

Scratch My Back™

rule extensions and FAQ



Extended Rules: (for use in addition to standard rules)

These *optional* rules add extra elements of skill and strategy. Try them once you're comfortable with the simpler form of the game.

Remove three (or so) Agree cards.

(it dramatically increases their strategic worth).

Accumulating Request Cards:

- At the end of a round, unpaired Request cards remain on the table.
- Unpaired request cards continue to accumulate until:
 - a) A player wins the round with a Command card.
 - b) A player wins the round after a pair of Request cards has been formed. (A pair of Request cards is formed when the two most recent Request cards on the table both have the same icon).

Full Win:

- If a player Agrees whilst making paired Requests, their score for the round is the sum of all cards played in the round -i.e. positive and negative cards are both worth one point each.
- If you add this rule, you'll need to tally scores on paper.

Tournament Rules:

- Players cut the pack. If they reveal an 'Agree' card, they Shuffle and deal.
- If they reveal a 'Command' card, they may nominate a dealer.
- When starting a new round, the starting player should make a request of the player who hasn't taken a turn for the longest.
- At the start of the game they may request anybody.
- The winner of the game is the first player to have 20 or more points in their Score pile at the end of a game.
- If at the end of a game, no player exceeds this total, a new game is played, with players retaining their score from the previous game and the player with the lowest score shuffling and dealing.

Trouble Shooting / FAQ:

A number of rules and concepts are unique to Scratch My Back. This can make learning the rules a little challenging first time you play. The main concepts that players misinterpret or have difficulty with are:

Attacking and defending:

- Whereas in many card games, play rotates in a clockwise manner, in Scratch My Back, play generally alternates between an attacking and defending player.
- If a player is attacking (i.e. they are trying to convince an opponent to agree to a request), they must make an attacking move, and vice versa.
For example, a defending player cannot play a Reason card as it only has an attacking icon (even though the language on this card may seem to fit in).

Replying to a Command Card:

- The Command card is the trump card. If an opponent plays a Command card, you must play a Command card back, or fold. (i.e. a player cannot reply with an Excuse, Why or Pass it on card -even though the language on the card may seem to fit in naturally).

Q: Do I have to use the language written on the cards?

A: No. The language is provided as a guide, and to stimulate creativity. Players are free to use what ever language they like (or can even play silently).

Q: Can I play a card, and then voluntarily fold on the same turn?

A: No. You first have to wait for your opponent's reply.

Basic Strategy Tips:

- Try not to play the Scratch My Back card too early in a round, or an opponent can win the round by playing an Agree card.
- If an opponent plays the Scratch My Back card, consider playing one straight back at them (as it may indicate that they are out of defending cards).
- But beware, as a player could be setting you up, and win the round with an Agree card.
- If you have lots of heart cards in your hand, be nice! Maybe you can finish as the Messiah?
- Playing two Pass it on cards on consecutive turns is a good way for an attacking player to keep the pressure on a defending player whilst building up the negative points on the table.
- If a defending player plays a Pass it on card, the attacking player can shift the focus straight back onto them with a Pass it on card.
- Play more aggressively when you have Command cards to back you up, but try to hold onto them for as long as possible.
- Unless there are a lot of Heart cards on the table, playing a Pass it on card may be a better option long term than using a Command card.
- Try to play as many cards from your hand as possible before playing a Reload card.
- As the Why card can be used in attack and defence it is more valuable than Decline, Excuse and Reason cards.

More Game Variations:

In a Rut:

- The player who ends a round begins the next round (regardless of how many points they score).
- This rule should be played in combination with the extended rules (left), and the following (harsher) folding penalty:
- **If a player folds:** their score **decreases** by the number of cards played in the round. e.g. if seven cards are on the table, the folding player subtracts seven points from their score. Their opponent's score increases by the number of positive cards played in the round.

Messiah:

- If a player is so righteous and benevolent as to finish the game only scoring positive points, they become the Messiah, winning the game regardless of whether they have the highest score.

Kindness Combos:

- A player may play a combination of four heart cards in response to a Command card.
- Some examples: a Kindness, a Scratch my back and two Requests of the same suit (played by a defending player); two Kindness, a Scratch my back and a Request (also played by a defending player); two Kindness cards, and two Agree cards (played by an attacking or defending player, this results in the player picking up all cards played in the round, as opposed to just the negative cards).

Discarding:

- A player can discard one negative card to their score pile (losing a point), or gift one positive card to another player's score pile at the start of a round.
- This is a way for a player to sacrifice points in exchange for a potentially better hand.