

Reactor 21 — Rules (Version 4)

1. Objective

You and your teammate work together to stabilize all four reactors by bringing each one to a total of exactly 21. If all four reactors become stabilized, you win immediately. The team loses if system failures accumulate beyond safe limits.

2. Components

- One standard 52-card deck (remove jokers).
- Four shared reactor zones labeled A–D.
- A face-down draw pile and a face-up discard pile.
- Red meltdown tokens and yellow instability tokens.
- Green stabilization markers for completed reactors.

3. Card Values

- 2–10 = card's face value
- J, Q, K = 10
- Ace = 1 or 11 (chosen when placed)

4. Setup

Shuffle the deck thoroughly. Deal one card face-up onto each reactor. Place the remaining cards face-down as the draw pile, then flip the top card to form the discard pile. Place all tokens and markers nearby.

5. Turn Sequence

Each turn proceeds as follows:

1. Draw one card from the draw pile or the top of the discard pile (only if you intend to place it).
2. Place the card on a reactor, if legal.
3. Resolve failure if the card is unplaceable.
4. Handle stabilization immediately when a reactor hits 21.
5. End the turn.

6. Legal Placement

A card may be placed on any reactor where the resulting total will not exceed 21.

- If multiple placements are possible, the team chooses.
- If only one option is legal, the card must be placed there.
- A total of exactly 21 stabilizes the reactor instantly.

7. Immediate Stabilization

As soon as a reactor reaches exactly 21, immediately:

1. Clear all cards from that reactor into the discard pile.
2. Mark the reactor with a green stabilization marker.
3. The reactor becomes permanently complete and cannot receive more cards.

Stabilizing all four reactors wins the game.

8. Unplaceable Cards

If a drawn card cannot be placed on any active reactor without exceeding 21, the team must choose one failure outcome:

Instability:

Reveal the card, discard it, and add one yellow instability token.

Meltdown:

Choose a reactor to overload, place the card on it, then clear all its cards into the discard pile and add one red meltdown token. Its total resets to zero.

If placing the new token would exceed system limits, the game ends in a loss.

9. Reshuffling

If the draw pile empties:

- Shuffle the discard pile to form a new draw pile.
- Flip the top card of the new draw pile face-up to start a new discard pile.

10. Winning

Stabilize all four reactors to win immediately.

11. Losing

The team loses immediately if meltdown tokens or instability tokens reach their respective limits. Limits may be set by the group in this version.