# Going Medieval: Viking Raid — Master Rules v1.2

Official · Open Playtest | Reconciled 16 October 2026 | Ludic Oath Games

## About this document

This Master is the single source of truth for Viking Raid v1.2. The Official Rulebook, Learn to Play, and website Full Rules are player-facing presentations of these mechanics. The game has not yet been human playtested; current balance estimates rely on theory and simulation.

## Overview and setup

One player commands the Viking Raider; every other player is a Villager who battles the Raider independently. The richest player after Winter wins. The Chronicle spans four Seasons.

- Players: 2–6. A six-player Chronicle has up to 24 Raids.
- Deck: one Hard Times Face Deck, 60 cards: two copies of each of the 30 ranked face cards (ranks 0–9 in each of three Estates). Knight, Flock, and Serf are not used.
- Setup: everyone starts with 20 Ducats; randomly choose the first Viking Raider.

## Seasons and Player Status

| Season | Villager Ante | Second Morning Raid |
|---|---|---|
| Spring | 1 Ducat | 2 Ducats |
| Summer | 2 Ducats | 3 Ducats |
| Autumn | 3 Ducats | 4 Ducats |
| Winter | 4 Ducats | 5 Ducats |

Check each player’s status at the start of every Raid, before Blind Boasts. A Season ends once every eligible player has raided once. If no player who has not yet raided this Season remains eligible, end the Season immediately; in Winter, end the Chronicle.

| Status | Condition | Permitted / prohibited |
|---|---|---|
| Prosperous | Can pay full Season Ante | May Blind Boast only if full Ante remains affordable afterwards; may buy Protection, offer a Mercy Pact if not holding or sharing the lead, or serve as Raider if able to cover the required stake. |
| Impoverished | Cannot pay full Ante | Antes all remaining Ducats; optional payments only if still affordable after Ante. May not Blind Boast, serve as Raider, or offer Mercy. |
| Destitute | 0 Ducats | Antes 0 and keeps playing; may receive one Mercy Pact. May not buy Protection, Blind Boast, serve as Raider, or choose protected cards. |

Raider eligibility: When the role reaches a player, they must hold at least Season Ante × number of Villagers (the full theoretical stake), even if actual Antes are reduced. Check eligibility when the role passes, not once at the beginning of a Season.

## Poker hand rankings

Best to worst. Only the best five cards count. With two copies of each Estate rank, six cards of a given rank exist.

| Rank | Hand | Definition |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Five of a Kind | Five cards of the same rank |
| 2 | Royal Flush | 9–8–7–6–5, all one Estate |
| 3 | Straight Flush | Five consecutive ranks, one Estate |
| 4 | Four of a Kind | Four cards of the same rank |
| 5 | Full House | Three of one rank and two of another |
| 6 | Flush | Five cards of one Estate |
| 7 | Straight | Five consecutive ranks, any Estates |
| 8 | Three of a Kind | Three cards of the same rank |
| 9 | Two Pair | Two pairs of different ranks |
| 10 | One Pair | Two cards of one rank |
| 11 | High Card | No higher combination |

Rank 0 is always low; straights never wrap 9 to 0. Royal Flushes: Nobility Emperor–Empress–King–Queen–Duke; Clergy Pope–Cardinal–Archbishop–Bishop–Abbess; Peasantry Bailiff–Reeve–Blacksmith–Miller–Carpenter.

Use standard poker tie-breaks: higher set, then kickers; Two Pair compares higher pair, lower pair, then kicker; Full House compares three-of-a-kind, then pair; Straight, Flush, High Card compare ranks in descending order. Estates never break ties. Raider wins an unresolved Raider–Villager tie. Villagers tied for Spoils split them evenly; any odd Ducat stays in the pool.

## The Raid — twelve steps

1. Choose the Viking Raider. Next eligible player in rotation; use the stake requirement above.

2. Blind Boasts. Before cards are dealt, a Prosperous Villager may pay 2 Ducats into the Spoils of War, but only if they can still pay the full Season Ante afterwards. This makes them eligible to claim Spoils if they survive.

3. Villager Antes. Each Villager pays the Season Ante. Impoverished players ante all remaining Ducats; Destitute players ante 0.

4. Launch the Expedition. The Raider matches the total Antes actually placed, forming the Raid Stake.

5. Deal. Each Villager receives five cards; the Raider receives none.

6. Mercy Pact (optional). Offer and pay a Pact now, after the deal. See Mercy Pact.

7. Protect Valuables. Villagers keep two cards for free, optionally buy more Protection, and send unprotected cards face down to the hidden Raider Pool. Protection Ducats are paid at this step and held in front of the player until the Final Battle. Destitute Villagers do not inspect their first five cards: randomly keep two and send three unseen to the Raider Pool.

8. First Raid. Shuffle the Raider Pool and take nine random cards; if fewer than nine, supplement from the draw deck. Raider secretly selects best five, then shuffles the unused cards into the draw deck.

9. Nightfall. Each Villager draws five reinforcement cards, builds and locks their best five-card hand. Unused cards form the hidden Village Discard Pool.

10. Mercy Pact Resolution. Resolve a Pact after both hands are locked; see Mercy Pact.

11. Second Morning Raid (optional). Raider pays Season cost into Spoils, draws five random cards from Village Discard Pool, and rebuilds their best five from those plus current hand.

12. Final Battle. Raider reveals; all Villagers reveal at once. Resolve each Villager separately.

| Cards protected | Extra Ducats | To Raider Pool | Cards after Nightfall |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 0 | 3 | 7 |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| 4 | 3 | 1 | 9 |
| 5 | 6 | 0 | 10 |

## Resolving the Raid

Each Villager’s battle is an even-money bet of their Ante against the Raider’s matching share of the Raid Stake.

- Villager survives: keeps own Ante, receives Raider’s matching stake share, recovers all Protection Ducats, and may claim Spoils if they Blind Boasted.
- Raider wins: takes that Villager’s Ante, retains matching stake share, receives half that Villager’s Protection Ducats (rounded up); remaining Protection goes to Spoils.

## Spoils of War

The communal prize pool receives Blind Boasts, the non-salvaged remainder of failed Protection, and the entire cost of Second Morning Raids. Only Villagers who Blind Boasted and survived this Raid can claim it. If several qualify, strongest poker hand wins; exact ties split evenly, with any odd Ducat remaining. With no eligible survivor, carry Spoils to the next Raid. Unclaimed Spoils after the last Raid of Winter are lost to the sea.

## Mercy Pact

A one-time card deal with a permanent end-game claim: the benefactor buys a Destitute player’s cards now and half the partner’s remaining Ducats at the end.

- Who: A Prosperous Villager who does not hold or share the Chronicle lead may offer one Pact to a Destitute Villager after the deal (step 6).

- Cost: 4 Ducats, paid immediately to the Destitute player. The 4 Ducats do not change the partner's status until the next Raid.
- Limits: One Pact offered per benefactor and one received per Destitute player, per Chronicle.
- Resolution (step 10, this Raid only): Both privately combine their locked hands into ten cards; the benefactor chooses any five as their final hand and the partner gets the other five. Both remain hidden until the Final Battle.
- Permanent alliance: The Pact cannot be dissolved. The partner continues playing independently but cannot win the Chronicle. At the end of Winter the benefactor adds half the partner's remaining Ducats (rounded up) to their Chronicle Score.

## End of Raid and End of Chronicle

After each Raid, resolve outcomes, Antes, Raid Stake, Protection, and Spoils. Pass the Raider role to the next eligible player. Once everyone eligible has raided, or no unserved player remains eligible, advance to the next Season. After Winter, count Ducats and add Mercy Pact bonuses; the highest Chronicle Score wins.

## Decision log — approved design history

- Royal Flush is 9–8–7–6–5 of one Estate, with eleven total poker-hand rankings (replacing the ten-hand Hard Times list).
- Standard poker tie-breaks; Estates do not break ties; tied Villagers split Spoils with odd Ducat remaining.
- Antes are paid before the Raider matches the actual total; Raider eligibility still requires covering the full theoretical stake.
- Two free protected cards; Destitute players keep two unseen at random.
- Mercy Pact is Prosperous-only, excludes anyone holding or sharing the lead, resolves locked hands once, grants a permanent half-share end-game claim.
- Unclaimed Spoils after Winter are lost to the sea.
- Full four-Season Chronicle retained; Second Morning Raid costs 2/3/4/5 Ducats.
- Raid Stake stays equal to total actual Antes; proposed 75% stake was rejected.
- Raider Pool is fixed at nine random unprotected cards, replacing player-count scaling.
- v1.2 reconciliation: Season ends if no unserved eligible Raider remains; unused Raider cards shuffled into draw deck; status checked at Raid start.
- v1.2 final clarification: Blind Boasts are Prosperous-only and must preserve full Ante; Mercy Pact payment does not change status until next Raid.

## Open items and playtest notes

- Update the Hard Times Hand Ranks reference card to the eleven-hand list for consistency across the poker games.
- Prior simulations: variable Raider Pool won roughly 34% at two players to 87% at six; fixed nine-card Pool estimates approximately 62–64% at every player count. These are model estimates, not human-playtest results.
- First live playtest: measure Raid length and examine how the Mercy Pact's permanent claim affects benefactor and partner decisions.

House rules (rebuy, extra years) remain table choices, not official rules.