

# KATZENJAMMER BLUES

## A Game by Reiner Knizia

Players: 2-6

Age: 10 and up

Duration: c. 30 minutes.

Goldsieber Spiele

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English Translation: Reiner Knizia and Kevin Jacklin.

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It's showtime! The night-time cats are wailing their blues. The coolest feline foursomes are looking for gigs. Their managers bid high just to get them an audition. In the end, however, all that counts is mice, mice, mice!

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## COMPONENTS

- 90 cards
- 24 mice
- 1 rulebook

Before the first game, the mice need to be carefully separated from the card.

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## THE CARDS

The cards show the values **1** to **5** and **J** for the jokers. There are 15 cards of each value and 15 jokers in the deck. The musical instruments and background colours depicted on the cards have no function in the game.

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## PREPARATION

Place the 24 mice to one side. With four players or fewer, four mice are removed from the game. Be careful! The mice are taken faster than you think.

Choose one player as the bandleader for the first turn. He shuffles the cards thoroughly and deals **six** cards to each player, placing the remaining cards face-down as a deck in the middle. The players take their cards into their hands.

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## COURSE OF THE GAME

The game consists of several rounds. At the beginning of a round, the bandleader reveals cards from the face-down deck. Then, the players bid with cards in their hands for the revealed cards. The player who wins the bid gets the cards, and then has the opportunity to present foursomes, thereby picking up mice. The game ends when one player picks up the last mouse, or when the face-down deck is used up. The player with the most mice wins. However, the player who relied too much on the joker cats will lose five mice.

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## PLAY

### 1. Revealing Cards

The bandleader turns over one card after another from the face-down deck, placing them in a row so that they can be seen clearly by everyone. The bandleader continues revealing new cards until either one card value is turned over for a second time, or a joker is revealed. This is the last card to be placed in the row. If a joker is revealed, each player draws a card into his hand from the face-down deck.

### 2. Bidding

Now the revealed cards are auctioned as a group. The player on the bandleader's left bids first. Bidding goes clockwise. Each new bid must be higher than the preceding bid. A player may only bid cards that he holds in his current hand.

If a player does not wish to, or cannot, make a higher bid he passes. Once he has passed, he may not rejoin the bidding in the current round. It is recommended that players who have passed place their hand face-down in front of them.

#### **Bidding Equal Values**

This bid consists of a number of cards of equal value. The player announces the number of cards and the value.

**Example:** *"I bid three 2's."*

A bid is always higher if it consists of more cards than the preceding bid. If a player bids the same number of cards than the preceding bid, he must bid a higher value.

**Example:** *Two 2's are higher than one 5.  
Three 2's are higher than three 1's.*

#### **Bidding Different Values**

Instead of making a bid with cards of equal value, a player may make a bid with cards all being different values. The player announces just the number of cards in his hand, as the values themselves are of no importance.

**Example:** *"I bid three different values."*

A bid of different values is always lower than a bid with the same number of cards of equal value. In order to make a bid of different values, it must satisfy two conditions:

- the bid must consist of more cards than the preceding bid; and
- all cards must be different values.

The highest bid in this category is "five different values".

**Example:** *The current bid is “three different values”. The next player also wishes to bid different values, therefore he must bid (at least) “four different values”. Subsequently a bid of “four 1’s” would again be higher.*

The bidding ends when all players but one have passed. This player openly places his bidding cards from his hand onto a face-up discard pile. He then takes the revealed cards from the middle into his hand. This player becomes the bandleader for the next round.

If no player bids for the revealed cards, they are placed on the face-up discard pile. The current bandleader then reveals new cards.

**Hint:** *The player who wins the bid may use the received cards right away, or later, to present foursomes. He may prefer, however, to use them in later bidding rounds. Lower value cards are often useful for bidding, whereas higher value cards make strong foursomes.*

### 3. Presenting Foursomes

A player may only present foursomes if he has just won the bidding round, and has received cards.

A foursome consists of four cards of equal value. When presenting foursomes, the player may use all the cards from his hand, including those just received. He may present more than one foursome.

For each foursome presented, the player receives its value in mice.

**Example:** *A player presents two foursomes - four 3’s and four 4’s. He receives  $(3 + 4 =) 7$  mice.*

The cards from each foursome presented are placed face-up on the discard pile.

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## THE JOKERS

Jokers may be used for bidding as well as for presenting foursomes. Jokers may be used as a substitute for any value. A bid or a foursome may contain as many jokers as a player wishes.

If a player uses joker cards, these are **not** placed in the discard pile, but remain displayed face-up in front of him. These jokers may not be used again.

The player with the most jokers at the end of the game loses **five** mice.

If a player presents a foursome of four jokers, he may either declare them with any value from 1 to 5 or, alternatively, as a foursome of joker cats without value.

- If the player presents the joker foursome with a value, he receives the respective number of mice, and display the jokers face-up in front of him.
- If the payer presents the joker foursome without value, he does not receive any mice, but instead places the four jokers on the face-up discard pile. This is the only way a player can discard jokers without displaying them in front of him.

**Example:** *A player presents a joker foursome. He declares them as “four 5’s”, receives five mice, and displays the four jokers in front of him.*

*Another player presents a joker foursome. He chooses to discard them all, but does not receive any mice.*

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## **GAME END AND SCORING**

The game ends immediately when the last card is taken from the face-down deck, or when the last mouse is picked up. In the latter case, if there are not enough mice remaining to pay for the finishing player’s foursome, he only receives what is left.

Now all players display all the joker cards from their hands in front of them. Each player counts the number of jokers in front of him. The player with the most jokers loses five mice. If several players tie for the highest number of jokers, they each lose five mice. Thus, it is possible to have a negative score.

The player with the most mice wins the game. In the case of a tie, the fewer number of jokers is used as a tie-breaker. If this does not resolve the tie, then the involved players share the victory.

Players may decide to play several games. Then after each game, the results are recorded and totalled.

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**The Author:** Reiner Knizia is a doctor of mathematics and lives in Windsor. An enthusiastic game author, he has more than 60 published games, the “German Game Prize 1993” and several nominations for “Game of the Year”. Reiner Knizia belongs among the successful authors of the German game scene.

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