

DECADE BY DECADE

THE RUMMY GAME OF HISTORY

Overview

Decade by Decade is a rummy-style card game spanning a century of history — from the 1900s to the 2020s. Players draw and play cards representing historical events, cultural milestones, scientific discoveries, and world moments, laying them down in consecutive decade runs to build a shared timeline. The first player to empty their hand wins.

2–4 players · ~30 minutes · Ages 10+

Components

106 cards total:


- 104 regular cards — 13 decades × 4 categories × 2 copies each
- 2 Event cards (wild cards — can represent any decade and category)

The 13 decades span:

1900s · 1910s · 1920s · 1930s · 1940s · 1950s · 1960s · 1970s · 1980s · 1990s · 2000s ·
2010s · 2020s

Categories

Each regular card belongs to one of four categories, colour-coded on the card and reinforced by an icon:

	World Events	Wars, treaties, elections, geopolitical shifts
	Arts & Entertainment	Film, music, literature, sport, pop culture
	Science & Technology	Inventions, discoveries, space, medicine
	Society & Culture	Social movements, fashion, food, everyday life

Event Cards (Wild Cards)

The two Event cards are wild — they can stand in for any decade and any category when forming a meld. When an Event card is played as part of a meld, the player declares which decade and category it represents for that meld.

A real card can be swapped into a meld in place of an Event card on a later turn, freeing the Event to be replayed from the table.

Setup

- Shuffle all 106 cards together.
- Deal 14 cards face-down to each player. Players may look at their own hand.
- Place the remaining cards face-down as the draw pile.
- The table area (shared play space) starts empty.
- Decide who goes first by any method. Play proceeds clockwise.

On Your Turn

Each turn you choose exactly one of two actions:

Option A — Draw a Card

Take the top card from the draw pile, add it to your hand, and end your turn. You may not also play melds on a turn where you draw.

If the draw pile is empty, you must pass (end your turn without drawing or playing melds).

Option B — Play Melds

Stage one or more melds using cards from your hand, then commit your play to end your turn. You do not draw a card on a turn where you play melds.

When you play melds you may also:

- Lay off cards — add one or more cards to any existing meld on the table, extending it.
- Swap out an Event card — place a real card into a meld that contains an Event card, and take the Event card back into your hand.

All changes are staged on your client before committing. You can undo and adjust until you are satisfied, then confirm. Once committed, the play cannot be reversed.

Melds

A meld is a valid set of cards played from your hand onto the shared table. There are two meld types:

Run

3 or more cards of the **same category** with **consecutive decades**. Event cards may fill any gap in the sequence.

Example: 1950s Science & Technology + 1960s Science & Technology + 1970s Science & Technology is a valid run.

Example: 1940s World Events + Event card + 1960s World Events is a valid run (Event fills the 1950s gap).

Group

3 or 4 cards of the **same decade** from **different categories**. Event cards may fill any missing category slot.

Example: 1980s World Events + 1980s Arts & Entertainment + 1980s Science & Technology is a valid group.

Duplicate copies of the same card (same decade, same category) may not appear in the same meld together. A spare copy may be laid off onto an existing run if the run continues on that side.

Opening Your Timeline

Before you can play melds freely, you must **establish your timeline**. On the turn you first play to the table, your play must include **at least one Run of 3 or more consecutive decades in the same category**. Event cards count toward this requirement.

Once you have established your timeline, all future turns allow any valid meld (run or group) and lay-offs without restriction.

A group alone — even a group of 4 — does not satisfy the opening requirement. You must have a run of 3+ consecutive same-category decades.

You may play additional melds and lay-offs on the same turn as your opening, provided the opening run is included in the play.

Winning

The first player to play all cards from their hand wins immediately. This can happen mid-turn — if playing your final cards empties your hand, you win at that moment.

The game also ends if the draw pile is exhausted and no player can make any play. In this case, the player with the fewest cards remaining in hand wins. Ties are broken by the player who most recently took a turn.

Strategy Notes

- Event cards are powerful — they can bridge a gap in a run or let you open early. Use them thoughtfully rather than spending them on the first available play.
- Watch opponents' established melds. If another player is building Science & Technology runs, consider holding or playing those cards to prevent easy lay-offs.
- Lay-offs let you shed cards without starting a new meld — in the late game, adding a single card to an existing run can be decisive.
- Swapping a real card into a meld to reclaim an Event card is often worth a turn even if you don't play the Event immediately.
- If you cannot play and must draw repeatedly, stay patient — a 14-card hand contains many partial runs. One draw can unlock multiple melds at once.

Quick Reference

Players	2 – 4
Hand size	14 cards
Deck	106 cards (104 regular + 2 Event wilds)
Turn	Either draw a card OR play melds (not both)
Opening	First play must include a Run of 3+ consecutive same-category decades
Win	First player to empty their hand