

## Blaze:

The object of Blaze is to **take the most bugs**. Players ante one dollar to begin. The bidding goes around the table multiple times, until everyone passes. (You can't pass and then come back in.)

You are not bidding in dollars, but in bugs. Whoever bids the highest arranges the Key Cards and leads the first trick. Play six tricks as usual.

**Winning:** If the bidder makes his bid in bugs, he wins the pot. If he does not, he must match the pot, (or pay some other established penalty) and the game restarts. If a player folds, he stays out until someone wins the pot.

## Buying the Trick:

In this variant, you can fold with no points. To do so, wait until your chance to play a card, and then pay the pot for every card currently in the trick. It's usually cheaper than taking the whole trick.

## RENFIELD ©1999 Cheapass Games.

Game designed by **James Ernest** and **E. Jordan Bojar**, with help from **Paul Peterson** and **Toivo Rovainen**. Illustrated by **Michael O'Connor**. Thanks also to a sly cadre of villainous Guinea Pigs.

## About Cheapass Games:

We here at **Cheapass Games** are aware of two basic facts about games: they cost too much, and they are, at some level, all the same.

If you ignore the clever shapes they come in, the cheap little plastic pawns are an interchangeable part of most of the board games in your house. So are the dice, the money, the counters, and just about every disposable spare part. These parts can account for as much as 75% of a game's production cost, and that cost gets handed to you.

If you had your choice, you'd probably invest a little bit of money in one good set of gaming paraphernalia instead of twenty crappy ones, and then just buy the new part of every "new" game. Yet most game companies insist on selling you the whole package every time; it's a little like bundling a can opener with every can of beans.

Cheapass Games come packaged with the bare essentials: boards, cards, and rulebooks. If you need anything else, we'll tell you. And it's probably something that you can scrounge from a game you already have, or buy cheap at a hobby store. Heck, if you need to, you can even buy the parts from us.

And once you've got a collection of pawns, dice, counters, and money, you can use the same ones for every Cheapass Game. We've standardized our designs so your gaming toolbox will last.

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# RENFIELD

A Cheapass Card Game for 4-7 players

Mmmm. Bugs. You can't eat just one.

Welcome to the wonderful world of Renfield, where gravediggers and other miscreants spend their spare time playing a brutal game of cards.

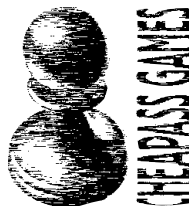
During the week, these grisly fellows make their living digging up the freshly dead, and pawning off their ill-gotten bits to the body shops and boneyards of Parts Unknown. So you can only imagine the kind of game these guys play to unwind.

Well, you don't have to imagine any more.

**What you Get:** The **Renfield Deck**, 54 cards in three suits. Plus this fine rulebook.

**What you Need: Money.** Renfield is a gambling game. If you aren't playing for real money, start each player with \$100 in chips, and compare scores at the end. If you come out with more than you started with, you're doing well.

**The Goal:** The object of this game is to take the fewest points, as long as you take at least one. The points are represented as yummy delicious bugs



## Cheapass Economic Fact:

As with automobiles, baseball cards, and precious stones, it's less profitable to sell a whole dead body than to break it up for parts. Don't believe us? Buy the sister game, **Parts Unknown!**

on the cards. You have to eat at least one bug (take at least one point) to win the game, but among the people who take bugs, the one who takes the least bugs wins.

Okay, eating bugs is not the real object of the game. The point is actually to soak the other gravediggers for their pocket change. Eating bugs is just the fun part.

**The Format: Renfield** is a trick-taking game. Each hand is played in six rounds, or "tricks," in which each active player plays one card onto the table, and the highest card takes the set. The player who takes one trick leads the next one, and so on for six tricks.

**Renfield** is also a gambling game, sort of like Poker, in which everyone has his own stake, and money is played into a pot in the center of the table. Like Poker, it has developed a family of **variants** which are listed at the back of this rulebook. (You'll also find one of our favorite Poker variants there, **Frankenstein**.) The variants are all written as extensions of the core rules, so learn the basic game before moving on to the rest.

Like Poker, this game plays best with 4, 5, or 6 players, though it is possible to play with as few as 3 or as many as 8. Expect a good deal of chaos in the larger games, and a lot more order in the smaller ones.

**The Cards:** Each card has four important details down the side. A **Rank** (1 through 17); a **Suit** (Tools, Parts, or Stones); **Bugs** (i.e., points, zero through six); and a **Dollar Cost** (zero through five dollars).

**Rank** determines the highest card within a particular **Suit**. The order of the **Suits** is set by

## Bonus Poker Game: Frankenstein

Designed by E. Jordan Bojar and James Ernest

This vicious little Poker game has been floating around the Cheapass offices since long before they were the Cheapass offices. Since it's so remarkably appropriate, we thought we'd throw it into the Renfield rules at no extra charge. (It plays with a standard Poker deck.)

**Frankenstein** is basic five-card draw with one major change, a **Zombie hand**. The Zombie hand is built from the discarded cards (but not the folded hands) and is allowed to make its best five-card hand in the showdown.

If the Zombie beats the high hand, then the would-be winner must **match the pot**, and the game is re-dealt.



**Folding:** It is only legal to fold when the bet comes to you. You cannot fold after your last chance to bet, call, or raise. This prevents someone from looking at the Zombie's cards, and then folding because he can't beat them.

Once you fold, you're out for good.

**Rotating Open:** For the sake of fairness, the role of first bet and first draw moves one player to the left with each new deal. This still isn't perfectly fair, but it helps. For more "fairness" you can **start** the rotating open at a random player, rather than to the dealer's left.

**Strategy:** You will probably be throwing your best cards into the Zombie and trying not to have the best hand, until so many people fold that you have a chance to beat the monster. Basically, this is a game of lowball that mysteriously changes into straight poker somewhere in the middle. It's up to you to decide exactly when that will be.

the high bidder at the start of each hand, and is represented by the arrangement of the **Key Cards** (the zeroes of each suit, which do not shuffle into the deck.) The **Bugs** represent how many points the card is worth towards your score, and the **Dollar Cost** is the amount you must pay the pot when you **take** the card. (**Not** when you play it.)

**Doublers:** Some of the cards, 2's and 12's, are **doublers**. The "D" in the dollar slot doubles the money you must pay to take the trick containing that card. "Double" on the bug line doubles your score for the **entire hand**.

**To Begin:** Remove the three **Key Cards**, the zeroes of each suit, and put them in the middle of the table. These are the indicator cards for their respective suits, and they will be arranged on the table to show the hierarchy of suits on this hand.

Your deck may also have come with a black-faced card; if so, take it out and save it for the "Death Card" variant listed below.

Choose a **dealer**, who shuffles the deck and deals a hand of **six cards** to each player. Set the rest of the deck aside.

After each hand, the deal will pass to the left.

**The Bidding Round:** Before playing the hand, players bid to determine who will order the suits and lead the first trick.

Starting to the dealer's left, each player must make a bid in dollars, or pass. The bid goes around the table just once, ending with the Dealer. Players must bid higher than the standing bid. If no one bids, the Dealer must take the lead for \$5.

Whoever makes the largest bid puts her bid **in the pot**, and arranges the Key Cards so that her choice for the **highest** suit is on the **top**, and the lowest on the bottom. Every card in one suit outranks every card in the suit(s) below it.

**Playing Each Trick:** The Leader (on the first trick, this is the player who won the bid) plays a card onto the table. Proceeding to her left, every player must play one card.

**Following Suit:** If a particular suit was led, players **must** play a card of the same suit if possible. So, for example, if a Stone was played first on

this trick, you must play a Stone if you have one. If not, you can play whichever other suit you want.

There is no other "following" rule; you can play higher or lower than the lead, and you can play anything you want if you are out of the suit that was led.

**Folding:** Once you have taken **at least one bug**, you may **fold** instead of playing a card. If you fold, turn over the cards you have collected, and lay down your hand. You are now out of the hand, and cannot win. **Note:** you can **only** fold at a time when you would play a card. If you take a trick, you must pay for the cards you've taken **before** you have the opportunity to fold.

**Taking the Trick:** If you played the highest card on the trick, you take it. The "highest" card means the highest ranked card of the highest suit, as dictated by the order of the Key Cards.

Pay the pot for all the cards in this trick. (A "D" in the dollar slot doubles the price of the trick.) Arrange the cards on the table in front of you, so that other players can see how many bugs you have, and which cards have been played.

Whoever takes one trick leads the next one, and so on. If a player folds instead of leading, the lead passes to the left.

**Winning:** After all six tricks have been played, players who have not folded compare their scores. Whoever has the smallest number of bugs, but at least one, wins the pot. **Note:** It is possible to take a trick and still have no bugs!

If two or more players are tied, they split the pot and leave the odd coins for the next game.

After each hand, the deal passes to the left.



Arranging the Key Cards (Parts is high here.)

## Variations:

Once you have the hang of basic Renfield, you'll probably want to try some variations. You might settle on a favorite house variant, or let the dealer call a new game with each hand. Most of these options can be **combined** to form more complex variants; and don't be afraid to make up your own.

### Stud:

Seven players max. Players get seven cards, of which they will play only six. Deal three cards facedown, and four faceup. After the cards are dealt, play proceeds as normal, with players able to play either upcards or downcards as they wish.



### Draw:

After the deal, there is a betting round as in Poker, in which players may check, bet, call, raise, or fold. Then there is a drawing round, in which players first discard up to four cards, and then all discards are reshuffled into the deck, and the players' hands are refilled to six cards. The normal game then resumes at the bidding round.

### Auction:

Seven players max. After the deal, players buy different cards as follows: deal seven cards into a facedown pack. Reveal the top card. Players bid in an open auction to buy the card. Players must bid in dollar increments, with a maximum bid of ten dollars, which buys any card outright. The player who buys the card pays the pot, and adds it to his hand. He then puts another card from his hand up for auction in the same manner, but **splits the proceeds** of this auction with the pot, with any odd dollar going to the pot. (Mean players tend to bid in odd numbers in this stage.)

If a card is not bought, it is discarded and the next card is revealed from the pack. Once the pack is exhausted, the game resumes with the normal bidding round.

### Breathing Room:

Max six players. Players are dealt eight cards, of which they will play only six.



### Wild Cards:

Before dealing, the dealer declares one or more cards to be wild. Wild cards may be played as any suit or rank, but revert to their actual value once taken. In other words, play these cards as if they were wild, determine who takes the trick based on the wild value, and then pay for and score them as their face value.

### The Death Card:

If your deck came with a black-faced card, you can use it as the Death Card. Otherwise, you can use any other card. Any trick including the Death Card is not taken by anyone, and those cards are removed from the game. The lead goes to the player who would have otherwise taken the trick.

The Death Card has no suit, and cannot be played unless its owner has no cards matching the lead. (Option: the Death Card has all suits, and can be played as a follow to any suit.) In either case, the Death card can never be led, and if it is a player's last card, he **must fold** (points or not) rather than lead the trick with it. This is actually good, if you need to get out of the game for free.

### Flatline:

There are no Key Cards. Players bid only to lead the first trick, with the Dealer taking an unbid lead for only \$2. Players must still follow suit, but all suits are considered to be of equal value. Cards are compared on the basis of rank only, with recent cards ranking above previous cards of the same rank on the same trick. In other words, if two 15's are played on the same trick, the second 15 is higher.

It is possible to shuffle the zeroes into the deck for Flatline. In this variant, if a Zero is led, that suit is high for that trick.

