intend to play. (Five is standard, three is a rather quick game. The more rounds you play, the less likely one player is to dominate simply by luck.)

The player who owns the game deals first. Each player gets seven cards. Once everyone has cards, the dealer turns the top card on the deck face-up next to the deck, starting the discard pile. Play begins.

PLAYING Turns

Players take turns drawing cards and putting them down. Play starts with the player on the left of the dealer and proceeds in that direction.

The object of the game is to empty out your hand as quickly as possible. Once one player "goes out" (that is, plays the last card in his hand) the round ends. Everyone else is assessed penalty points based on what cards, and how many, they still have in their hands.

Each player's turn proceeds like this.

1) The player gets a chance to take the face-up card currently showing in the discard pile. The current player can take the card for free.

2) If the current player does not want the card in the discard pile, any other player may pick that card up – but the player who does so must also draw an additional "penalty card" from the top of the deck. If more than one player wants that card, the person immediately to the left of the current player gets the first chance at it, then the person two to the left of the current player, then three and so on. In other words, the longer it's been since your turn, the better your chance of getting the card. Don't forget that penalty card, though! Once every player has rejected a card, it's "dead" – no one can pick it up again, even if it resurfaces after someone picks up another discard from on top of it.

3) If the current player doesn't pick up the face-up card, he must draw one card from the deck.

4) The player may then lay down a sentence. Every sentence must begin with a START card, finish with an END card, and the arrows on all the cards in the sentence must line up unbroken and matched in color. As the player puts down the sentence, he reads it out loud (with appropriate gleefulness), aiming it at another player of the game (Example: "Brad, your taste in clothing is grotesque!") Only one sentence

can be played per turn, and each sentence can have only one START and one END. The only exception to this rule is if you use the "Furthermore" card, described below.

5) The player may then discard a single card from his hand, stating "Done!" as he does so (or doesn't, as the case may be). If this is the last card in his hand, the round ends.

After the player discards, it's the next player's turn. That player has the option of picking up the discard or drawing a new card, and it proceeds until someone gets rid of all his cards.

Scoring

Each card has a numerical value printed on it. When a round ends, every player adds up the values of all the cards that remain in his hand. These are written down on the score sheet. Remember, the goal is to have the lowest score!

You do not get points for insults that were aimed at you. Once a card is out of someone's hand, it does not give points to anyone.

Round's End

When a round ends, the player who went out (that is, who scored zero for that round) gathers up all the cards, shuffles them well, and becomes the dealer for the next round.

WINNING

Once the agreed-upon number of rounds has been played, the game ends and the person with the lowest score wins.

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CARD TYPES

These are the cards you'll find in an eighty-card deck: 24 Starts, 32 Links & Specials and 24 Ends.



Start



Links



Finish



Comeback

SPECIAL CARDS

There are four cards with associated special rules.

"Furthermore"

In every deck, there are four "Furthermore" cards. You may play a "Furthermore" card after any card with an END symbol. You can then link it to a card with a START symbol and proceed through another entire sentence. This is the only way you can play two sentences in a single turn.

"Furthermore" can only be used to string two sentences together, and can only be played with two sentences in the same turn, never used to link two already-placed sentences. It has no place in the middle of a sentence, even if it sounds right when read. (That's why there are no lines going into or coming out of it.)

Blank Cards

Eight cards are blank except for their scoring value. These are wild cards, and are assumed to have whatever arrows you need to make them work as necessary. You can use them as either Starts or Ends, or to link any two cards – as long as you can find a word or phrase that makes sense. As you read the sentence aloud, you must utter the phrase you're choosing for the blank card. Finally, they may never be used as any other Special Card.

Comebacks

Comebacks (or sharp retorts) are cards that can be played to block someone's insult played against the holder, if they're in the hand at the time of the insult. Signified by the comeback symbol, they are played on the table, and read with the appropriate tone; the insulting player must return his sentence to his hand and draw a card.

If the insulting player has a comeback in his hand, he may play it. This prompts a war of retorts; whoever

runs out of comebacks first, loses. The insulting player suffers the results as listed above, if he loses. If the target loses the exchange, then he must draw two cards outside of his turn, discarding all comebacks used.

Note that any penalty cards must be drawn from the Draw Deck, not the Discards. Additionally, if any war of retorts leads to the end of a round, the loser must still draw his card(s) and add them to his point total for the round.

There are twelve comebacks in the deck.

One-Liners

Three cards have both the Start and End symbols on them. These "one liners" are self-contained sentences that don't need to be linked to any other cards. You play that one card, it's a sentence, and that's it. You can link them to longer sentences with the "Furthermore" card if you wish.

VARIATIONS

Growing Hands

In the first round of a Growing Hands game, the players start with the standard seven-card hand. Every round, their starting hand gets bigger by one card until they start out with eleven cards. (Multiple decks shuffled together may be necessary for big groups.)

Limit Variation

Instead of setting a number of rounds at the beginning, the game continues until one player reaches a set number of points. 100 points is a pretty quick game, 300 is a rather long one.