

Wilcox War

Single Deck/Winner-Takes-All Rules v5

By Jeff Wilcox

A game of strategy, deterrents, and bluffing.

Overview

Wilcox War updates the (frustrating and not-great) game War to add in strategy, deterrents, and bluffing - slight changes to make a much better game - without changing its essence! Enjoy!



Rules

Components

One standard 52-card playing card deck

Set-up

1. The deck is split evenly between players – one receiving all the red cards, the other all the black.
2. Players shuffle their cards.
3. Players place them **face up** on the table, slightly to their left.
This is their *Draw pile*.
4. Players draw three cards into their hand, creating their starting hand. This hand is briefly shown to the other player.

NOTE: Cards won during game play are placed **face down** next to the winner's Draw pile. This is that player's *Spoils pile*.



A Standard Round

Each round, players simultaneously:

1. Choose a card from their hand to play.
2. Reveal their card. The player of the highest ranked card wins and places both cards face down into their Spoils pile. [If cards shown are of equal rank, see “Fighting a Battle” section.] The ranks are: (highest) Ace, King, Queen, Jack, then 10 down to 2 (lowest).
3. Draw the top card of their Draw pile into their hand. **(Opponents must have time to review the new card going into a player's hand.)**
4. If a player has no cards in their Draw pile, that player counts the number of cards in their Spoils pile:
 - If the total is 10 or more cards, the cards are shuffled and these cards become the new Draw pile.
 - If the total is 9 cards or fewer, the player loses and the game is over. See the Who Wins? section.

Repeat these steps.

Fighting a Battle

If both cards played in a round have the same rank (both are 5s, or Jacks, or 10s, etc.) then the players are in a battle. To fight the battle, players set aside their hand (for now) and turn their Draw pile **face down** and briefly shuffle it, then players:

1. Deal **two** cards from the top of their Draw pile and place it, overlapping, on their battle card. These are the prize cards.
2. Deal **one** card from the top of the Draw pile and place it face-up on their prize card. Highest-ranked battle card between these final cards wins the battle. The winner places all battle and prize cards into their Spoils pile after revealing the hidden prize cards to both players. (See “Larger Battles” section if both final battle cards have the same rank as well.)

If there are not enough cards left in a player’s Draw pile at the start of the Battle, they play out all cards from there as normal, then shuffle their Spoils pile and make it the new Draw pile and continue with playing out cards for the battle.

If a player has no cards in the Spoils pile AND Draw pile during a battle but still needs to play cards into the battle, that player loses and the game is over. See the Who Wins? section.

After the battle is over, players:

- Turn the Draw pile **face up**.
- Fill their hand to three cards. **Then players show their hand to each other** and continue playing.



Larger Battles

If the battle cards at the end of any battle have the same rank, repeat The Fighting a Battle steps (above). Repeat this as many times as the ending battle cards have the same rank.

Who Wins?

A player wins if their opponent encounters either of these:

- **When NOT in a battle**, their Spoils pile has 9 cards or fewer when they count them when restoring their Draw pile.
- **In a battle**, their Spoils pile AND Draw pile are empty at any point when they need to draw a card.



2-Deck Variation

These are the adjustments to the above rules when each player has their own 52-card deck.

Setup: Each player uses their own full deck, instead of having the red or black cards within one deck. For ease of sorting cards after the game, it is recommended you use decks with two different back colors/patterns/pictures on them.

Fighting a Battle: Players place down 3 prize cards per battle, instead of 2.

Losing the War: If a player's Spoils pile has 18 cards or less (instead of 9 or less) when they count it when restoring their Draw pile when NOT in a battle. (The other losing condition is the same.)

Version	Spoils cards in pile loses	Prize Cards
1 Deck	9 or fewer (when not in a battle)	2 face down cards
2 Decks	18 or fewer (when not in a battle)	3 face down cards

Other Options

Here are some nifty, small variants you can add to your game. Both players must agree to any of these prior to start of play.

Faster Game: Game ends when one player only has 12 (for 1 deck) or 24 (for 2 decks) cards in their Spoils deck when counted while replacing the Draw deck.

Limited Game: Game ends when any player must place their Spoils deck into their Draw deck for the 4th time.

Diminishing Returns: All players when replacing their empty Draw deck with their Spoils deck, **MUST** discard one of the highest ranked and one of the lowest ranked cards in the Spoils deck first. These two cards are set aside out of the game.

Strong 2: A "2" defeats both "Aces" and "Kings".

