

Sabacc

The games described on this page are interpretations and adaptations of the card game Sabacc from the movie Star Wars.

Introduction

Sabacc is a gambling card game played in the Star Wars Universe. It is a difficult game to adapt to real-world play because it uses an electronic deck of cards that can switch values at random. What's more, the deck is composed of 76 cards, in the following configuration:

Four Suits (Sabers, Flasks, Coins, Staves)

Values 1 - 11

Ranked Cards

Commander (value 12)

Mistress (value 13)

Master (value 14)

Ace (value 15)

Two copies of eight Face Cards

The Star (value -17)

The Evil One (value -15)

Moderation (value -14)

Demise (value -13)

Balance (value -11)

Endurance (value -8)

Queen of Air and Darkness (value -2)

Idiot (value 0)

NB. In this game, each suit has both an "ace" (value 15) and a "one" (value 1)!

This means any deck used to play Sabacc must be created. Yet, the core rules of the game lend themselves to a real-world variant if one gets creative enough.

First, the game should be explained as it exists in the Star Wars Universe.

Star Wars Universe Overview

The game is typically played by 4 to 6 beings, and is rarely played with more than eight participants. Most casino games are dealt by a droid dealer. This droid also controls the random pulses that change the values of the cards. It is this randomness that adds much of the suspense to the game. A winning

hand can very quickly become a devastatingly losing hand. All hands are figured based on the numerical sum of the card values.

Sabacc's main objective is to win Credits. There are two pots, the Main Pot and the Sabacc Pot, to be won in Sabacc. Each hand starts with each player placing an ante into both the Main Pot and the Sabacc Pot. Subsequent bets during the hand will be placed only into the Main Pot.

The dealer then deals out two cards, one at a time, to each player. Depending on the casino or the participants, it may be required for every player to call out their beginning hand totals. Players then take turns drawing a card, trading a card, or standing. Afterwards a betting round proceeds where players can call, raise, and bluff. The first through fourth rounds of play and betting are usually considered the pot-building phase, and the game cannot be Called during this time.

The hand ends when a player (after the pot-building phase) declares they would like to **Call** the hand. One last round of betting occurs, starting with the Calling player, and then players reveal their cards. Winning hands in Sabacc are hands that total 23 or -23, which are called Pure Sabacc, or a hand made up of an Idiot (value 0) a 2 of any suit and a 3 of any suit (this is a literal 023) called an Idiot's Array. An Idiot's Array beats a Pure Sabacc. If no one has any of these winning hands, the player with the highest hand total below 23 wins. Any player with a hand totaling more than 23, less than -23, or exactly 0 at the time the hand is called has Bombed Out. The penalty for Bombing Out is to pay an amount equal to the contents of the Main Pot into the Sabacc Pot. The winning player takes the contents of the Main Pot. If that player won with a Pure Sabacc or an Idiot's Array, the Sabacc Pot is also collected.

In the event that two or more players have equal winning hands, a Sudden Demise is enacted between those players. Each player in the Sudden Demise is dealt one extra card. Their hand totals are then re-summed to include their new card. Whichever player then has the best modified hand wins. If all players involved in the Sudden Demise bomb out they do not have to pay into the Sabacc pot, but none are then eligible to win the Main Pot. The Main Pot in that case goes to the player with the best hand who is not bombed out.

At any time during game-play, up until the point where players reveal their cards, a **Sabacc Shift** may occur. It is the rare case when a Sabacc Shift occurs three or more times in a single hand, though once should be expected and twice is not abnormal. This random event is set in motion by a pulse from the droid-dealer and redistributes the values of the cards. The only way to prevent a card from being effected by the Shift is to place it in the **Static** (or **Disruptor**) **Field**. This Field disrupts and blocks the Shift pulse and locks the values of all cards placed within it. The trade-off for placing a card in the Field is that it is placed face-up and the value can be seen by all other players.

Adaptation of Rules

The two most difficult aspects of Sabacc, as I said earlier, are the Sabacc Shift and the 76-card deck. I have crafted my own Sabacc deck by merging parts of two regular decks of playing cards. I then took a pen and, as nicely as I could, created the ranked cards and the face cards. There are a few places on the

internet that have printable versions of full Sabacc decks. Creating the deck is really a matter of preference. As for the random shifting of card values, this is easily accomplished by incorporating dice into the game and simply collecting and re-dealing all the cards.

To play Sabacc, players need a Sabacc Deck, two dice, and some form of betting currency.

A **Sabacc Shift** occurs any time the two dice match. The dice are rolled once after the completion of every Betting Round, after each player makes a play during the Play Round, and once after the game is Called after final bets are placed but before players reveal their cards. This allows for a Shift to occur during every critical moment of the game, but the probability of a Shift occurring at any point remains relatively low. If a Sabacc Shift does occur, the dealer collects all the cards that are not locked, shuffles them into the deck, then deals the cards back to the players. Players should end a Sabacc shift with the same amount of cards in their hands as they had before the Shift.

Each hand starts with every player placing an ante into both the Main and Sabacc Pots. The Dealer then deals out two cards, one at a time, to each player. Starting to the left of the dealer, each player calls out their beginning hand totals.

Next begins a Play Round. In this round, players can draw one card from the deck, trade a card from their hand for a card from the deck, or stand. Players **cannot** discard cards. Drawing too many cards can be risky.

Each player rolls the dice after they finish their turn in the play round. If the dice ever pair, a Sabacc Shift occurs.

It is only during this round that players can place cards into the **Disruptor Field** to prevent them from being Shifted should a Shift occur. Players do this simply by placing their cards face-up in front of them. Players may only place one card per turn in the disruptor field, but may have as many cards total in the Field as they desire. The downside is that they may only remove one card per turn from the Field as well. Players may do both, though, remove one card from and place one card into the Field per turn.

The player to the dealer's left then places the first bet into the Main Pot, and a Betting Round proceeds, with players raising as they see fit. The Betting Round ends when every player has either called the bet or folded. To signal the end of the Betting Round, the dealer rolls the dice. If they pair, a Sabacc Shift occurs.

The Hand can only be **Called** during the fourth Betting Round or any Betting Round thereafter. This allows for a brief period for the pot to build. After a player Calls the Hand, the Betting Round proceeds just like normal. After the final Betting Round is concluded, the dice are rolled one last time, and a Sabacc Shift occurs should they match. Then players reveal their cards.

The player with the highest hand, totaling 23 or below, wins the Hand Pot.

If a player has a hand total of 23, -23 (called Pure Sabacc) they win the Sabacc Pot in addition to the Hand Pot.

If a player has an Idiot card, a 2 card of any suit, and a 3 card of any suit (0-2-3, called the Idiot's

Array) he or she beats out a Pure Sabacc for both the Hand Pot and the Sabacc Pot.

If a player has a hand total over 23, below -23, or exactly 0, that player is said to Bomb Out. Any player that bombs out must pay an amount equal to the Hand Pot into the Sabacc Pot.

If two or more players tie for the winning hand, they engage in a Sudden Demise. Each player involved in the Sudden Demise is dealt one extra card. After incorporating that card into their hand totals, they again compare hand totals, the player with the best modified hand wins. In the case that a player Bombs Out, they do not suffer the Bomb Out penalty. If all players involved in the Sudden Demise Bomb Out, the winner of the hand is the player with the second-best hand.

In the event that all players Bomb Out, no Sudden Demise takes place. Instead, the Hand Pot is moved into the Sabacc Pot and a new hand begins, with no winner declared for the previous hand.

Game-Play proceeds in the following way:

1. Ante
2. Two cards dealt to each player
3. Hand totals declared
4. Play Round (dice rolled after each player completes their play)
5. Betting Round (dice rolled at the conclusion of the Betting Round)
6. Hand is Called during any Betting Round after the third.