



About FALLING

FALLING was invented by James Ernest in 1998. It is a “real time” card game, which means that all players are doing the same thing at the same time, without taking turns.

This can take some getting used to. If this is your first time falling, you will need to play a few games before you understand what is going on. That’s okay, because each game takes about a minute and a half.

You should deal, even if you’re new, because it will make you a better player. A good FALLING player has sympathy for the dealer, and helps by placing his riders cleanly and discarding his cards when he’s supposed to.

How to Play

FALLING is a fast-paced game with one dealer and several players. The dealer, who is not falling, distributes the cards and controls the speed of the game. Everyone else is playing, all the time. The **Ground** cards are waiting at the bottom of the deck, and these cards knock you out of the game. The only goal is to hit the ground last.

FALLING works best with 4-8 people, and you can add more players if you like. We don’t recommend playing with fewer than four players (that’s three fallers and one dealer).

A good playing surface is important. A small, round table is ideal. Players should have enough room for their own cards, but should also be able to reach across the table to play cards on each other.

This rulebook is split into two principal sections, **Dealing** and **Falling**. Everyone needs to understand both parts, but we felt this was the best way to sort the rules.

Section 1: Dealing

When you deal, you aren’t falling. Your job is to control the pace of the game, follow the instructions of the riders, and be the referee. The winner of each game becomes the dealer for the next.

Occasionally, timing disputes will arise, and it is your job to settle them. If two players have tried to do something at the same time, and they can’t agree on who was faster, you can pause and settle the problem. The dealer’s solution is final, so use your best judgement.

The Basics: Before you deal, separate the **Ground** cards from the deck. (Remove the **Anvil**, **Chute**, and **Goggles** also unless you are all advanced players.) Shuffle the rest of the cards, and put the **Grounds** at the bottom. Hold the deck face down, and deal from the top.

Starting with the player to your left, deal cards one at a time clockwise around the table. Deal the cards face up into *stacks* in front of each player, as shown in the diagram at right. (Stacks are oriented vertically.) Each player starts with one stack. Later in the game, some players might have more stacks, or none at all.

If a player has *more than one stack*, you will deal one card into each. If a player has *no stacks at all*, you must start a new one. (Player 5 below has no stack, but will still get another card on the dealer’s next pass.) Extra stacks disappear once they are empty, so you don’t have to remember anything beyond the first.

Altering the Deal: Your dealing pattern will be changed by cards called **riders**. These are instruction cards, which must be played horizontally between a player and the dealer, as shown below. The three basic rider cards are **Hit**, **Split**, and **Skip**. Each rider tells you how to deal to the *players*, not to their individual stacks.

Riders can also be modified by an **Extra** card, which adds to the rider’s effect. There are five riders in the diagram below, one of which (player 2’s) is being modified by an **Extra**.

When you encounter a rider, you follow the card’s meaning, and then sweep the rider into the discard pile, in the middle of the table. The meanings of the basic riders are as follows:

HIT: After dealing normally, deal a *second card* into each of this player’s stacks. (And sweep away the **Hit**.)

EXTRA HIT: After dealing normally, deal *two extra cards* to each stack. (Sweep away the **Extra** and the **Hit**.)

SPLIT: After dealing normally, deal this player one more card as the *start of a new stack*. (And sweep away the **Split**.)

EXTRA SPLIT: After dealing normally, start *two new stacks*. (Sweep away the **Extra** and the **Split**.)

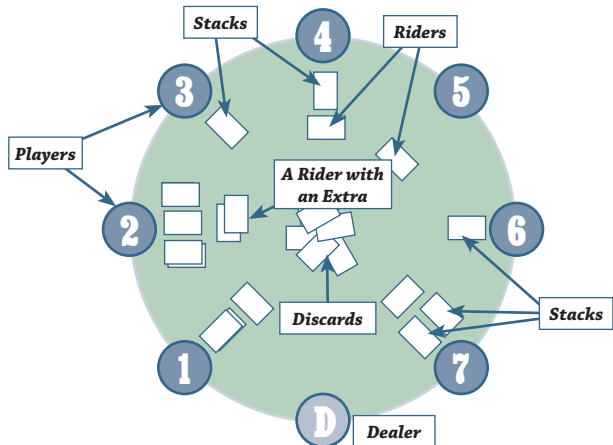
SKIP: Deal no cards to this player. (And sweep away the **Skip**.)

EXTRA SKIP: Deal no cards to this player, and *sweep away only the Extra card*. (The **Skip** remains.)

*Note: Jump to the end of the rules to read about the three optional riders: **Anvil**, **Chute**, and **Goggles**.*

Timing Notes: Players are not allowed to play cards that would affect a rider if you are in the middle of executing it. Once the dealer is addressing a player, no one can affect the deal by meddling with the rider, either with a **Move**, **Stop**, or **Extra**. Similarly, while you are dealing to a player who has no rider, if a new rider is played on him, you can just ignore that rider until your next pass.

GROUND: Once a player gets a **Ground** card, she is out of the game. You don’t deal to her, and she can’t play any more cards or have any more cards played on her.



Running out of Grounds: If there are more players than **Ground** cards, you could add more from a second deck. But it's just as easy to imagine the last few, and tell the players who hit the ground to gather their cards and turn them face down. There are only five **Ground** cards, but *there is an unlimited supply of ground.*

Section 2: Falling

As a player, you will receive cards from the dealer, and play those cards at your own pace. There are no turns in this game, so everyone is playing all the time.

You're trying to avoid the **Grounds** when they eventually come out, by saving up plenty of **Skips**, **Extras**, and **Stops**, and using other cards to prevent other players from doing the same.

The play of cards is *very restrictive*: You may pick up only one card at a time, and you may only play the card that is in your hand (you can't set it back down). Strictly speaking, fallers should use only one hand, and keep the other hand out of the way.

You can only pick up the *top card* of your stack. This means that once a card has been buried, you can't play it, unless you first play all the cards on top of it. Note: If the dealer is giving you two cards in a row (because of a **Hit**), you can certainly grab the first one. But only if you are fast!

When you have multiple stacks (because of a **Split**), you have more choices of what to pick up. But you still can't pick up more than one card at a time.

Be careful what you pick up! Once you are holding a card, you may play it right away, or you may keep holding it. But you *can't set it back down*, and you *can't discard it*. (Dealers, keep an eye on players who aren't clear on this rule.)

Riders: Riders are instructions to the dealer. They include **Hit**, **Split**, and **Skip**, and their meanings are described under "Dealing," above.

You may place a rider in front of any player, including yourself, as long as that person doesn't already have one. A player can never have more than one rider at a time.

Action Cards: The Action cards are **Move** and **Stop**, and they both affect riders. **Stop** can also repel a **Ground**.

To play an Action card, you must touch the card to the rider you are trying to affect, carry out the result, and then discard the Action card *yourself*. (The dealer won't do this for you.) You can only affect riders once they are in play; you can never mess with the cards in someone's stack.

MOVE: This card moves a rider. You can either steal someone else's rider, or you can give your rider to someone else. (You can't use a **Move** to move a rider between two other players). In each case, the destination must be empty, because a player can never have more than one rider at a time.

STOP: This card has two functions: You can use it to *discard any rider*, or you can use it to *pop a Ground card back onto the deck*.

When you discard a rider, you sweep both the **Stop** and the rider to the discard pile. If you **Stop** a rider that has an **Extra** on it, the **Extra** is also discarded.

To **Stop** a **Ground**, play the **Stop** as the **Ground** is being dealt to you. The dealer keeps the **Ground**, and you discard the **Stop**.

A **Stop** can only send *one Ground* back onto the deck. If you are due to get two **Ground** cards, as a result of a **Hit** or because you have multiple stacks, one **Stop** card won't save you.

EXTRA: An **Extra** card modifies a rider. Once played, it is attached to that rider. To play an **Extra**, lay it on top of the rider you wish to modify, overlapping it so the dealer can still read both cards.

If the rider moves around, the **Extra** moves with it. If the rider is destroyed by a **Stop**, the **Extra** goes away too. A rider can only have one **Extra** at a time, so if a rider already has one **Extra** on it, you can't give it another one.

The meaning of an **Extra** on the three basic riders are described on Page 1, under "Dealing." In general, "Extra" means "more of the same." **Extra Hit** means you get two cards on every stack. **Extra Split** means you get two more stacks. And **Extra Skip** means you'll be skipped twice in a row: to do this, the Extra is swept away on the first pass, and the Skip is taken on the second pass (if it's still there).

GROUND: If you receive one of these, you are immediately out. To reflect this, gather your cards together under the Ground, or turn your cards face down. Once you have hit the Ground, you can no longer play cards, receive cards, or have any cards played on you.

General Notes:

You will discover that riders have offensive and defensive uses, at different times in the game. **Hits** and **Splits** can be good at the beginning of the game, but **Skips** are most useful at the end.

If you want to teach **FALLING** to a new group, you should play very slowly, and introduce the card types one at a time. Start with just the riders and **Grounds**, then add **Extra**, **Stop**, and **Move**.

Learning the card types one at a time is less overwhelming than learning the whole game at once. *And remember that people will play better after they learn how to deal!*

Expert Cards: Anvil, Chute, and Goggles

If this is your first game of **FALLING**, you should remove these three cards from the deck. Once you know the basics, try adding one or more of these cards for extra flavor and craziness.

Permanent Riders: The three optional cards, **Anvil**, **Chute**, and **Goggles**, are *permanent riders*. This means that the dealer does not sweep them, though they can still be **Moved** and **Stopped**.

ANVIL: This card is a permanent **Hit**. If it has an **Extra**, the dealer treats it like an **Extra Hit**, but sweeps only the **Extra**.

CHUTE: This card is a permanent **Skip**. If it has an **Extra**, the dealer treats it exactly like an **Extra Skip**, sweeping only the **Extra**.

GOGGLES: This card does *nothing*. The dealer can just ignore it and deal. Strangely, **Goggles** does actually have a function: since a player can have only one rider at a time, **Goggles** prevents that player from getting another rider. If the dealer encounters an **Extra Goggles**, she deals normally and sweeps the **Extra**.

***FALLING** was designed by James Ernest, illustrated by Val Mayerik. Edited by Mike Selinker and Carol Monahan. Playtesters include more than 15 years of fearless falling guinea pigs, including Toivo Rovainen, E. Jordan Bojar, Kathy Ice, Paul Peterson, and Rick Fish. Special thanks to Andrew Looney and Looney Labs for keeping the flame alive and suggesting many of the improvements in this edition.*

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