

Black Flower – 黒花

A hanafuda banking game for 2-10 players, without having to know the suit order.

By Ryan Sartor

Objective:

1. The object of the game is to finish each round with a better hand than the banker.
2. There is a hierarchy of hands, with a few designated special hands being considered the best, followed by the hand whose total value is the closest to 13 without exceeding it.

Initial Setup:

1. First, players must come to an agreement over whether the game is to be played for money or for imaginary points. If playing for money, make a decision whether to buy in via chips or simply to wager the cash directly. Establishing a maximum bet per hand is also recommended.
2. Each round, one player is considered the banker, against whom all other players compete. Agree beforehand whether this player will remain the banker the duration of the game, or if it will change after each round.
3. If it is agreed that the banker is to change each round, choose the first banker by having players draw one card each until someone draws a Bright; that someone is the first banker. For subsequent rounds, either the opportunity to bank will pass clockwise until someone accepts it, or whoever won the most points/chips/money in the previous round will be the new banker. Make sure to come to a majority agreement on this before beginning the game.

Gameplay:

1. First, the banker shuffles the deck, and each player who wishes to participate in the hand makes their wager. The banker themselves does not bet; their winnings and losings depend on the other players' bets.
2. Then, the banker deals one card face up to each participant, except themselves, in a counterclockwise motion, starting from the seat directly to the banker's right. They deal themselves one card face down.
3. Then, the banker deals one additional card face up to each participant, including themselves.
4. In the same order as before, each player has the option to take more face up cards. On a player's turn, they may take anywhere from zero to three additional cards total, making the decision for each additional card one at a time. When they decide to stand, or end up busting (exceeding a hard hand value of 13), it becomes the next player's turn, and so on, until the dealer's draw phase.
5. On the banker's draw phase, they reveal their face down card to everyone and play in a similar manner, hitting until they wish to stand, or until they bust.
6. Finally, the players compare hands one at a time with that of the banker, with the result being an exchange of points, chips, or money according to the initial bet. If the banker's numeric hand value is lower than a given player's, that player wins the bet. If the banker's hand value is greater than that of the player, the player loses the bet. If their hand values are identical, the round is considered a "push," and the player holds onto their wager.

Card Values and Arrangement

Generally speaking, **Chaff** are worth **5** points, **Ribbons** **4** points, **Animals** **3** points, and **Brights** **2 or 6** points. To indicate that a Bright is to be used as 2 points, turn it sideways; to use it as 6 points, leave it longways like all the other cards.

There is also a unique rule to this game that is not found in Blackjack: **paired cards (by suit)** can (optionally) be used as **either card value plus 1**. To indicate that a pair is being utilized in this way, overlap the two cards, with the one whose value is being added to on top. For instance, if dealt the Sake Cup and a Chrysanthemum Chaff, you may treat those cards as worth 8 (by keeping them separate on the table), worth 6 (by overlapping them with the Chaff on top), or worth 4 (by overlapping them with the Animal on top).

The combination of **paired cards may even be combined with turning Brights sideways**. You may rearrange your cards as many times as desired both before and after accepting additional cards; however, once you declare that you will stay, you may not alter the arrangement and thus the value any longer.

In the case of **3-of-a-kind** or **4-of-a-kind**, you may combine the overlaps or use them separately as you see fit. For example, if you have all 4 Pine cards, their total values may be anywhere from 5 (Sideways Crane over the other three: 2+1+1+1) to 20 (All cards played longways, individually – note that this is a bust if you stand in this arrangement!). So, be mindful when choosing how to arrange your cards!

Special Hands

There is a small assortment of special hands that automatically beat any other hand, even if the sum of that hand is 13.

1. **San-Ko:** Any 3 Brights. Your hand may contain other cards as well, but you must not bust before drawing the third Bright! (It is okay if the third Bright would normally cause you to bust, however.) **Beats all other hands.**
2. **Ni-Ko:** Dealt two Brights off the bat. This essentially replaces the “Natural” or “Blackjack” hand. If you wish to claim Ni-Ko, you cannot take any additional cards, and must immediately stand. **Beats all hands but San-Ko.** Note that if both the banker and another player were dealt Ni-Ko, the banker is the winner!
3. **Shi-Tan:** Four Ribbons, and no other cards. It doesn't matter that this would normally total 16. **Beats any hand except San-Ko and Ni-Ko.**
4. **Tane:** Five Animals, and no other cards. It doesn't matter that this would normally total 15. **Beats any hand except Shi-Tan, San-Ko, and Ni-Ko.**

Optional Rules

These rules are mostly adapted from Blackjack, and it should be agreed upon in advance whether to play with them or not, as they can greatly change the dynamics of the game.

1. **Splitting by Suit:** If dealt two cards of the same suit (e.g. Peony) at the initial deal, a player may “split” their cards into two hands, by placing an additional bet of equal value to the first. The player makes the decision to hit or stand for each hand individually, and will win or lose the two bets independently.

- Splitting by Rank:** If dealt two cards of the same rank (e.g. Animal) at the initial deal, a player may “split” their cards into two hands, by placing an additional bet of equal value to the first. The player makes the decision to hit or stand for each hand individually, and will win or lose the two bets independently.
- Doubling Down:** On a player's turn, after evaluating their initial hand but before they take any additional cards, they may double their initial wager, but are then only allowed to “hit” once.
- Banker's Advantage:** There is no “push;” the banker wins all draws.
- No Pair Advantage:** Paired cards cannot be overlapped and treated as +1. This makes for a simpler game closer to the original Blackjack, but also makes it riskier to “hit” in any given situation!
- Whatever else you can think of!**

Initial Hands

The following tables illustrate both the probability and value of each distinct hand in Black Flower. This information will not tell you whether to hit or stay in a given situation, but may be useful in evaluating the possible values of your opening hand, and furthermore, may be interesting to those who enjoy statistics.

KEY: R = use reduced value of a card. f = frequency. p = probability out of 1.

Card 1	Card 2	High	Reduce C2	R2 RB	Reduce C1	R1 RB	f	p	%	Rank
Bright	Bright	6+6=12		6+2=8		2+2=4	20	0.00887	0.89%	12
Bright	Paired Chaff	6+5=11	6+1=7	2+5=7	1+5=6	2+1=3	20	0.00887	0.89%	12
Bright	Chaff	6+5=11		2+5=7			220	0.09752	9.75%	4
Bright	Paired Ribbon	6+4=10	6+1=7	2+4=6	1+4=5	2+1=3	6	0.00266	0.27%	15
Bright	Ribbon	6+4=10		2+4=6			94	0.04167	4.17%	6
Chaff	Paired Chaff	5+5=10	5+1=6				13	0.00576	0.58%	16
Chaff	Chaff	5+5=10					539	0.23892	23.89%	1
Bright	Paired Animal	6+3=9	6+1=7	2+3=5	1+3=4	2+1=3	4	0.00177	0.18%	17
Bright	Animal	6+3=9		2+3=5			86	0.03812	3.81%	8
Chaff	Paired Ribbon	5+4=9	5+1=6		1+4=5		38	0.01684	1.68%	10
Chaff	Ribbon	5+4=9					442	0.19592	19.59%	2
Chaff	Paired Animal	5+3=8	5+1=6		1+3=4		34	0.01507	1.51%	11
Chaff	Animal	5+3=8					398	0.17642	17.64%	3
Ribbon	Ribbon	4+4=8					90	0.03989	3.99%	7
Ribbon	Paired Animal	4+3=7	4+1=5		1+3=4		16	0.00709	0.71%	14
Ribbon	Animal	4+3=7					164	0.0727	7.27%	5
Animal	Animal	3+3=6					72	0.03191	3.19%	9
							2256	1	100.00%	

sum	p Total	p Forced	p Optional
12	0.89%		0.89%
11	10.64%		10.64%
10	28.90%	23.89%	5.01%
9	25.27%	19.59%	5.67%
8	24.02%	21.63%	2.39%
7	21.54%	7.27%	14.27%
6	12.28%	3.19%	9.09%
5	6.65%		6.65%
4	3.28%		3.28%
3	1.33%		1.33%
ANY	100.00%	75.58%	24.42%

	f	p	%
Pair	125	0.05541	5.54%
Bright	450	0.19947	19.95%
B and/or P	551	0.24424	24.42%
B and P	30	0.0133	1.33%
Forced	1705	0.75576	75.58%