

# RACE TO ACE™

An Aerocatures™ card game for 3-5 players

== Fast-playing, challenging & fun! ==



# Race to Ace™

## Rules of Engagement (ROE)

version 2.0

### How to Win

The first Pilot to accumulate five combat victories by playing GUNS or MISSILE cards against other pilots is declared the Ace and wins the game.

### Components

50 Attack cards (identified by a target reticule symbol)

- 15 RADAR ACQUISITION cards
- 15 VISUAL ACQUISITION cards
- 10 MISSILE cards
- 10 GUNS cards



28 Defense cards (identified by a shield symbol)

- 6 MALFUNCTION cards
- 8 MANEUVER cards
- 8 JAMMIT! cards
- 6 FLAMEOUT cards



12 Special cards (identified by a star symbol)

- 10 RELIGHT cards
- 1 GOLDEN BIRD card
- 1 HOT STICK card



60 Tokens

- 20 Kill tokens



- 40 Target Acquisition tokens  
(5 sets of 4 tokens with extras)



## Mission Preparation

Shuffle the cards and deal 7 to each Pilot. Stack the remaining cards in the middle of the table as a draw deck. Leave space for a discard pile (face up) next to the draw deck.

Place the Kill tokens in an easily accessed location. Give each Pilot a set of Target Acquisition tokens in the same color and number (these may be useful when Acquisitions are moved around between different pilots). Choose a Pilot to go first.

Assigning cool fighter pilot nicknames (Mallard, Cowgirl, Pincushion) is optional.

All Pilots **MUST** agree to the Rules of Engagement (including any desired rules modifications) prior to the start of play.

## General Sequence of Play

- Draw a card.
- Play a card. You **MUST** play one card during your turn (except for DOGFIGHTS (as described below). This may be:
  - An Attack card against another eligible Pilot (who becomes the Defender);
  - A Defense card to cancel, suppress, or counter an Acquisition that has been played on you;
  - A Defense card used offensively on another pilot, such as a JAMMIT! or FLAMEOUT card;
  - A Special Card to counter a standing Defense card that is in play, including the use of another JAMMIT! card to counter a suppressed RADAR Acquisition (to UNSuppress it);
  - Discard a card into the Discard pile.
- At the end of a Pilot's turn, all Pilots should have 7 cards in their hands. Pick from the draw deck or discard until you have 7 cards.
- Play continues to the left.

## Mission Assets

### Attack Cards

There are four different types of Attack cards: VISUAL ACQUISITION, RADAR ACQUISITION, GUNS, and MISSILE cards. Each has a crosshairs symbol in the corners.

A Pilot must play either a VISUAL ACQUISITION or a RADAR ACQUISITION card on an opponent to be able to use GUNS or MISSILE, respectively, to score a victory.

Only 1 Acquisition of each type (either VISUAL or RADAR) may be played against a Pilot at any time.

GUNS or MISSILE may only be used on a Pilot that has an active Acquisition card in play against him or her.

ANY Pilot can take advantage of any other Pilot's acquisition card (except in a DOGFIGHT, described below).

## **Defense Cards**

There are four types of Defense cards: MANEUVER, FLAMEOUT, JAMMIT!, and MALFUNCTION. Each has a blue shield symbol in the corners.

When a VISUAL ACQUISITION or RADAR ACQUISITION card is played, the acquired Pilot becomes the Defender, and has a number of immediate defense plays available, depending on which Acquisition card is played. The Attacker and Defender are now in a DOGFIGHT (see below).

### **Maneuver Cards**

A MANEUVER card is played on a VISUAL ACQUISITION to immediately outmaneuver the attacker and counter the acquisition. The first engaged Pilot to play a GUNS card on an outmaneuvered VISUAL ACQUISITION scores the victory.

A MANEUVER card can be countered by another MANEUVER card or a FLAMEOUT card.

When the defending Pilot is outmaneuvered, both MANEUVER cards are discarded, and the original VISUAL ACQUISITION card is brought back into play against the defender.

### **FLAMEOUT Cards**

A FLAMEOUT card will immediately break one of either type of ACQUISITION. The FLAMEOUT card is placed in front of the Attacker and remains active until a RELIGHT Card is played during normal turn.

A Pilot with an active FLAMEOUT card cannot play any Attack or MANEUVER cards. However, the Pilot may still play MALFUNCTION, FLAMEOUT, or JAMMIT! cards on other Pilots during that Pilot's turn.

### **MALFUNCTION Cards**

A MALFUNCTION card will immediately break one of either type of ACQUISITION, in which case both cards are immediately discarded.

A MALFUNCTION card will also counter a JAMMIT! card, in which case both cards are immediately discarded.

## **JAMMIT! Cards**

JAMMIT! cards are electronic countermeasures (ECM) defenses that interfere with the operation of electronic systems. A JAMMIT! card can only be played on a RADAR ACQUISITION to temporarily suppress the RADAR ACQUISITION. The JAMMIT! card is placed on top of the RADAR ACQUISITION card.

There are three ways to counter a JAMMIT! card:

Play a new RADAR ACQUISITION card on the JAMMIT!

Play another JAMMIT! card as ECCM (Electronic Counter- Counter Measures) to cancel the first JAMMIT! card. Discard both JAMMIT! cards. The RADAR ACQUISITION is once again in full effect.

Play a MALFUNCTION CARD on the JAMMIT! Card. Immediately discard both the MALFUNCTION and JAMMIT! cards, reestablishing the RADAR ACQUISITION.

DEFENSE BECOMES OFFENSE. A FLAMEOUT may be played on any of the other pilots during that pilot's own turn to temporarily eliminate them as potential aggressors.

## **Special Cards**

There are three Special cards used to counter particular Attack or Defense cards. They have gold stars in the corners.

RELIGHT cards cancel FLAMEOUT cards. When a RELIGHT is played, discard both the FLAMEOUT and RELIGHT cards.

The HOT STICK Pilot cannot be outmaneuvered. The HOT STICK card can either be displayed in front of a Pilot during a normal turn or held in that Pilot's hand as a defense against a MANEUVER card. The MANEUVER card is then immediately discarded. The HOT STICK card remains in effect for the entire game, even if that pilot is shot down.

The Pilot flying a GOLDEN BIRD card is immune to MALFUNCTION and FLAMEOUT cards. The GOLDEN BIRD card can either be displayed in front of a Pilot during a normal turn or held in that Pilot's hand as a defense against either a MALFUNCTION or FLAMEOUT card. When the Attacker displays this card, the MALFUNCTION or FLAMEOUT card is then immediately discarded. The GOLDEN BIRD card remains in effect for the entire game, even if that pilot is shot down.

## DOGFIGHTS

DOGFIGHTS are the essence of **Race to Ace™**. This is when the fangs come out and pilots battle each other in 1 V 1 in mortal combat.

Playing a RADAR or VISUAL ACQUISITION card initiates a DOGFIGHT. The Defender reacts immediately (out of turn) by playing a Defense card to cancel, suppress, or counter the Acquisition. (See Attack Cards and Defense Cards sections above for more information.)

Play continues between the Attacker and Defender with the available cards remaining in their hands. Neither pilot draws a new card during a DOGFIGHT. Pilots continue to counter or suppress each other until one or the other has no playable cards left.

If the Defender can no longer defend against an Attacker's move, the Attacker can play the appropriate weapon on the now-vulnerable Defender, scoring an immediate kill. The Attacker collects a Kill token. All cards in play on or from the Defender (excluding HOT STICK and GOLDEN BIRD) are immediately discarded.

If the Attacker does not have a usable weapon, the Attacker grudgingly breaks off the attack and slinks away, leaving the acquisition in play for another pilot to use in his or her turn. In either case, following a DOGFIGHT, both Attacker and Defender draw cards to bring their hands back to 7 cards and normal play is resumed.

When a Pilot is shot down, the downed Pilot loses his or her next turn (cannot attack or defend). At his or her turn, the downed Pilot can only draw a card and then discard a card.

**ROE Reminder:** GUNS and MISSILE cards CANNOT be played against a Pilot unless an active, unsuppressed VISUAL ACQUISITION or RADAR ACQUISITION (respectively) is in play in front of that Pilot.

## Example of Play

**Abbie, Benjamin, Carla, and Derek** are ready for a game of **Race to Ace™**. **Abbie** is chosen to be the first Pilot.

**Abbie** has mostly Defense cards in hand, but no Acquisition cards. She draws a FLAMEOUT card and decides to play it on **Benjamin**, hoping to slow down his game. FLAMEOUT is not an Attack card, so he cannot defend against it at this time.

**Benjamin** draws a VISUAL ACQUISITION card but can't play it due to the FLAMEOUT card. Fortunately, he does have a RELIGHT card, so he plays it to cancel the FLAMEOUT. Both cards are discarded.

**Carla** draws another GUNS card, so she decides to play a VISUAL ACQUISITION against **Derek**, initiating a DOGFIGHT. However, **Derek** plays a MANEUVER card and slides the VISUAL ACQUISITION back over to **Carla**. She checks her hand for a HOT STICK, MANEUVER, or another VISUAL ACQUISITION card, but is out of luck. **Derek** immediately refills his hand.

**Derek** now starts his turn by drawing a card. Sadly, it is not a GUNS card, so he is unable to finish off **Carla**. However, since he does have a couple of MISSILE cards, he decides to initiate a DOGFIGHT with **Benjamin** by playing a RADAR ACQUISITION card against him. **Benjamin** grins as he plays a MALFUNCTION card, which cancels the RADAR ACQUISITION and both cards are discarded. **Benjamin** immediately draws a card to refill his hand.

**Abbie** draws a RADAR ACQUISITION card. Hoping that **Benjamin** doesn't have an effective counter, she plays the RADAR ACQUISITION against him, initiating a DOGFIGHT. Fortunately, **Benjamin** has a JAMMIT! card handy, and places it on top of the RADAR ACQUISITION, suppressing it for now. **Abbie** also has a JAMMIT!, which she plays, countering **Benjamin's** JAMMIT!. **Benjamin** is reacquired. **Benjamin** does not have any other defense cards to play. **Abbie** plays her MISSILE to successfully shoot **Benjamin** down. **Abbie** collects a Kill token. All cards associated with the DOGFIGHT are discarded. **Abbie** draws two cards and **Benjamin** draws one to refill both hands to 7 cards.

It is **Benjamin's** turn, but because he was shot down, he can only draw and then discard a card.

At the start of her turn, **Carla** draws the HOT STICK card. She drops the HOT STICK in front of her, discards the MANEUVER card covering the VISUAL ACQUISITION, and slides the VISUAL ACQUISITION back to **Derek**, which re-engages a DOGFIGHT between **Carla** and **Derek**. **Derek** shrugs and plays a MALFUNCTION card to cancel the VISUAL ACQUISITION in front of him. The MALFUNCTION and VISUAL ACQUISITION cards are discarded. **Derek** draws a card to refill his hand. **Carla** is mightily pleased that she does not have to deal with any MANEUVER cards for the rest of the game.

**Derek** shrugs and draws a card to start his turn. He looks at the cards in play. Not seeing anything useful, he plays a VISUAL ACQUISITION on **Abbie**, initiating a DOGFIGHT. **Abbie** counters easily with a MANEUVER. **Derek** counters **Abbie's** MANEUVER with a MALFUNCTION card. **Abbie** cannot counter the MALFUNCTION card and acknowledges the loss with a head nod. **Derek** shoots **Abbie** with a GUNS card and claims his Kill token. All cards associated with the DOGFIGHT are discarded. **Derek** and **Abbie** both draw cards until they each have 7 cards in their hands.

**Abbie** loses her turn due to being shot down and can only draw a card, and then discard a card.

Play continues.



## Possible Variations on Rules of Engagement

If only two Pilots are playing, they may consider dealing a second hand for each play, treating the second hand as Wingmen to support partner's engagements with Defense or Attack cards.

Each Pilot could track their ACQUISITIONS by using the provided tokens. (We did mention that you may need them later). This negates the rule that Pilots can have only one ACQUISITION of each type in front of them. Now a specific Pilot can only attack on an ACQUISITION placed by that Pilot, as identified by the tokens.

Perhaps the JAMMIT! or MALFUNCTION card could be used to jam a MISSILE card? Similarly, MALFUNCTION could be used to cancel a GUNS attack.

If you want to make things more even, consider discarding GOLDEN BIRD and HOT STICK cards when the owning PILOT is shot down. If these cards are still in a Pilot's hand, they are not discarded.

Do you want to keep score over multiple games? FIVE KILLS WILL ALWAYS WIN THE **Race to Ace™**.

Sample: Kills - 5 points  
Successful Acquisitions - 2 points

*The concept for this game was created by Hank Caruso in 1980. It was further developed with his associate Tom Quirk in 1981. In 2023 Hank added color to the original black & white art and the game was updated for the 21st century by Craig Robertson, Hank and Amy Caruso, and the gaming specialists at Lombardy Studios.*

Sign up for future updates on **Race to Ace™** and **Aerocatures™** by contacting [dana.lombardy@gmail.com](mailto:dana.lombardy@gmail.com).

*Historical Note: Why is there a bird on the JAMMIT! card? In World War II, British personnel involved with electronic warfare were called "Ravens." This may have been because aircraft that fought at night using radar detection and targeting were often painted black. In the United States, ravens are referred to as crows. The professional society involved with all electronic countermeasures (ECM) is named the Association of Old Crows. Hence, an ECM crow is featured on the JAMMIT! card. - Hank Caruso*