

Master Thieves

Overview

Both jewelers and gemologists know the difference between true and imitation gems and they try to get rid of their imitation gems. The smugglers try to build smuggler rings in order to get a share of a large booty. The thief simply takes all the gems he can find. But, only the master thief can find the hidden compartments where the most prized gems are hidden. The detectives watch all others and confiscate stolen gems when they can.

Contents

- 1 jewelry box with 3 levels and 12 drawers
- 17 pillows: 8 white, 8 black, and 1 red
- 102 gems: 6 red rubies, 24 blue sapphires, and 72 white diamonds
- 48 character cards: 8 each of 6 different characters
- 8 summary cards
- 8 alarms
- 1 rule booklet

Goal

Each player tries to get rid of his imitation gems, while acquiring as many true gems as possible and taking on the roles of the six different characters in the game. At game end, a player scores minus points for any imitation gems he has left and plus points for all true gems he has acquired during the game.

The jewelry box

The wooden jewelry box has three levels and twelve drawers. All of the drawers are two-sided, with a topside and a bottom side, such that when the box is turned over, the bottom side becomes the topside and the topside becomes the bottom side (fig. 1). Six of the drawers have secret compartments behind the drawers (fig. 2), but only the master thief can find the secret compartments. Each level may be independently rotated. During the game, the players will rotate the levels and turn the box over to hide the gems from the others (and maybe themselves).

During the game, when a player opens a drawer, he *must* always open it completely so any gems in the bottom side can fall out, but not past the drawer to the secret compartment. Only the master thief can “find” the secret compartment (fig. 4).

Preparation

Place the box in the middle of the table so all players can see it and reach it. Next, place 1 red ruby in one secret compartment in each level. Then, turn the box over and place 1 red ruby in the other secret compartments in each level. Thus, the 6 red rubies are in 6 secret compartments in different drawers, 3 on the topsides and 3 on the bottom sides of the drawers (fig. 3).

Tip: we suggest you rotate the levels so that the drawers with the secret compartments are lined up on opposite sides of the box. Then, place the first 3 red rubies in the secret compartments on one side of the box. Next, turn the box over and place the other 3 red rubies in the secret compartments on the opposite side of the box (it will actually appear to be the same side as the box was turned over).

Distribute 12 diamonds equally among the players. If some players get more than others, it is not a problem. Each player then takes a turn placing his share of the 12 diamonds in the box, in any order the players choose. On his turn, a player puts his diamonds in 1 or more drawers of his choice. If, when he opens a drawer to put diamonds in, some fall out of the bottom he should place the fallen diamonds back in the drawer on the top side. After placing the diamonds, the player may rotate the top level or the top two levels 90 degrees to the right or left. Then, the player may turn the box over through 180 degrees, without twisting it as he turns it.

Place the red pillow next to the box in the middle of the table.

Each player takes a white pillow, the place for his imitation gems, and a black pillow, where he will put the true gems he acquires during the game. Each player then puts 9 white diamonds and 3 blue sapphires on his white pillow. These are his imitation gems.

Sort the 48 character cards by character and shuffle the separate 6 stacks face down. Thus, there will be a stack of 8 smugglers, another of 8 thieves, and so on. Then, each player takes 1 card from each stack to form a hand of 6 cards. With fewer than 8 players, return the unused cards to the box. They will not be used in the game. Thus, each player has 6 cards in his hand, 1 from each character.

Each player takes 1 summary card and the alarm in his color. He places the summary card between his white and black pillows. He places the alarm on the appropriate place on his summary card (fig. 5).

Playing the game

Each player selects one character card from his hand and places it face down on the table. Then, simultaneously, the players reveal their selected cards. The cards indicate which characters the players will play for this round. Each character grants the player certain actions for the round and also determines the player order for the round. The turn order is shown on the summary cards. If two or more players have selected the same character, the numbers on the cards determine player order. Lower numbers take their turns before higher numbers.

Example of turn order:

In a game with 8 players, the players select the following cards:

Anna selects gemologist number 8. Kevin, Alfonzo, and Mike select smugglers numbered 2, 5, and 8. Ken and Robin select detectives numbered 4 and 1. James selects master thief number 3 and Sheila selects thief number 7. Thus, the turn order, based on the summary cards and the numbers on the cards is:

Kevin, Alfonzo, and Mike as smugglers. As no player selected jeweler, the order skips to Anna, the gemologist, Sheila the thief, and James the master thief. Finally, the round finishes with the two detectives, Robin and Ken.

After every player has taken a turn, the round ends. The players place the selected cards aside face down (they are not returned to their hands). In the next round, each player must select from the remaining 5 cards in his hand. In the following round, each selects from 4 cards, and so on.

After the 6th round, the players take their sets of face down cards and pass them to their left neighbors. A new round begins with each player selecting from his 6 new cards.

Important and basic for the game

On each turn, a player *must* open one drawer (exception: detective). The player may select any drawer on any side of the box and at any level. However, the player must not move the box when doing so. If necessary, the player may stand and move to a different side of the table to open the drawer he wants. When a player opens a drawer and one or more gems fall out, the gems are placed on the red pillow (exception: alarm) and the player may not take any gems from the drawer and may not place any gems in the drawer (exception: gemologist). If no gems fall out, the player may take a gem or gems if allowed by his character and place a white diamond or blue sapphire into the drawer.

Any gem that falls or is removed from the box is a true gem and is placed on the player's black pillow or the red pillow, depending on the situation.

When a player places 1 or more imitation gems in a drawer, he may then take 2 actions with the box: first, he may rotate the top level or the top two levels 90 degrees to the right or to the left. Then, he may turn the box over through 180 degrees, without twisting it. If the player does not place any imitation gems in the drawer, he is allowed only 1 action with the box as described above. This means he may either rotate the top level or the top two levels or turn over the box, but not both.

Characters

Smuggler: may take one gem from the drawer and place it on his black pillow. Then, he may place one blue sapphire or white diamond from his white pillow in the drawer. He may do this even if he finds no gems in the drawer to take.

Smuggler ring: when there is more than one smuggler *and* there are more smugglers than detectives, the smugglers form a smuggler ring. If no gems fall out of the drawer he opens, each smuggler places *all* gems he finds in the

drawer on the red pillow. And, if no gems fall out of the drawer he opens, he may then place 1 imitation gem in the drawer. Then, the next smuggler takes his turn. After all smugglers have taken their turns, they divide the booty on the red pillow. This can even include gems that were on the pillow at the beginning of the round and any that were placed there by a smuggler who dropped gems out of the bottom of a drawer. Starting with the smuggler with the lowest number and moving upward through the smuggler numbers, each smuggler takes 1 gem of his choice from the red pillow. If there are gems remaining after each has taken 1 gem, they take turns again, in the same order and continue doing so until there are no more gems on the red pillow. This means that some smugglers may get more gems than others. Also, any smuggler who dropped gems out of a drawer when opening it does *not* share in the booty!

Jeweler: may place 1 imitation gem from his white pillow in the drawer. In addition, he may place his alarm in the drawer as well, but only if there is not an alarm from another jeweler in the drawer already. Only one alarm per drawer! The jeweler does not remove any gems from the drawer!

Later, if a player opens a drawer and finds an alarm, there are two possibilities:

- 1) It falls out of the drawer when he opens it. In this case, he gives the alarm and any gems that fell with it to the jeweler whose alarm it is. Exception: if the alarm belongs to the player who opened the drawer, he takes back his alarm, but must place any gems that fell on the red pillow.
- 2) It is lying in the drawer. The player may take the normal actions of his character, including taking gem(s) from the drawer and placing imitation gem(s) in the drawer. Afterwards, if the alarm lies alone in the drawer without any gems, the owner of the alarm may choose to take his alarm back.

Gemologist: may place 1 imitation gem from her white pillow in the drawer. She may do this even if she opens the drawer and gems fall out of it. In addition, she may place 1 additional gem for each detective in the round. The gemologist does not remove any gems from the drawer!

Thief: may take all gems in the drawer and place them on his black pillow. He does not know about the secret compartment and may not look in it.

Master thief: like the thief, he may take all gems in the drawer and place them on his black pillow. Then he may place 1 imitation gem from his white pillow in the drawer. Instead of taking the gems he finds, the master thief may choose to look further for the secret compartment. If he finds a secret compartment and there is a ruby in it, he may take the ruby and all the other gems in the drawer, placing them all on his black pillow. As before, he may then place 1 imitation gem from his white pillow in the drawer. However, if he finds no secret compartment, or if he finds it and it is empty, or if he finds it and a gem falls out of it, he may take no gems from the drawer and may not place an imitation gem in the drawer. As

always, he places gems falling out of the drawer or the secret compartment on the red pillow.

Detective: the detective will not even touch the box, lest he leave fingerprints on it. The detective(s) do confiscate all gems on the red pillow in the same way smugglers take gems from the red pillow, placing them on their black pillows. As with smugglers, some detectives may get more gems than others. If there are no detectives in the round, any gems on the red pillow remain there for the next round.

Note: the detective will *not* rotate nor turn over the box!

Game end and winner!

The game ends at the end of a round when one or more players have no imitation gems left on their white pillows. The winner is the player who scores the most points. Players score points as follows:

Black pillow

each white diamond: +1

each blue sapphire: +2

each red ruby: +4

White pillow

each white diamond: -1

each blue sapphire: -2

If players tie with the most points, the player among them with the most rubies is the winner. If there is still a tie for winner, the player among them with the most sapphires is the winner.

Tips:

- 1) *Try to track one drawer with gems so you can later take them. Do not try to keep track of more than one drawer, as this will often prove too difficult.*
- 2) *Pay attention to which player with which character will play after you and then decide whether to rotate and/or turn the box.*
- 3) *Select the master thief when you are certain of the location of a ruby or two.*
- 4) *Select the detective when you think several players have not tracked a drawer and may, therefore open drawers that cause gems to fall out and be placed on the red pillow.*
- 5) *When you have not remembered a drawer to open, play the gemologist or the detective.*
- 6) *Select the smuggler or the detective when there are several gems on the red pillow.*

The author and publisher thank the many test players for their ideas and suggestions. We especially thank the players who are the models for the characters, which give the game its unique charm. Finally, we thank the production manager for the unique and beautiful jewelry box.