

Reactor 21 — Rules (Version 7)

1. Objective

You and your teammate work together to stabilize four nuclear reactors by bringing each one to a total of exactly 21. Stabilize all four reactors to win. The team loses immediately if the system suffers too many meltdowns or too much instability.

2. Components

- A standard 52-card deck (jokers removed).
- Four shared reactor zones labeled A–D.
- A face-down Draw Pile.
- A face-up Discard Pile.
- A face-down Nuclear Waste Pile (starts empty).
- 3 red Meltdown Tokens.
- 5 yellow Instability Tokens.
- 4 green Stabilization Markers.
- A game mat with printed areas for Reactor Zones, Draw Pile, Discard Pile, Nuclear Waste Pile, Meltdown Track, and Instability Track.

3. Card Values

- 2–10: face value
- J, Q, K: 10
- Ace: 1 or 11 (chosen when placed)

4. Setup

Shuffle the deck thoroughly. Deal one card face-up to each of the four reactors. Place the remaining deck face-down as the Draw Pile. Flip the top card to begin the Discard Pile. Place all tokens and markers beside the game mat. All reactors start active.

5. Turn Sequence

On your turn:

1. Draw one card:

- You may draw from the Draw Pile, OR
- You may draw from the top of the Discard Pile, but only if that card can be legally placed on a reactor immediately.

2. Attempt to place the card on a reactor. A placement is legal only if adding the card would bring that reactor's total to equal to or less than 21.

3. If the card cannot be legally placed on any active reactor, resolve Instability or Meltdown.
4. Stabilize any reactor that reaches exactly 21.
5. End your turn.

6. Legal Placement

A card may be placed on any active reactor where the resulting total would be equal to or less than 21.

- If multiple reactors can accept the card, the team chooses.
- If only one reactor can accept it, the card must be placed there.
- If no reactor can accept the card, it is unplaceable.
- A reactor that reaches exactly 21 stabilizes immediately.

7. Reactor Stabilization

When a reactor reaches a total of exactly 21:

1. Announce the stabilization.
2. Clear all cards from that reactor into the Discard Pile.
3. Place a green Stabilization Marker on that reactor.
4. That reactor is permanently complete and will not receive more cards.

Stabilizing all four reactors results in an immediate victory.

8. Unplaceable Cards: Instability or Meltdown

A card is unplaceable if placing it would push every active reactor above 21. When this happens, the team must choose one of the following:

Instability:

- Reveal the card.
- Discard it face-up.
- Place one yellow Instability Token on the Instability Track.

Meltdown:

- Choose any active reactor.
- Place the card onto that reactor to force an overload.
- Move all cards from that reactor face-down into the Nuclear Waste Pile.
- Reset that reactor's total to zero.
- Place one red Meltdown Token on the Meltdown Track.

Nuclear Waste Pile Rules:

Cards placed in the Nuclear Waste Pile are removed from play and cannot be used again until the Draw Pile empties. When the Draw Pile empties, all cards in the Nuclear Waste Pile are shuffled together with the Discard Pile to create a new Draw Pile.

Immediate Loss:

If placing the chosen token fills its track (all 3 red or all 5 yellow), the team loses immediately.

9. Reshuffling the Deck

If the Draw Pile empties:

1. Shuffle all cards from the Discard Pile.
2. Add all cards from the Nuclear Waste Pile into this shuffle.
3. Place the shuffled cards face-down as the new Draw Pile.
4. Flip the top card to begin a fresh Discard Pile.
5. The Nuclear Waste Pile becomes empty.

10. Winning the Game

The team wins immediately when all four reactors have been stabilized.

11. Losing the Game

The team loses immediately if either:

- All 3 Meltdown Tokens have been placed, or
- All 5 Instability Tokens have been placed.

There is no recovery once a track has been filled.