

In general, the dealer wants to have a strong crib and puts the best two cards on dealer-side of the board without excessive sacrifice to hand potential. The non-dealer selects the two cards believed to have low scoring potential without excessive sacrifice to potential hand score.

Playing experience will improve your discarding judgment over time. I would like to see great improvement over a short time as winning a higher percentage of games played will increase your enjoyment of the game and the quality of play. Effective discarding requires a knowledge of board position. The boards provided tonight have position zones marked and it will be necessary to detail some of the basic theories relative to board position. The subject matter of lesson #8 & 9 will be board position and the techniques of defensive and offensive strategies relative to position.

For most cribbage players, their discards to the dealer will result in cribs which average 5.0 points. Discards to own crib will produce cribs which average about 4.0. So it would appear that we do not "load" our own crib as often as possible and we do not "balk" the opponent's crib effectively. Reversing those averages can change the outcome of 50% of the games played. Inexperienced players who play experienced players can expect to win 3 of each ten games played with no apparent discarding strategy. Our goal is to equalize play so that the better players win 56% of their games and the lower level players are winning 44%. This creates an environment in which lower level players find themselves in the prize money more often and those at the upper end of this spectrum have to improve play to maintain a quality performance.

Some players break up their hand when they should not. Others don't break up the hand when they should. Ask yourself these questions prior to discarding.

Who has the crib?

Where am I on the board and where do I need to be?

Where is my opponent on the board and does opponent have desired board position?

THE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS SHOULD PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE DISCARDING.

"Keep the points in your hand" is often the advice given among cribbage players. Sometimes this is the best advice possible. I believe that is true on the opening hand of the game for the non-dealer. It may also be true on the closing hand of the game if you have potential and first count. The rest of the game, that advice might not be so valid!

Now, let's review the concept of loading own crib. Remember next week, we will explore "balking" opponent's crib.

HOW DO I LOAD MY CRIB AND INCREASE THE POINT POTENTIAL WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE TO THE COUNT IN HAND? IN THE CASE OF A GOOD HAND, CAN I RETAIN HAND POTENTIAL FOR TWELVE POINTS OR MORE AND LOAD MY CRIB? IN THE EVENT OF A POOR HAND (2-3-6-8-9-K), CAN I LOAD MY CRIB AND NOT GIVE UP POINTS?

The first concept to understand is that the deck of 52 cards has sixteen 10-point cards four five spots, and sixteen cards which total five points (A-4 & 2-3). That's an amazing 36 cards in the deck of 52 that total five or ten points. That's 70% of the deck! Keep that in mind as it will put you in touch with mathematical probabilities when discarding.

SO WHAT ARE THE BEST DISCARDS THAT CAN BE MADE TO OWN CRIB AND HOW MANY POINTS DO THEY AVERAGE? WE'LL GROUP THEM FOR THE PURPOSES OF DEMONSTRATION AND COMPARISON.

5-5***	8.876	5-10**	6.698
2-3**	7.135	5-Q**	6.594
5-J**	7.089	4-5**	6.534
5-6**	6.809	7-8	6.443
5-K**	6.726	3-3	6.075
		5-7	6.009

NOTE THAT ALL CHOICES IN THIS FIRST GROUP AVERAGE 6.0 OR BETTER!

		5-8*	5.564
3-5*	5.971	2-5*	5.536
7-7	5.873	4-4	5.535
2-2	5.821	A-A	5.507
6-6	5.762		

ALL CHOICES IN THIS SECOND GROUP AVERAGE AT LEAST 5.5 AND LESS THAN 6.0.

8-8	5.496		
5-9*	5.434	6-7	5.140
A-4*	5.416	3-4	5.129
A-5*	5.381	6-9	5.114
J-J	5.275	Q-Q	4.930
9-9	5.213	J-Q	4.827

ALL DISCARD SELECTIONS IN THIS THIRD GROUP AVERAGE LESS THAN 5.5 AND MORE THAN 4.75.

\*\*\*Only the 5-5 to own crib is worth a sacrifice in the hand of up to four points if retaining hand potential for 12 points or more. Notice that the 5-5 averages nearly nine points to own crib. It is wise to sacrifice up to two points in the hand to discard any of those choices with \*\*. Five point combinations of lesser strength are indicated with a single \*. Those discards which have no asterisk are reasonably good discards to own crib although they are not worth a sacrifice of points in the hand. You'll do lots better playing mathematical probabilities rather than playing hunches or chasing figments of the imagination.

Your discard choices should be governed by two basic rules. The BIG HAND RULE applies when you have eight points or more in the hand or have potential for 12+. In such hands, a strong discard and sacrifice of hand points may be made subject to these questions.

1. DO I STILL HAVE POTENTIAL FOR 12 POINTS OR MORE IN THE HAND?
2. HAVE I SACRIFICED FOUR POINTS OR LESS TO MAKE A 5-5 DISCARD?  
HAVE I SACRIFICIED TWO POINTS OR LESS FOR ANY OTHER FAVORED DISCARD? (2-3, 5-J, 5-6, 5-K, 5-10, 5-Q, 4-5)

If the answer to both questions is yes, proceed with the strong discard to your crib. If the answer to either question is no, retain the points/potential in hand.

Most other hands will be subject to the SMALL HAND RULE. This rule is applied as follows:

1. Hands of less than eight points are governed by this rule.
2. DON'T GIVE UP POINTS IN THESE HANDS OF EIGHT POINTS OR LESS AND GIVE FULL CONSIDERATION TO COMBINED VALUES OF HAND/CRIB.

The BIG HAND RULE and the SMALL HAND RULE will apply to 95% of the hands possible. You will improve your winning percentage substantially if you apply these two rules in all situations possible. There will be a few hands (about five in a hundred) which seem not to fit either of these rules. In these cases, use your judgment and give maximum regard to board position.