

♥ Bounty Suit (Hearts)

At the end of the hand, cards from the bounty suit may be added in either a Mast Year or Squirrel Boom. They are added temporarily for just one hand, then removed again for the next. However, you may not lead with the bounty suit unless it is “**broken**” meaning a bounty card has been played **off suit**. Once a player has played bounty, it is broken for the rest of the hand.

Mast Year

At the end of a hand, each oak player will have 1 card remaining in their hand. Reveal them. If **one** of them is either an **acorn** or **trunk** card, there is a Partial Mast Year. Add in the **2-5** of the bounty suit for the next hand only. If **both** players reveal an **acorn** or **trunk** card, there is a Full Mast Year instead. Add in the **2-9** of the bounty suit for the next hand only

Squirrel Population Boom

If a single squirrel player has **5 or more** acorn cards in their stashes (face-up or face-down) there is a Squirrel Population Boom. Add in the **J-A** of the bounty suit for the next hand only.

Variants

Game Length: Change the goal points from 10. Try 7 for shorter, 20 or even 30 for longer.

Incomplete Information: Add the 10 of Bounty during setup. Set 1 card aside face-down after each shuffle for that hand.

Single Hand: Play 1 hand. Score normally, then bonus: Oaks score 1 for Partial, 2 for Full Mast Year. Squirrels score 2 for Squirrel Boom.

Tournament Mode: Play 2 games, swap teams in between. Highest sum of points wins.

Silent Mode: Don't say "Many" or "Few" after passing.

What You Need

Required to play:

- A standard deck of 52 cards, potentially marked for ease of use (see THE DECK)
- A method of keeping score (poker chips, pen and paper, etc.)

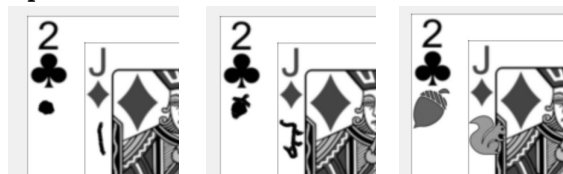
Optionally:

- 1 "Speedy Squirrel" Token
- 4 Double sided Communication Tokens (Reversi/Othello Chips work well)

The Deck

There are 2 special types of cards in the deck, Acorns and Squirrels. To improve the game experience, marking them with an icon is recommended.

Examples below:



Minimal Mark

Sketch

Stamp

This chart shows which cards you need to mark (or to reference if not marking)

	Squirrels	Acorns
Hearts (bounty) ♥	J,Q,K,A	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
All other Suits ♣♦♠	J	2,3

The cards rank from 2 (low) to Ace (high)

Designed By: Jonathan Bovee **Art:** Public Domain

Thanks to the many playtesters at Break My Game, Playtest Northwest, and Puget Sound Playtesting.

Visit jbovee.com/games/mast-year for more.

Mast Year:

Squirrels vs. Oaks



An Asymmetric Partnership Trick Taking Card Game

By Jonathan Bovee

What is a Mast Year?

Mysteriously, every few years all the oak trees in a region will join together to produce a huge abundance of acorns. Exactly why or how still isn't known, but some believe it helps them distribute their acorns while controlling the squirrel population. There aren't nearly enough squirrels to eat all the acorns in a mast year, and many acorns will be buried but go uneaten, becoming oak saplings the next year.

Summary

Mast Year is a trick-taking game based on the real world phenomenon of the same name. Two teams of two players each will compete to score points over several hands. Each hand has many “tricks” where all players play a single card. The winner of one trick will take the cards and begin the next trick.

The two teams are Squirrels and Oaks and they have different goals. The Squirrels want to take and eat acorns. The Oaks want to distribute acorns to the Squirrels, but prevent them from being eaten.

At the end of each hand, you might cause a Mast Year or Squirrel Boom, adding powerful “bounty” cards in a new suit with extra icons and shaping the next hand.

Goal

To win, a team needs to score 10 acorn cards, each team does this differently.



The Squirrels want to eat acorns. They score face-down "eaten" acorns in their stashes at the end of a hand.



The Oaks want to use the squirrels to spread acorns. They score face-up "uneaten" acorns in the squirrel teams stashes at the end of a hand.

Setup

1. Decide teams: Two players will be on the Squirrel team and two will be on the Oak team. Make sure your teammate sits across from you so that both opponents are sitting next to you.
2. Choose a Squirrel player to be "Speedy Squirrel" first. Give them the Speedy Squirrel token. This will alternate between the Squirrel players.
3. Remove all 13 Bounty cards (Hearts) from the deck and set them aside for future hands.

The Deal

Shuffle the deck, then set aside 3 cards at random. Deal the rest to the players evenly. Then, deal 1 set aside card to each **Oak** player and deal 1 to the **Speedy Squirrel**.

For the first hand, there should be 10 cards in the Oak and Speedy Squirrels hand, and 9 in the other squirrels hand.

The Pass

Each player simultaneously passes 1 card face-down from their hand to their partner. As you pass, you may say "Many" or "Few" either verbally or with a token if you have them. This communicates to your partner whether you have Many or Few of the card type being passed. Once all players have selected, add your partners card to your hand.

The Trunk

The **Speedy Squirrel** chooses the "trunk" suit (called a trump suit in other games). They remove a card from their hand and reveal it face-up. The suit of this card is the **trunk suit**.

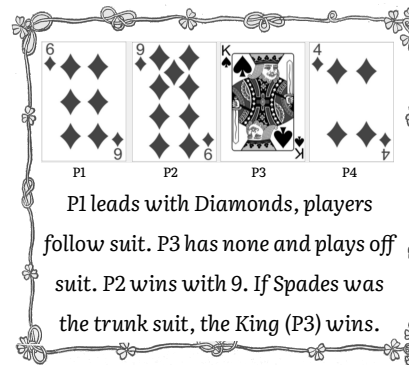
The Tricks

The **Speedy Squirrel** "leads" the first trick each hand, playing a card from hand face-up. All other players in clockwise order play a card "**following suit**" if able: if they have a card that matches the "lead suit" of the first card played this trick, they must play it. If they can't, they instead play any card in hand "**off suit**."

When all players have played a card, determine a winner: The **highest** card of the **lead** suit wins (**Ace** is high).

However, if anyone played a trunk, the **highest** card of the **trunk** suit wins instead.

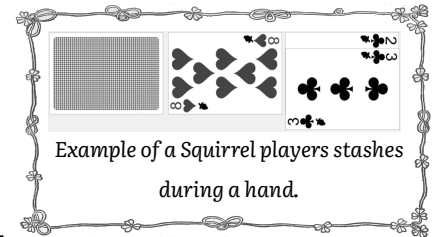
The winner gathers the cards from the trick, then leads the next trick. If the winner is a **Squirrel** player, they might **STASH** or **EAT**.



Stashing and Eating

If a **Squirrel** player won a trick, check for symbols:

- If there are any **acorn** icons, that player places all acorn cards in the trick in a face-up "stash" in front of them. Acorns



won in separate tricks go in separate stashes.

- If there are **no acorn** icons, that player may "eat" a single stash of acorns already in front of them from a previous trick, turning it face-down to score for the squirrel team.
- If there are any **acorn** icons AND a **squirrel** icon, stash the acorns as before, but place them face-down, already "eaten" and scoring.

The End

After a trick, if a player has no cards in hand, tally the score and end the hand. **Squirrels** score a point for each **face-down** acorn card in all their stashes combined. **Oaks** score for the **face-up** acorn cards in the squirrels stashes. If a team reached 10 points, the game ends; the team with the most points wins. If not, check for a Mast Year or Squirrel Boom (See Page 5), swap Speedy Squirrel and deal again.

