

MOUNTAINEERS (version 1.3, April 2023)

Climbers: 3 - 5

Luck (1 = none, 5 = completely): 3

Time to Play: 30 minutes

Skill: (1 = none, 5 = perfect information): 4

SUMMARY:

It's a rock-climber's race to the peak as you out-guess your rivals and skillfully choose cards from identical hands. Each turn, climbers play cards from their hand - simultaneously revealing the first, then one climber at a time chooses and reveals their second card of the Round. Watch out, though... climbers who show matching cards don't earn points for them, and maneuvers such as **Bomber** and the double-handed **Tak-Tak** are the ultimate gamble. Are the gains worth the risk?

In a typical match, the first climber to make it to the mountain summit wins! Try out other game modes (detailed later) for more variety and challenge.

DETAILS: Although there are a couple different "game modes" to play with these cards, the mechanics of how to play are the same. Each climber has an identical mini-deck of 14 cards. There are **Route** cards numbered 2 through 10, and various **Special Effect** cards. The final card of the set is the **Lead Climber** token, and is given to the selected first climber.

SETUP: Each climber takes their own deck. Take your deck, and then separate the cards labeled **Route**. Shuffle these cards and place them in a face-down draw deck nearby. The rest of the cards (also known as **Special Effect** cards) are stacked face-up, and start your discard pile.

Climbers start a Round by drawing a hand of 3 cards, then they must draw the top card from their deck and place it face-up on the table in front of them. The Lead Climber draws an additional card to their hand at the start of the Round, so their hand limit is 4 cards.

GO FORWARD: Starting with the **Lead Climber** and moving in clockwise order, each climber must select and reveal a second card from their hand until all climbers have done so. Climbers earn points for their unique cards, and all duplicated cards played that round are discarded. To end a Round, scores are recorded and the **Lead Climber** token is passed to the climber with the current highest score. Be sure to update the climber tokens on the scoring track.

CLEANUP: Climbers must discard one card from their remaining hand, if possible. Each climber discards the cards they played that Round into their own discard pile, then you start the next Round. If you've exhausted your draw pile, shuffle your discard pile and create a new draw pile from it.

Remember that the **Lead Climber** has a hand limit of 4 cards, and the rest of the climbers have a hand limit of 3. *If there's a tie for Lead Climber at the end of the round, grant Lead Climber status to the tied climber who played a card last.*

Limited "table-talk" is permitted but no specific details about a climber's unrevealed cards, hand, etc. may be discussed. *Climbers never share or pass cards between one another during a typical match.*

Different Special Effect cards and how they affect gameplay are listed below. Before trying these cards, you may want to play a Basic Match with just the Route cards included. It's your choice. Focus on the fun...!

- **Route cards:** a Route card on the table adds its value to that climber's score, as long as it matches no other Route revealed in that Round. *These cards have a "climber" icon in the upper-right corner.*
- **Bomber!:** A climber who reveals Bomber may either add 5 points to their score for that round, or discard it and play any Route from their hand and score it regularly. Bomber is a "bomb-proof" Unblockable maneuver and provides a guaranteed 5 points for the round, but it can be traded in for a higher-scoring Route in some cases. *This card has a "pick and shovel" icon in the upper-right corner.*
- **Tak-Tak!:** a climber who reveals Tak-Tak may also play a Route during that Round. If a Tak-Tak is the second card played, then you may follow-up this card with a Route and score it regularly. The Tak-Tak is worth 6 points on its own, but can be blocked by a duplicate Tak-Tak. *This card has a "hand" icon in the upper-right corner.*
- **Belay!:** the climber of a Belay scores only the *lowest non-duplicated Route played that Round*. This card is Unblockable, though if there are no non-duplicated Routes played during that Round, then the Belay card scores 0 points. *This card has a "coiled rope" icon in the corner.*
- **Clip In!:** a climber who reveals Clip In makes all the cards they've played that Round Unblockable. Note that if you play a Clip In card along with a Route, you will always score points for that Route, but anyone who has played that same Route won't score it unless they too have played a Clip In. *This card has a "carabiner" icon in the corner.*
- **Sabotage!:** a climber who reveals Sabotage will "steal" one point from a climber on one side of the table next to them and then steal two points from a climber on the other side of them. This will likely reduce the points earned by those other climbers, but no climber can earn fewer than 0 points (so you don't have to worry about "negative" points). If duplicated, then this card earns the climber 0 points for the Round and the point-stealing does not occur. *This card has a "falling rock" icon in the corner.*

WINNING THE GAME:

To end a typical match (also called "Peak Performance Mode"), a climber must either:

- Make it to the mountain summit on the score track first, or
- Be the Lead Climber and have at least two marker flags between their position on the score track and that of the next-closest climber

The player with the most points at the end of the match is the winner!

RULES VARIATIONS

There are different winning conditions for the other game modes. Read the *Rules Variations* section for more details on these different ways to play.

There are a number of different ways to play a game with the Mountaineers Deck. For new climbers, try out the **Basic Match**, then branch out to the other game modes to find your sweet spot for maximum enjoyment. You should be able to fit two or more game sessions into a single hour once you become familiar with the gameplay and flow. *Check out the different ways to play, and find out your favourite!*

BASIC MATCH

Learn how the game is played by starting with this game mode. Each climber removes all cards except the Route cards from their deck (they should have a personal deck with 9 cards in it). Play proceeds as normal. The climber with the highest score when someone reaches 50 points wins the Match.

PEAK PERFORMANCE (*h/t to Kristopher Kycia of BGDF.com*)

This is a "full featured" game mode where all cards are used. End the match once someone reaches the end of the Score Track, at the peak of the mountain. This game mode is intended for regular play, once all climbers are familiar with how the Mountaineers Deck is used. The different Special Effect cards add various dynamics that ensure no two games are ever the same.

MOUNTAINEER TOURNAMENT

For seasoned climbers, try a Tournament! Play one Match per climber, where each climber has the role of Lead Climber that does not change for the entire match. All cards are included in this game mode, just like in Peak Performance mode.

In a Tournament, players earn Medal Points based on one's finishing position at the end of the Match. As soon as a climber reaches the summit, determine each climber's Medal points earned, and record them until the end of the Tournament:

- **8 Medal Points:** 1st Place
- **5 Medal Points:** 2nd Place
- **3 Medal Points:** 3rd Place
- **2 Medal Points:** 4th Place
- **1 Medal Point:** 5th Place
- **0 Medal Points:** 6th Place or later

Once all matches are complete, the climber who has earned the most Medal Points is the Tournament Champion...!

SHERPA TOURNAMENT

This game mode plays (and scores) quite differently than a "typical" Tournament. Keep your eyes open!

Games proceed as a Mountaineer Tournament (and each climber takes a match as Lead Climber), but to begin you must remove all Special Effect cards except for *Bomber! and Sabotage!*

Medal points are awarded as follows:

- **+1 Medal Point:** each round you are Lead Climber (if your match runs long, you earn more Medal Points!)
- **+3 Medal Points:** Ending a round on a Marker Flag
- **+1 Medal Point:** Playing a Route card along with your Bomber! card (instead of collecting the automatic 5 points)
- **+1 Medal Point:** each uncovered Marker Flag between you and any other climber behind you at the end of a Round (you earn more points when other climbers don't watch their step!). Each climber calculates this separately each Round.

A Sherpa Tournament ends after all climbers have ended their match as Lead Climber. The climber with the most Medal Points wins the Sherpa Tournament.

BLITZ MODE

This is a "lightning round" style match, where climbers score points as quickly as possible until someone reaches the first flag to win the match.

Remove all Special Effect cards from the deck, so climbers use only Route Cards. Choose a Lead Climber for the entire Round. Each climber shuffles and then flips four cards face-up in front of themselves. Keep these cards off to the side, but visible to all other climbers. The remaining Route cards are now that climber's hand.

A climber selects a card and places it face-down in front of them. Once all climbers have done this, these face-down cards are revealed. The player with the highest-value, non-duplicated card moves to the next marker flag on the score track. If there are no non-duplicated cards, then no climber advances.

Move the face-up cards off to the side with the rest, and then repeat until climbers have exhausted their deck. Shuffle and repeat the process, flipping four Route cards face-up off to the side.

A climber wins Blitz Mode when they're the first to reach the summit.

ABOUT THIS GAME

Icons by: Caro Asercion, Lorc, and Delapouite, acquired from www.game-icons.net under a CC BY 3.0 license.

Please contact the designer with feedback, comments, and questions:

Stephen B. Thomas: editor@let-off.com, 443-653-2120

Enjoy the Mountaineer's Deck... Thank you for playing!!!