

Monte

*-game piece for any ensemble
of 7 or more players-*



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Beginning/Shuffling Strains:

- The dealer picks a performer and cues them to begin playing (any material) by showing them the Queen of Spades, or "pretty lady." It is recommended that oversized playing cards (ca. 8.5 x 11") be used so they are easily readable by all players.
- After some interval of time, the dealer can select a new performer to take over the original performer's material (hereafter called the "strain") by showing them the Two of Diamonds. At her/his cue, the new performer takes the strain and the original performer stops playing.
- The dealer can continue moving the strain among different performers ("shuffling") at any rate.
- Performers should play the strain as it was played by the last person who played it, and *not* refer back to the performer who originated the strain. Thus, the material of each strain will undergo changes as it is passed from player to player, sometimes quite drastically (e.g., when polyphonic material is passed to a monophonic instrument or when pitched material is passed to an unpitched instrument). Performers should never intentionally alter strains, but allow them to undergo changes naturally as they are shuffled.
- At any point, the dealer can begin another strain with a performer who is not currently playing, which can be passed around among various performers as well. Up to three strains can be going simultaneously, though in games with a larger number of players (11 or more) it may be suitable to have more. The dealer may begin the game with one, two or three strains at the first cue.
- At any point, the dealer can cut off a performer without assigning another to take over, thus ending that particular strain. To do this, the dealer shows the performer the King of Hearts, or "suicide king." The dealer may start a new strain (by showing the Queen of Spades to another player) at the same moment she/he ends a strain in order to prevent a break in the texture.
- It is possible to pass strains between two performers who are both currently playing (e.g., performer A's material goes to performer B, and vice versa).
- To request to take over a strain, a performer signals the dealer and points to the person currently playing that strain with two fingers. To request to start a new strain, performer signals the dealer and points to themselves. In both cases, the dealer can oblige or refuse.

Tricking the Mark:

- At any point, the dealer can ask a performer (hereafter called the "mark"), where a particular strain began (the mark may or may not be playing). To do this, the dealer shows the mark the back of a card and points to a performer currently playing, implying she/he wishes to know the origin of that particular strain. If the mark correctly identifies the performer with whom the strain began (by pointing), they are "safe." If the mark cannot identify where the strain began, they are "out," and must leave the playing area.
- The dealer must always be aware of the performers with whom each strain began. (If she/he does forget where a strain began, she/he should cut it off and begin a new strain in its place.)
- Performers must keep in mind that a strain may have begun with a performer who is no longer in the game (therefore, those performers who are out must remain visible to those who are still playing).

Shills:

- A performer can become a shill and work with the dealer to try to fool the other players. To request to become a shill, the performer subtly brushes their nose with their index finger. If the dealer sees this, she/he can accept the performer's request by brushing her/his nose in response, or can turn down the proposal by shaking her/his head.
- If the dealer accepts the performer's request, the next time (and *only* the next time) the dealer asks that performer (hereafter called the "shill") where a strain originates the shill can answer correctly *or incorrectly*. The dealer will treat both a right and a wrong answer as a correct answer, and the shill will stay in the game, which may cause confusion amongst the other players.
- The dealer need not question the shill immediately after the shill request takes place, and may question several other marks or shuffle various strains before questioning the shill. Once the dealer questions the shill and the shill answers, the performer is no longer a shill, and any further questioning by the dealer must be answered correctly (unless preceded by another shill request). It is possible for the dealer to have shill arrangements with more than one performer at a time.

Ending the Game:

- Once the ensemble is reduced to three performers, it may be difficult to trick marks and reduce the ensemble any further. When the dealer is unable to reduce the ensemble beyond the remaining performers, she/he should call the game and end it.
- To end a game, the dealer shows the King of Hearts *turned sideways* and gives a large cut-off gesture, ending all strains at once.
- Thus, a game may have one (unlikely), two (preferable) or three (not preferable) winners.

Additional (optional) rules:

- *Victory lap* - When dealer decides that she/he cannot eliminate any more players and that those remaining are the winners, she/he can cue a "victory lap" by showing the Queen of Spades *turned sideways* and moving her/his hand in a circular motion. This lets those players remaining know they have won, and they celebrate by being granted the freedom to improvise material based on the various strains heard throughout the game, thereby providing a type of recapitulation or coda to the piece. The dealer can end this brief solo with a standard cut-off or she/he can step aside and allow the player(s) to end the victory lap when they are ready.
- *Combining strains* - Two different strains can be combined into a single strain. To do this, the dealer signals a performer (hereafter called "performer X") with the Two of Diamonds *turned sideways*, and points to two other performers who are currently playing. At the dealer's cue, performer X begins playing a combination of the two strains, either by playing material that incorporates some characteristics of both strains simultaneously *or* by quickly alternating between the two strains. However it is done, the resultant material becomes a new strain, which is said to originate with performer X (i.e., *not* with the performer(s) who first played the strains which were combined to form the new material).
- *Playing for keeps* - Game could be played for money or other wagers, in which each performer places bets of equal amounts in "the pot" before the game. Each player who is eliminated during the course of the game surrenders their bet, with the amount in the pot distributed evenly among those remaining when the game is over.




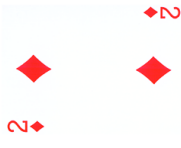


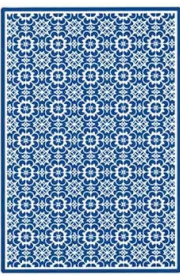
Performance Note:

"The grift has a gentle touch. It takes its toll from the verdant sucker by means of the skilled hand or the sharp wit. In this, it differs from all other forms of crime, and especially from the heavy-rackets. It never employs violence to separate the mark from his money. Of all the grifters, the confidence man is the aristocrat."

- David Maurer, *The Big Con*

Monte is the first in a series of game pieces based on classic confidence tricks and swindles called *The Big Con*. Modeled after the Three-card Monte grift, the piece was composed for and is dedicated to the new music collective. Wooden Cities.

Monte Cues

| Dealer Cues | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------|
|  | tell player to start playing a strain |  | begin victory lap |
|  | tell a player to take over another player's strain |  | combine strains |
|  | end a strain |  | final cut-off |
|  | ask a player where a strain began | <i>brush nose with finger</i> | accept a request to shill |

| Performer Cues | |
|---|--|
| <i>point to self with one finger</i> | request to begin a strain |
| <i>point to another player with two fingers</i> | request to take over another player's strain |
| <i>cut-throat and point to player</i> | end a player's strain |
| <i>brush nose with finger</i> | request to become a shill |