

Go Stop

During the New Year's celebration, family who may not have seen in each other for the last year gather around a table to celebrate and play a card game. It has become a tradition in the family to play on holidays when they all come together at their parents or grandparents house. Grandmothers teach their young grandchildren how to play, as cousins, brothers and sisters play more competitive games. The game, whose name translates to Go Stop, uses the Korean version



Image from
http://bp2.blogger.com/_Hv6CD5qP1TI/R2Evznn1hjl/AAAAAAAAACRU/NoPKi8TvU3E/s400/hwatu_gosstop_korean.JPG

of a Japanese flower card deck (a Korean flower deck shown below). A flower deck is a deck with 12 suits, one named after each month, which of each has 4 cards (Nintendo used to make flower decks before they made video games and supposedly still does). (Sloperama) The cards are broken up into junk cards, cards with ribbons, cards with animals, and "bright" cards which have a special red character on them to mark them. The card themselves are smaller than a normal deck of cards, and seem to be made of a thicker plastic making it hard to bend. (Wikipedia)

Flower cards are originally Japanese in origin, and may have been used to avoid anti-gambling laws that were directed at traditional decks. (Wikipedia) However, they are more popular in Korea today, perhaps even more popular than certain video games which seems to

have taken that status of a cultural icon. Go Stop in Korea is a popular game, played often by many people. (Sloperama) In the US, it would be rare for me to see flower cards outside of a family celebration. The game is fast paced, and simple to learn, often played by families or friends. While it started as a gambling game, it had evolved into a game played casually (though it is sometimes played for pennies or larger sums of cash if the kids got a lot of money as gifts on New Year's Day...)

The simple (besides the scoring system, which is a tad complicated, but parents can help their children count up their points) and fast paced nature of the game allows even children to enjoy the game. Adults enjoy gambling in the game, adding more tension and excitement to the game. The way the game can suddenly end makes it exciting for everyone who plays it, whether they are adults or children. The game is based enough on luck that anyone can win a hand, but also requires enough skill that good players will win consistently over time. This means even between players of vastly different skill levels can play with each other and have fun.

Go Stop is played by two or three players either sitting in chairs around a table, just on the floor sitting in circle, or anything in between as long as they can't see each other cards! They are sitting comfortable in the home of a relative, or friend. The players happily chat with each other as the dealer shuffles the cards for the next hand. The dealer is done shuffling and deals the next

hand. The players play quickly, each trying to score more points than the others. They carefully study the cards that the other players play, trying to capture more cards than everyone else. Then someone reaches the minimum score limit! The other players wait impatiently as he decided whether to call Stop or whether to call Go. He calls Go, and the game continues, every player racing to try and score as many points as possible before calling Stop. Someone gleefully matches a low value card with a much more valuable card, capturing them both. Then, someone takes four cards at once and calls Stop! The other players count up their scores and half-jokingly groan as they realize they just lost another 10 cents to the winner. The next player in line becomes the dealer and another hand quickly starts, the other players eager to win this new hand...

Equipment: Korean (a Japanese one also probably works as there are only slight differences between the two) Flower Card deck. A flower card deck is broken up into 12 “suits”, each of which represent a month of 4 cards each. The ribbons, animals and bright cards are not distributed evenly between the suits. Most suits have 2 junk cards, 1 ribbon card and a special card, either an animal or a bright card. However, one of the suits is made up of one ribbon and 3 specials and a few of the other suits vary from the norm.

A piece of paper and a pen, poker chips, pennies, or anything that can be used to keep track of scores.

Definitions:

Middle: The area next to the pile and in between all the players. The cards here are all face up and can be used by any player.

Stack: Three cards from the same month in the middle, these are combined into a stack and can be captured all at once.

Pile: The cards face down from which players draw cards

Junk Card: A card that has no ribbon, animal or is not a bright card. Usually worth 1 point but some are worth more

Ribbon Card: A card with a ribbon on it

Animal Card: A card with a bird(s) on it

Bright Card: A card with a bright red character on it

Go: Calling Go allows the game to continue

Stop: Calling Stop ends the hand

The players decide on a point value to play to. Once a player reaches the point value, then the player calls either Stop or Go. If the player calls Stop, then the hand is over. If the player calls Go, then the game continues. Any player who reaches the point limit can call Go or Stop on that turn, but must wait until they score more points to call Go or Stop again.

If playing with 2 players, deal 10 cards to each player and 8 cards face up in the middle. If playing with 3 players, deal 7 cards to each player and 6 face up in the center of the table. The rest of the cards are placed faced down to form the pile.

If there are four cards from the same month in the middle, then the deal is declared void and the dealer shuffles and deals a new hand. If there are three cards from the same month in the middle, they are made into a stack.

Everyone looks at their hand and tries to make one of several different special matches. If someone starts with all four cards from the same month, then they win immediately and collect 5

points (or cents) from everyone else. If more than one person has four cards from the same month, then that person too collects 5 points (or cents) from everyone (thus the remaining player ends up paying 5 points to each player and the two others' payment to each other cancel each other out). If a player has three cards from the same month, then the player can, if the player chooses, to show it to the other players. If this player wins, the player's winnings are doubled. There is no penalty for losing after showing the three cards.

The dealer plays first and it goes counter-clockwise. The dealer plays one card from his into the middle. If it matches one card in the middle, he captures both cards. If it matches two cards in the middle, he must pick which one to capture. If it matches a stack, the player captures the entire stack and his card. If it matches nothing, the player places the card in the middle.

Next, the player flips over one card from pile and places it in the middle. If the card matches another card in the middle, the player captures the extra pair (or stack). If the card matches a pair the player just made with the player's first card, sorry! A stack of three cards is made and it stays in the middle. If the player made a stack with his first card and the pile card matches that card, the player captures all four cards, and then the player gets to turn over another card from the pile. If the card matches nothing, it is placed in the middle. The next player then plays.

If a player does anything of the following four things during their turn (except the last turn as it is trivial at that point) then every other player as to give them one junk card. If a player captures all the remaining cards in the middle by either making a two pairs or taking a stack (the taking of the stack is the only one still valid on the last turn). If a player captures a pair in the middle by playing a card to make a stack and then drawing the fourth card from the pile or if the player plays a card that matches nothing in the middle and then draws a card from the same month from the pile (forming a pair). All the other players must give them a junk card (if a player has no junk card, then they do not have to give the player anything).

Once a player has called Stop, or all the players have played all their cards, then the game is over. If play continued until all the cards ran out and no one called Stop, then no one won. If someone called Stop, points are added up in the following manner.

Bright Cards are worth: 5 bright cards: 15 points

4 bright cards: 4

"Dry"(no cards with rain in them) 3 bright cards: 3

"Wet"(at least one card with rain in them) 3 bright cards: 2

5 animals: 1

Each animal above 5: 1

5 ribbons: 1

Each ribbon above 5: 1

Ten junk: 1

Each junk above 10: 1

Set of 3 Ribbons that Match (red with text, blue with text, and red): 3

A set of the February, April and August Bird Cards: 3

The December junk card and the November junk card with the colored flower are worth 2 junk cards each

If the winner showed three cards from the same month at the start, the winner's score is doubled. If the winner called go once, 1 point is added the winner's score. If the winner called go twice, the winner's score is doubled (and add one point), if the winner called go three times, the

winner's score is tripled (and add one point), etc. If a player called go but did not win, the player gets no bonuses. (Sloperama and Pagat)

Easy wins are made less appealing by making a harder win much more valuable. The game would be boring and easy if it was simply a race to a certain point total. By giving a potential winner the option of either calling Stop or Go, the game tries to diminish easy or trivial wins. While a player could call Stop at the first chance, if he calls Go and goes out the next time he gains a bonus point...if he calls Go twice, his score is doubled! Doubling his score will mean he will gain more than twice the number of points he would have. If he had 10 points and his opponent had 5 points each, then he would win 5 points. However, if he called Go twice first, then he would get $(10 + 1) * 2 = 22$ points. He wins 17 points, more than triple the points he would have won if he had just called Stop. The players can also set a relatively high minimum score that much be reached before Go or Stop can be called. This ensures that the hand will play for at least a little while before it ends.

However, Stop Go still has trivial wins. If a player starts with four cards of the same suit, then they win the hand before it even begins. A player's hand is based upon luck and the game has not even started yet before it's over! In addition, while the rules discourage players from ending the game as soon as possible, it does not make it illegal to do so! A group of players could always choose to Stop, thus eliminating much of the strategy and tension of the game.

When playing, a player should try to match low valuable cards in their hand to high valuable cards in the middle and high valuable cards to anything they can in the middle. If a player is in a command position, the player should keep calling Go until another player might call stop. The player could also keep a low value card that matches to another low value card in the middle (and thus unlikely to be matched by another player) so they can capture the low value pair and go out at any time they fear that someone else will call Stop.

Playing a card into the middle that already has two cards of the same suit in the middle is not worth much, unless the pile is low and the player knows the last card in the suit has not been played yet. There is a much higher chance the player will take that suit from the pile and match 4 cards from the suit together, capture all 4 cards and take one junk card from each player! On the other hand, one should try to avoid playing a single card to capture a pair if the pile is low, and there are still cards in the suit not played. The player could get unlikely and draw the a third card in the suit and not earn any points that turn!

While showing three cards from the same suit in the beginning of the game puts a player at a severe disadvantage, the other players know three of the player's cards out of seven or ten cards, if the player can go out as quickly as possible (Calling Stop as soon as the player can) then that player earns the double score bonus without needing to call Go twice! Or, if the player calls Go twice, then they would earn a x4 score bonus. However, this should only be done if the other cards in the player's hand are strong and valuable, as the three cards all in the same suit will have limited usefulness. They can only match to the one remaining card of that suit, and if another player holds it then they will not play that card. The only other way to score with those cards is to place one of them down during one turn and then the next turn place another one in the middle to make a pair. Two turns for only a pair is not a good idea

If a player has a large lead, she should make that lead much more pronounced by calling Go as many times as possible as fast as possible! While capturing two junks is not worth much by themselves, if doing so allows the player to call Go again, that could add another multiplier to her score, making it four times instead of three times.

Play is meaningful because while the game is more fast paced than other games, and relies equally upon luck as skill, there are still decisions to be made and skillful players will win more often. The two meaningful actions in the game is to decided which card to play from one's hand to the middle and whether to call Stop or Go. The card that the player plays into the middle has a direct impact on the game and the player's fortunes. The player will attempt to maximize her score while trying to minimize her opponent's gains and the risk that she will make a pair and then draw a third card of the same suit from the pile and thus gain no points that turn.

The Stop or Go decision determines the final outcome of the game. The more times a player calls Go the bigger her potential score is, but the more times she calls Go, the higher the chance that someone else will call Stop and she will lose all the bonus points she has gathered from all her Go calls. The Go or Stop decision is perhaps the most important decision in the game. Experienced players will be better able to judge how far they can push their luck before it backfires on them.

Go Stop has become a popular game in Korea. The cards are sold in many stores, and many people know how to play it. It has become a tradition among many families to play the game (or other games using the flower cards) during family gatherings on holidays, most notably on New Year's Day. This tradition is similar to the tradition of American families playing Monopoly or another board game at their family gatherings on holidays. Often television shows will show two characters playing the game with each other at a kitchen table or something similar. (Sloperama)

Sources

Brief Introduction about Go Stop: My grandfather

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