Medieval Mastery
A card game for 3 or more players devised by Roger Kingdon, 31 October 2009

1. Use a well-shuffled pack of IDEAL cards (defined below).
2. Deal 9 cards to each player. Place the remainder face-down as a 'stock pile'.
3. The player on the left of the dealer plays from his hand the first card of the first trick. The other players then follow in turn, each playing a card from hand. They must follow suit if possible. There are no trumps. The trick-winner is determined by the following rules:
    - Cards are ranked *firstly* by their position in the sequence **K** (high) to **X** (low), and *secondly* by their suit in the sequence ♠ (high), ♥, ♣, ♦, Ψ (low). Thus ♣**Q** is beaten by ♥**Q** but ♦**K** beats them both, for example. An exception to this rule is the 5 **X** cards which, in addition to their zero value that means they have the lowest rank, are deemed to be entirely equivalent, *i.e.* they do not outrank one another by suit.
    - Within each suit the five Ruler cards (**K**, **Q**, **P**, **F**, **J**) are outranked by the five Wanderer (or 'nemesis') cards (**Z**, **N**, **T**, **V**, **W** respectively). Thus ♥**K** is beaten by ♥**Z**, ♥**Q** is beaten by ♥**N**, ♥**P** is beaten by ♥**T**, ♥**F** is beaten by ♥**V** and ♥**J** is beaten by ♥**W**, and similarly for the other suits. Note that this is a pairing of particular cards within each suit, so ♥**Z** does not beat ♥**Q** or ♠**K**, for example. Whenever in a trick a Ruler meets its nemesis, this determines who wins the trick: the rank of other cards is irrelevant. (For 4 or more players it is possible that several such pairings occur in the same trick. In these cases the trick is given to the person who played the nemesis to the highest-ranking Ruler.)
4. On completing the trick the trick-winner has the opportunity to arrange on the table particular combinations of cards, drawn both from the cards won in the trick and from the cards in his hand. These combinations, known as 'families' or 'communes', are the basis of the point-scoring system that determines the winner of the game. They are constituted as follows:
    - **Families** are started with a 'marriage' of **K** and **Q** or **J** and **P**. If **K** and **Q** belong to the same suit it is known as a 'Royal marriage' and is worth more points at the end. **J** and **P** may *not* belong to the same suit, however: that would be incest.
    - Once a family has been started it may be augmented (in any order) by further cards belonging to the same suit(s) as the marriage partners. Again, these 'family members' add to the point-value of the family in the final reckoning. The exceptions to this rule are: (i) A family may contain only one **K** and **Q**; (ii) When **J** and **P** are married they establish their own 'junior' family that is independent of parent **K** and **Q** families, *i.e.* a junior family may contain only one **J** and **P** and no **K** or **Q**; (iii) Families may not contain **X** – see below.
    - At the same time the trick-winner may make other changes to family groups, *e.g.* swapping marriage partners in order to upgrade to a Royal marriage, or marrying-off a bachelor **J** or spinster **P**. If as a result of these changes a family contains members belonging to an alien suit (*e.g.* the suit of a dumped spouse) then these must be removed. If they cannot be found a legitimate home in another family or commune these cards must be discarded as 'rejects'.
    - **Communes** are started with one of two 'charismatic leader' cards, **A** or **X**, and subsequently augmented as follows. A commune started with **A** must be augmented in strict alphabetic order only, but these additional cards may be of any suit. A commune started with **X** may be augmented in any order, but these additional cards must be of the same suit as **X**: this is known as a 'Religious commune' and is worth more points at the end.
    - **X** is a special card that follows different rules from the rest. The only role for **X** is to start a Religious commune. That is, **X** cannot be added to an existing family or

commune. (This means, incidentally, that communes started with **A** may only ever run as far as **W**.) If **X** is held in hand then the trick-winner can choose whether or not to start a Religious commune with it. If, however, **X** is won in a trick then the trick-winner *must* start a Religious commune with it. In either case, once **X** is laid down the trick-winner must immediately 'convert' (*i.e.* transfer) to the new Religious commune all cards of the same suit as **X** from every other family and commune. Thenceforth, no other family or commune belonging to that player may include any card of the same suit as **X**. If as a result of these changes a family becomes unsustainable (because a converted spouse cannot be replaced from elsewhere) then these abandoned cards must be discarded as rejects. Similarly, if as a result of these changes a commune loses alphabetic order (because a converted card of a particular rank cannot be replaced by another of the same rank from a different suit) then the commune is truncated at that point and all later cards are discarded as rejects.

- Once laid down in this way, cards are not available for playing in tricks. (Neither can they be made available by discarding as rejects, unless they are genuinely so.)

5. When the trick-winner has finished building his families and communes, all rejects and any unused trick-cards are added to the bottom of the stock pile (in any order). Then, starting with the trick-winner, players take the number of cards they need from the top of the stock pile to restore their hands to 9 cards. If the stock pile is running low then players just take what is available.

6. Play restarts with the trick-winner leading the next trick from hand.

7. Play continues in this way until one or more players has no cards left in his hand at the beginning of a trick. At this point play stops and the scores are counted as follows. For each card in an ordinary family or commune, add up its face value (as given below). All cards in a Royal family or Religious commune have their face value doubled. The winner is the person with the most points.

8. The game may be repeated over a fixed number of rounds or until one person has reached a pre-defined cumulative score. $5^5 = 3125$ is a good number to aim for.

IDEAL cards

These comprise 130 cards in 5 suits of 26 cards, each organised as 5 classes of 5 plus a singleton. The suits are Swords (♠), Cups (♥), Staffs (♣), Pentacles (♦) and Wands (Ψ). The 26 cards in each suit have unique face-values as given in the first table below. In addition they have defined ranks (associated with unique initial letters) and learning styles. Finally, the suits and learning styles associated with the 5 classes are indicated by their leading cards. (This feature, summarised in the second table below, is not used in the game of Medieval Mastery.)

Value	Rank	Learning style	Class
25	**K**ing	**Idealist**	Ruler
24	**Q**ueen	Conformist	
23	**P**rincess	Theorist	
22	**F**avourite	Activist	
21	**J**ack	Empiricist	
20	**E**cclesiastic	**Conformist**	Courtier
19	**S**oothsayer	Idealist	
18	**I**ntelligencer	Empiricist	
17	**A**pothecary	Theorist	
16	**C**onstable	Activist	
15	**O**culist	**Theorist**	Artisan
14	**U**surer	Idealist	
13	**B**lacksmith	Activist	
12	**M**ason	Empiricist	
11	**R**eeve	Conformist	
10	**H**untsman	**Activist**	Farmer
9	**G**oatherd	Empiricist	
8	**Y**eoman	Conformist	
7	**D**airyman	Theorist	
6	**L**abourer	Idealist	
5	**W**itch	**Empiricist**	Wanderer
4	**V**agrant	Activist	
3	**T**roubadour	Theorist	
2	**N**ecromancer	Conformist	
1	**Z**any	Idealist	
0	**X**enocrat	**IDEAL man**	Xenocrat

Sign	Suit	Learning style	Class
♠	Swords	Idealist	Ruler
♥	Cups	Conformist	Courtier
♣	Staffs	Theorist	Artisan
♦	Pentacles	Activist	Farmer
Ψ	Wands	Empiricist	Wanderer