



A cryptid hunting card game for 2-5 players | 30 minutes

The monsters are real, and the hunt is on.

As an intrepid crew of cryptid hunters, you're embarking on daring expeditions to track down beasts of legend unknown to modern science. Out in the wild, sightings are fleeting—a scaled tail vanishing into the brush or glowing eyes gleaming in the dark.

You'll work together to draft the bizarre traits of whatever is lurking in the shadows, piecing together a shared visual of the creature to create the **Sighting Report**. But when the dust settles, it's every hunter for themselves! Armed with a hand of your favorite cryptids, you must play the card that you think best matches what the group saw. Prove your expertise, claim the closest match to win the sighting, and cement your legacy as the ultimate monster hunter!

Components

- **64 Cryptid cards** — each with a unique combination of 6 attributes
- **6 double-sided Trait tiles** — one per category, showing the current consensus of the sighting
- **Player Reference card**

Cryptid Attributes

Each cryptid card has 6 traits (out of 12 possible). A cryptid has one trait from each of the following categories:

Category (Color)	Trait A	Trait B
Head (blue)	 <p>Horns</p>	 <p>Fin</p>
Eyes (purple)	 <p>Eyes</p>	 <p>Eyes</p>
Mouth (red)	 <p>Fangs</p>	 <p>Beak</p>
Hands (green)	 <p>Pads</p>	 <p>Claws</p>
Skin (brown)	 <p>Fur</p>	 <p>Scales</p>
Tail (purple)	 <p>Spiked</p>	 <p>Tentacles</p>

Every possible combination of traits appears on exactly one card, giving 64 unique cryptids.

Trait Tiles

Each trait tile is double-sided, corresponding to one category — one trait per side. The face-up side shows which trait the group currently agrees was seen.

During the game, trait tiles are arranged in a row to form the **Sighting Report**. In this game players will be playing cryptid cards from their hand and trying to play the card that is the most similar to the current Sighting Report. However, the traits are considered in order from left to right. The leftmost tile (Slot 1) is the most prominent detail and is considered first, while the rightmost tile (Slot 6) is the least prominent detail and is considered last.

Setup

1. **Place the 6 trait tiles** in a pile in the center of the table.
 2. **Shuffle all 64 cryptid cards** and deal **7 cards** to each player. Set remaining cards aside. Players look at their hands but keep them secret.
 3. **Decide the starting player**. The player who was last in the woods goes first.
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Overview

The game is played over a series of **expeditions**, each consisting of 7 **sightings** (one per card in hand). Each sighting represents the group's proposal for what monster has been seen during this expedition. Each sighting has three phases:

1. **Determine the Sighting Report** - Players work together to determine the Sighting Report tiles. See below for details.
2. **Propose Cryptids** — All players simultaneously play a cryptid card from their hand face-down, then reveal.
3. **Evaluate the Cryptids** — The proposed cryptids are compared against the trait tiles to determine the cryptid that most closely matches the sighting report. The player who played this card wins the trick and scores 1 point.

Continue until all player hands are empty, which ends the expedition. Check for a winner. If no one has won yet, collect all of the cards and start the next expedition.

Playing a Sighting

Phase 1: Determine the Sighting Report

Initial Sighting - Start of an Expedition

At the start of each expedition, players draft the 6 trait tiles. This forms the Sighting Report. Drafting determines which trait tiles occupy each slot and which trait is face-up for each tile. The draft starts with the player who has the most points (or, for the first expedition, the starting player selected at the beginning of the game), and proceeds clockwise.

The number and position of tiles drafted depends on player count:

Player Count	Drafting Order
2	Players alternate picking from Slot 6 down to Slot 1. First player drafts Slots 6, 4, 2. Other player drafts Slots 5, 3, 1.
3	First player drafts Slots 6, 5. Next player drafts Slots 4, 3. Last player drafts Slots 2, 1.
4	First player drafts Slots 6, 5. Next drafts Slots 4, 3. Next drafts Slot 2. Last drafts Slot 1.
5	First player drafts Slots 6, 5. Remaining players each draft 1 slot (4, 3, 2, 1) in clockwise order.

Additional Sightings

The expedition continues as you catch another glimpse of the monster! Each player takes one action to alter the trait tiles that will be used to evaluate the cryptids for this sighting.

Starting with the player that won the previous sighting and proceeding clockwise, each player may take **one action** to modify the trait tiles, either:

- **Flip** one trait tile to its opposite side, OR
- **Swap** the positions of any two trait tiles in the Sighting Report row.

Restriction: You cannot repeat the exact action taken by the player immediately before you. (You may perform the same type of action on different tiles.)

Phase 2: Propose Cryptids

All players simultaneously choose one cryptid card from their hand and place it **face-down** in front of them, proposing the cryptid they believe is the best candidate for the sighting. Once everyone has chosen, flip all cards face-up.

Phase 3: Evaluate the Cryptids

Compare the proposed cryptids against the trait tiles, starting from Slot 1:

1. **Check Slot 1.** Does the proposed cryptid match the trait on this tile?
 - If **some cryptids match and others don't**: eliminate all non-matching cryptids.
 - If **no cryptids match**: skip this slot (all cryptids survive).
 - If **one cryptid remains**: that cryptid wins the sighting. Stop evaluating.
2. **Repeat** for Slot 2, then Slot 3, and so on through Slot 6. This will always result in a single winning cryptid closest to the sighting.

The winning player claims the sighting and scores **1 point**. (You may collect the played cryptid cards from this sighting into a score pile to track points, recognizing that each won sighting is worth exactly 1 point regardless of the number of players).

Winning the Game

After completing an expedition (all 7 sightings), count each player's score pile and add it to their running score. **The first player to reach 10 points wins.**

- If **one player** has 10 or more points and leads outright: that player wins!
- If **multiple players** are tied at 10 or more points: enter **Sudden Death**.
- If **no player** has 10 points yet: shuffle and deal again to start the next expedition.

Sudden Death

Shuffle all cards, deal a new hand of 7, and determine the Initial Sighting as normal. Play sightings one at a time. After each sighting's Evaluate phase, check: does any single player now lead outright? If so, that player wins immediately. Otherwise, proceed with the next sighting. If players remain tied at the top after all 7 sightings, start another expedition and continue.

Between Expeditions

When an expedition ends without a winner:

1. Shuffle all 64 cards together, deal 7 to each player, and set the rest aside.

2. The player with the most points begins when drafting the next Initial Sighting Report.
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Quick Reference

Sighting structure: Determine the Sighting Report (clockwise) -> Propose (simultaneous) -> Evaluate (Slot 1 through 6)

Evaluating priority: Slot 1 > Slot 2 > Slot 3 > Slot 4 > Slot 5 > Slot 6

Additional Sightings actions: Flip 1 tile OR swap 2 tiles. Cannot repeat the previous player's exact action.

Win condition: First to 10 points with a clear lead.

Strategy Tips

- **During the initial sighting:** Place your strongest attributes in the slots you control. Remember, Slot 1 dominates — if your best cryptid matches Slot 1, it beats cryptids that match Slots 2-6 but miss Slot 1.
 - **When proposing:** Play the cryptid that survives the most filters. A cryptid matching Slots 1 and 2 will beat a cryptid matching Slots 3, 4, 5, and 6.
 - **Additional Sightings are key:** A well-timed flip or swap can transform a weak hand into a winning one. Think about which changes help your remaining cryptids while hurting opponents.
 - **Watch the endgame:** As players approach 10 points, sudden death tension rises. Controlling Slot 1 becomes critical.
 - **Drafting trade-offs:** By drafting first it may feel like you're just choosing tiebreakers, but you're choosing which traits **will not** be eligible to be in the first few spots which is a key decision.
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Credits and Disclosures

Cryptid Connections was created by Don Schwarz, in partnership with Gemini 3.1 and Claude Opus 4.6. The primary mechanic of judging a trick-taking game by measuring similarity by using a set of binary attributes in a specific order was created by Don Schwarz. The theme and traits were decided upon during discussions with Gemini. The titles of the cards, card art, and flavor text were created by Gemini. The graphic design was done using a combination of image generation abilities in Gemini, and composition using Squib. The Antigravity IDE was used to configure Squib and create various scripts to generate the cards and rules, and to create a web version of the game for playtesting. Claude Opus 4.6 was used to proof-read the rules and suggest improvements.