

Steal the show. Keep a gift.

2-10 players per deck / designed for 4-10 / 20-40 minute target / ages 10+ target. Timing and age fit still need playtesting.

The promise

Everyone leaves with exactly one gift. Spend cards to steal, use reactions to stop a move, and draw a comeback card when someone moves your gift. There are four rounds, with one turn per player per round. At the end, the gift in front of you is yours. There is no cash score or overall winner.

Before guests arrive

Agree on one gift budget and whether joke gifts are welcome. Each person brings one wrapped gift. Opaque gift bags or easy-to-open boxes make secret peeks easier. The base game needs no extra gifts, tokens, dice or phones. Gifts are not included in the deck.

Set up in three minutes

1. Randomly give everyone one wrapped gift. Drawing your own is allowed. Secretly peek at your own gift, then close it again.
2. Shuffle only the 54 MOVE, SCHEME and REACTION cards. Deal 3 face down to each player. Keep hands secret. Put the rest in a draw pile with space for discards.
3. Give everyone a YOUR TURN reference. Put the four ROUND cards in order. Randomly choose a starter using folded name slips; give them START HERE as the marker.
4. For two players, remove all 6 SWITCHEROO and all 4 THREE-GIFT GRIFT cards first. Use the remaining 44 play cards.

Read this aloud

"Draw one, then play one card, spend any two cards to try a steal, or refresh your hand. Every steal is an exchange. If your gift moves on somebody else's turn, draw one after their action. You can stop a move with a reaction. We play four rounds, reveal all gifts after round one, and stop after the final turn."

One turn. One decision.

Choose the moment to make a move. Keep something in reserve.

1 / Draw one card

At the start of your turn, draw 1. It is okay to temporarily hold more than 5 cards during an action.

2 / Choose exactly one action

Play: Play one MOVE or SCHEME from your hand and follow it. Reactions are played only when a gift move threatens your gift.

Cash in cards: Discard any 2 cards to attempt a SWIPE: exchange gifts with one other player. They can block it. Both cards are spent even if blocked.

Regroup: Discard 0, 1 or 2 cards, then draw that many. Choosing 0 is a pass. You cannot play another card after regrouping.

3 / Resolve, reload, clean up

Resolve all gift moves and reactions. Then each player whose gift actually moved during your action draws exactly 1 comeback card, except you. This includes the two other players in a THREE-GIFT GRIFT and both recipients in a successful two-step YANKEE HEIST. Blocked moves earn no comeback draw. After the entire action, everyone with more than 5 cards discards down to 5. The next player clockwise takes a turn.

Four rounds; four turns each

1. THE SNOOP: Play with gifts wrapped; an optional peek can reveal information privately. After everyone has had a turn, everyone unwraps and shows their current gift. Allow a brief reveal for each person.

2. THE SCRAMBLE: All gifts are now visible. Play one turn each.

3. THE DOUBLE-CROSS: Play one turn each.

4. LAST CALL: Play one final turn each, including reactions and comeback draws. Stop after the last action. Unused cards have no value. No extra final steal.

Move the starter; keep your seats

After each of the first three rounds, move START HERE one seat clockwise and reveal the next ROUND card. The new starter begins; play continues clockwise until everyone has taken one turn. The round labels are reminders, not extra effects. One person can tick off turns on paper if needed.

The moves

32 MOVE cards. Every gift transfer is a swap or a three-gift rotation.

SWIPE / 14 copies

Choose another player. Swap your gift with theirs. They may block. If it works, they draw 1 comeback card.

SWITCHEROO / 6 copies

Choose any two different players. Swap their gifts. You may be one of them. Either affected player may block the whole swap.

THREE-GIFT GRIFT / 4 copies

Choose two other players. Point out a loop between the three of you. Each gift moves one place around that loop. One block cancels the entire rotation. Requires 3+ players.

SNEAK PEEK / 4 copies

Privately look inside another player's wrapped gift OR at their hand. Then you may swap gifts with that player. The peek cannot be blocked. The swap can. Do not show anyone else. If a private gift peek is impractical, inspect the owner's hand instead. Reactions cannot stop the peek itself.

YANKEE HEIST / 4 copies

Discard 1 extra card. Attempt a swap with one player, then you may attempt a swap with a different player. Each swap can be blocked separately. In a 2-player game, attempt only one. Choose the second target after the first swap resolves. You may attempt the second even if the first is blocked. You cannot target the same player twice. You must pay the extra card before trying either swap.

What "steal" means here

Take the gift you want and give its holder your current gift in the same move. Never take a gift without replacing it. Gifts remain open after the round-one reveal, even when they change hands.

Schemes & defenses

8 SCHEME cards and 14 REACTION cards. Reactions do not use up your next turn.

HOT TIP / 4 copies

Draw 3 cards. Then discard 1 card from your hand. Cannot be blocked. Finish the action with at most 5 cards.

RE-GIFT / 4 copies

Exchange your remaining hand with one other player. Then that player draws 1 card. Exchange face down, without looking first. Cannot be blocked. Play RE-GIFT out of your hand first, then exchange what remains. An empty hand is a legal hand to exchange. The other player gets the extra draw even if you gave them zero cards. This does not move gifts or earn comeback cards.

HANDS OFF / 10 copies

On another player's turn, cancel one swap or rotation that would move your gift. All gifts in that move stay put. Cannot be countered. No comeback draw for a blocked move.

TRIPWIRE / 4 copies

On another player's turn, cancel one swap or rotation that would move your gift. All gifts in that move stay put. Then draw 2 cards. Cannot be countered. Finish the action with at most 5 cards.

The reaction window

Announce the complete swap or rotation before touching gifts. Starting with the first affected player clockwise after the active player, ask each affected player once: block or pass? The active player cannot react to their own action. The first reaction played cancels that move; other players keep their reactions. A pass is final for that move. A YANKEE HEIST creates a new window for its second swap. There are no reactions to reactions.

Example: a trap in the middle

Alex uses YANKEE HEIST and pays its extra card. Bea blocks the first swap with TRIPWIRE, so both gifts stay put and Bea draws 2. Alex then swaps with Cam. After both attempts, Cam draws 1 comeback card; Alex draws none. Bea gets no comeback card because her gift did not move.

Keep the party moving

These rulings apply to every table. Read only when needed.

Empty pile, empty hand, impossible effect

When the draw pile empties, shuffle the discard pile to make a new one. Keep the card being resolved and any reactions aside until the entire action ends. If neither pile has cards, draw as many as possible, possibly zero. Draws resume when cards become available.

An empty hand does not remove you: draw normally at your next turn, then play, regroup or pass. If a card has no legal target, you cannot play it. You can still spend it as one of the two cards for a basic SWIPE or discard it when regrouping.

Exactly one gift, always

All affected gifts move simultaneously within a swap or rotation. No gift can be permanently locked, and no gift has a steal limit. You may take back a gift on a later action. Cards do not transfer ownership of their owners' gifts unless they say so. Never open, consume or use a gift in a way that changes its value during play.

Comeback details

Count actual moves over the entire action. Each non-active player who moved a gift gets one card, even if they liked the new gift. They get at most one comeback card for that action. Draw in clockwise order starting after the active player, after all immediate effects finish. Then everyone trims to 5. You cannot use a comeback card to block a move that already happened.

Friendly table manners

Give people a chance to read their reaction before moving gifts. Aim for about 30 seconds to choose an action, with extra time for reading or accessibility. Talk, bluff about plans, and make nonbinding promises. Do not misstate card rules, trade cards outside an effect, or negotiate money. A person may leave by handing their seat and entire game state to a substitute; do not remove a gift midgame.

The ending is firm

The final action follows exactly the same rules as earlier actions. Nothing grants an unanswerable last steal. The last player still has a timing advantage; rotating starters and reactions reduce it but do not prove balance. Test that explicitly. Any voluntary gift trading after the game is a separate social choice.

More guests. More tables.

One deck serves 2-10 players. Above ten, use the party relay format.

The scaling rule

Use **ceil(players / 10)** decks and tables, balanced as evenly as possible. At 11+ players this creates tables of 5-10, so nobody sits at a tiny overflow table. Each table has its own draw pile, discards, starter and table captain. Turns and card targets stay within that table.

PLAYERS	DECKS	TABLE PLAN
2-10	1	One table; special setup for two.
11-20	2	11 = 6 + 5; 20 = 10 + 10.
21-30	3	21 = 7 + 7 + 7; 30 = 10 + 10 + 10.
31-40	4	31 = 8 + 8 + 8 + 7; 40 = four tables of 10.
41-50	5	41 = 9 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 8; 50 = five tables of 10.
51-100	6-10	Later event edition; same formula, more facilitation.

One room-wide moment: the party relay

Play rounds 1 and 2 simultaneously at all tables. Pause until every table finishes round 2. Announce a table order: A to B to C and back to A. Each table captain randomly selects one occupied seat using seat-number slips. Each selected player sends their current gift to the selected seat at the next table and receives one from the previous table. Exchange simultaneously; cards and players stay seated. This host event cannot be blocked and earns no comeback draw. Then complete rounds 3 and 4 locally. Explain the relay before the game begins.

What this solves, and what it does not

A 50-person single table would require 200 sequential turns across four rounds: about 100 minutes at 30 seconds per turn, before reveals and setup. Five tables need about 20 minutes of turns in parallel, plus setup, reveals and the relay; test a 30-45 minute event target. Players cannot target any gift in the room. The tradeoff is faster play and one shared crossover. The 50- and 100-player formats remain unvalidated until live tests.

Small groups & the vault

Optional ways to add variety. Start with the base game for your first 4-10-player test.

Two players

Remove the 6 SWITCHEROO and 4 THREE-GIFT GRIFT cards. YANKEE HEIST makes only one swap attempt and still costs an extra card. Play the same four rounds. With only two gifts, the choices are inherently narrow; treat this as a couples variant, not the main selling point. The optional vault adds a third or fourth gift to pursue. With three players, use the full deck and ordinary rules.

Cash in a gift: the optional vault

Before play, the host or willing contributors add 1-3 extra gifts, wrapped and within the agreed budget, to a central vault. These are separate from the one-per-player gifts. Agree in advance that leftover vault gifts return to their contributors. No real cash is involved.

On your turn, after drawing 1, you may replace your normal action: discard any 2 cards, give your current gift to the vault, and take any one vault gift. Reveal the gift you take immediately, even in round 1. Gifts returned to the vault remain in their current wrapped/open state. The exchange cannot be blocked and gives no comeback draw. It uses your whole action.

Other cards cannot target vault gifts. The vault always contains the same number of gifts. At the end, every player keeps one gift and all remaining vault gifts return as agreed. For multiple tables, omit the vault in the first event test; later give each table its own equal-sized vault.

Print this prototype tonight

Print the 8-sheet card PDF on US Letter at **100% / Actual Size**, single-sided. It contains 72 cards: 54 play cards, 10 YOUR TURN references, 4 round markers and 4 host aids. Sheets 1-6 are the shuffled play deck; sheets 7-8 are support cards. Each card trims to 2.5 × 3.5 inches. Measure one before cutting.

Cut on the gray grid. Put each play card in an identical opaque-backed poker-card sleeve with an old playing card behind it. This prevents white-paper transparency or cutting differences from identifying a hand card. Support cards need no opaque backing. These are home-print fronts, not commercial press files.

Test what matters

Use the separate scorecard. First test with inexpensive household objects in gift bags. Run a 4-player session, a 6-8-player session and a 10-player session before changing the deck. Then give the rules to a host who has never seen the game and observe without teaching. Test two-player and two-table play separately. The printed version is a complete rules prototype; enjoyment, balance, time and market demand are not yet validated.