

# “Tables” Card Game

There's a game I play with kids that encourages thinking about different ways of operating on numbers. It's a very simple game with humungous scope for variations and extensions. I'd like to think that I invented it, but I'm sure it's been played in many different ways in many places.

It can be played with any number of people. 2 is good. Playing in pairs can be even better.

Use a pack of cards minus the picture cards (Ace is 1, 10 can be 0 or 10). Dealer places two cards face up to make a two digit number - dealer chooses which is tens and which is units. Let's call this the target.

Each player (or pair) is then dealt four cards. They have to use their four cards and any mathematical operations to get the closest possible number to the target. Closest to the target is the winner.

The use of cards is good for manipulating the digits. It could even be useful for younger students to have cards made with symbols on them for whatever operations could conceivably be used. The basic method would be to multiply two digits and then add the others. Or combine two pairs of cards to make 2 2-digit numbers and then add or subtract them.

Of course you can make the target larger by using three digits. You could also make the target a fraction or decimal.

The great learning comes from having to prove to your opponent that you have beaten them.

I hope I've explained this well enough. I gave a demo of this game to a group of parents at a session one evening, only to hear that it was being played as a drinking game at a party the following Saturday night (by the mums, not the students!).