

Two covert operatives are on a secret mission.
Each knows 9 agents the other must contact.
Can they dodge the assassins and complete their
mission before time runs out?



**YOU CAN
LEARN TO PLAY
FROM THE
VIDEO!**

www.cge.as/cn2-http



www.codenamesgame.com

SETUP

SIT OPPOSITE YOUR PARTNER.

You are both on the same team, but you must sit on opposite sides so that you each see a different side of the key card.

LAY OUT 25 RANDOM WORDS.

Mix up the word cards, choose 25 at random, and lay them out in a 5×5 grid.

KEEP THE 15 AGENT TILES WITHIN REACH.

Both players will use the green tiles to mark contacted agents, so keep them in the middle.



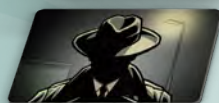
15 agent tiles



9 timer tokens



1 assassin



25 word cards (from a deck of 200)

AND THE ASSASSIN.

If you need this tile, you have lost the game. Keep it dangerously close to the agents.

USE 9 TIMER TOKENS.

Timer tokens track how many turns you have left. Place them beside the grid.

Two extra tokens (the blue ones) have been included for players who want 10 or 11 turns instead of 9. For a standard game, you can leave these extra tokens in the box.

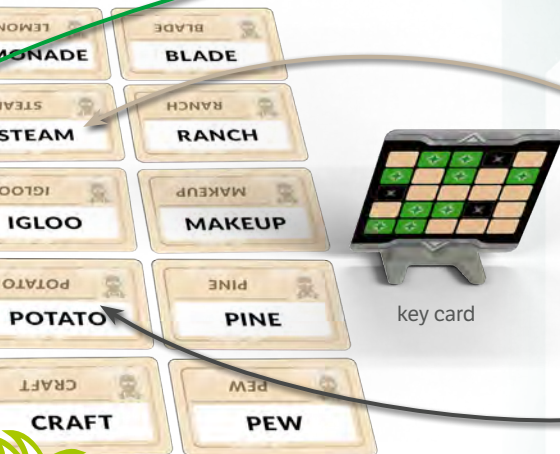


DRAW A RANDOM KEY CARD.

Hold the deck of key cards upright, take a random card from the middle, and place it in the stand as shown below. (The arrows should be on the top and bottom edges of the key.)

Place the key beside the words. Each of you should see only your own side of the key.

Your partner sits
across from you.



YOU SEE WHAT THEY MUST GUESS.

Your side of the key card shows what happens when your partner guesses a word.

You want your partner to guess
COCONUT.



agent



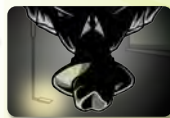
You don't want your partner to
guess STEAM.



bystander



If they guess POTATO, you both lose
the game!



assassin



THEY SEE WHAT YOU MUST GUESS.

Your partner's side of the key is a grid
like yours, but the colors are in different
places.

**When you guess, the color on your
side of the key does not matter.** Your
partner will tell you if you guessed an
agent, an innocent bystander, or an
assassin.

HOW TO PLAY

You and your partner take turns giving clues to each other. Each turn uses up 1 timer token. If you contact all 15 agents before you run out of timer tokens, you both win.

EITHER OF YOU CAN BE THE CLUE-GIVER ON THE FIRST TURN.

Look at the key card and try to find two or more green words that can be linked with a single clue. The first player to find a good clue starts the game by giving it. Let's suppose the first clue-giver is you.

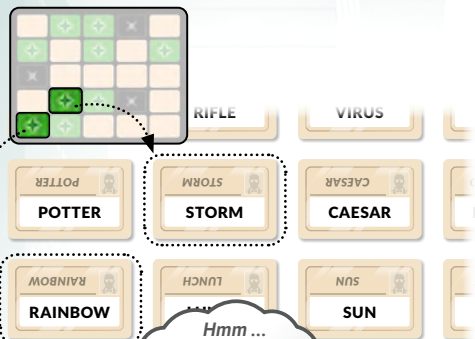
THE CLUE-GIVER GIVES ONE CLUE.

Your clue must be **1 word** and **1 number**.

The **word** must be related to the words you want to give a clue for.

The **number** tells how many words your clue relates to.

weather: 2



Hmm ...
STORM and
RAINBOW ...

For example, if you see STORM and RAINBOW as green words, you might say weather: 2.

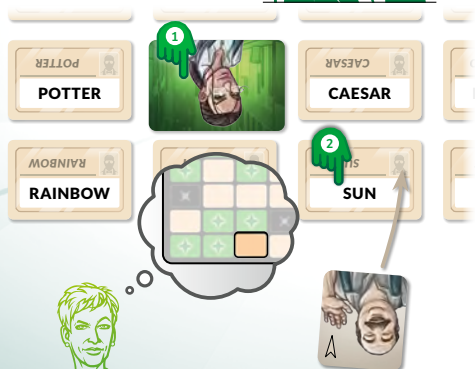
THEN THE GUESSER MAY MAKE MULTIPLE GUESSES.

After you give a clue, your partner will look at the words and try to figure out what your clue means. They may think aloud. Do not react to what they say. Wait patiently for them to indicate their guess by touching one of the cards.

If your partner guesses a word you see as green, they may guess again. Cover the word with a green agent tile to show that this agent has been contacted. (Place the agent so it faces your partner.)

If your partner guesses an innocent bystander, that ends the turn. Take one timer token and place it on the card, facing your partner. (Leave the word visible – it might be an agent that can only be guessed by you.)

Hmm ...
"weather"



Your partner can also end the turn voluntarily by taking a timer token and placing it face down on their side of the table.



Ideally, they will guess every word for your clue, then take a token. However, they are not required to guess every word. They can end the turn if they have made at least one guess.

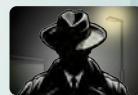
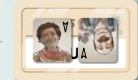
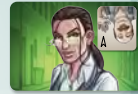
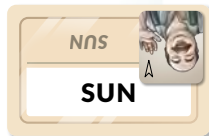
Every turn uses exactly 1 timer token. Either the clue-giver places a timer token as an innocent bystander or the guesser takes a timer token to end the turn.

ON THE NEXT TURN, THE ROLES SWITCH.

If you gave the first clue, your partner will give the second. And so on.

Your partner's side of the key is not the same as yours. You might have to guess a word that looks green or tan or black to you. Any of them could appear green on your partner's side of the card.

SUN looks like a bystander from your side. But when you guess it, your partner could mark it as an agent, a bystander, or an assassin!



If you guess an assassin, you instantly lose the game!

KEEP TAKING TURNS BEING THE CLUE-GIVER AND THE GUESSER.

After the guesser ends the turn, either voluntarily or by guessing a bystander, they become the clue-giver for the next turn.

In addition to guessing words for the current turn's clue, the guesser may also guess words they missed on previous turns.

There is no limit on the number of guesses.

Now I see it!



HOW THE GAME ENDS

WHEN ALL 9 GREEN WORDS HAVE BEEN GUESSED, SAY SO.

You see 9 words as green. When all of these are covered by agent tiles, say so. You have no words to give clues for, so your partner will be the clue-giver on all remaining turns.

(Some are green from both sides and may have been guessed by you.)



THERE ARE 3 WAYS THE GAME CAN END:

IF YOU FIND ALL 15 AGENTS, YOU WIN.

Once all green words from both sides of the key have been guessed, both players win the game!

There are 15 words to guess and 15 agent tiles. So you win when the last agent tile is placed.



IF YOU MEET THE ASSASSIN, YOU LOSE.

If either player guesses a word that the other player sees as black, your team has been caught by the assassins and you both lose.



IF YOU RUN OUT OF TIMER TOKENS, YOU GET A SUDDEN DEATH TURN.

If you have used up your last timer token and there are still words to be guessed, it is time for the sudden death turn.

No one gives any more clues. The sudden death turn just allows you to use all the previous clues in one last attempt to win the game.

Make guesses one at a time, and mark them in the usual way. You and your partner can guess in any order and you do not have to take turns. You are not allowed to discuss strategy beyond saying "I'll go," or "You go." Do not tell your partner how many they have left to guess, but do tell them when they have no words left to guess.

A wrong guess in sudden death ends the game. Both players lose, even if the guess was just an innocent bystander.

If you find all your agents, you both win!



YOU NOW KNOW THE RULES. GO PLAY!

MISSION DEBRIEFING

HOW DID IT GO?

YOU DID NOT FIND YOUR AGENTS.

Did you meet an assassin? This happens a lot, even to experienced Codenames players. With 3 assassins out there, it can be tricky to give a clue that avoids them all.

Did you run out of timer tokens, even though you were trying to give lots of clues for two or three words? Well, sometimes things don't click.

Most people lose their first game. Don't give up. Just flip over the words, draw a new key card, and try again.

It takes practice. And even if you get really good, you won't win every time.

If you consistently run out of timer tokens, consider adding an extra one. Or two. The game comes with 11. Maybe you need to practice on an easier mission before tackling the tougher challenges.



YOU WON WITH 10 OR 11 TOKENS.

Great! You played with some extra timer tokens, but you contacted all your agents while avoiding the assassins. Mission complete!

Would you like to try again with 9?

YOU WON A 9-TOKEN MISSION.

Great work! You're ready for anything.

If you want, you can add up your score based on how you used your timer tokens:

Used as a bystander:	0 points each
Taken to end a turn:	1 point each
Not used at all:	3 points each
If you needed sudden death:	-1 point

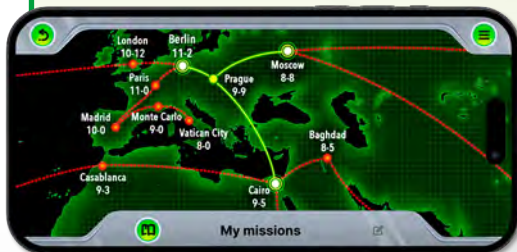
A score of 5 is really good. And it's fun to try for 10 or more. If you like trying new challenges, check out the mission map in the Codenames Companion app.

MISSION MAP

The free **Codenames Companion** includes a mission map for Duet.

The mission map offers new challenges for players who have mastered the standard 9-token mission. Some missions encourage you to give clues that stretch to 3 or 4 agents. Others can be won only with caution and precision.

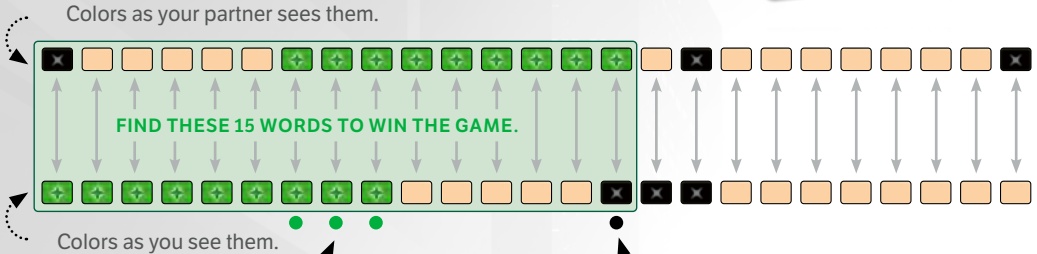
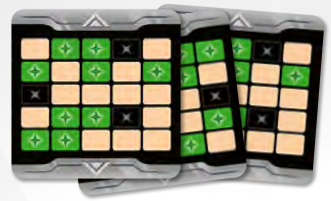
Beginner missions unlock trickier missions, and you can find the challenge that works best for you.



ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

SECRETS OF THE KEY CARD

All key cards are designed according to the diagram below. You can use this knowledge to your advantage.



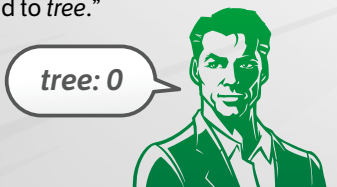
3 of the GREEN words are also green on the other side. If you guess one of these words, your partner will cover it with a green tile, which means neither of you can guess it again, so you no longer need to give a clue for it. Play your agent tiles facing the guesser, so you can tell which player guessed which card.

1 of the BLACK words is green on the other side. This means, sooner or later, you have to touch a word you see as black. This is a dangerous move because one of those three is black from both sides! If you find the right one, you know you should avoid the other two black words for the rest of the game.

Do not talk about what you see! When you make a correct guess, do not say what color the word was on your side. When you are considering guessing one of your black words, do not indicate what the other two might be.

ZERO CLUE

Sometimes it's easier to tell the guesser what not to guess. If your partner gives a clue like *tree: 0*, that means "Don't guess the word (or words) related to *tree*."



So if COCONUT is the only kind of tree on the table, don't guess COCONUT.

Next, ask yourself, "Why not?" Well, if there are words like POTATO, TOAST, and SUGAR on the table, maybe your partner wanted to give a clue like *food: 3*, but COCONUT was in the way. So try guessing POTATO, TOAST, and SUGAR.

PASSING

You can decide to give no more clues. When it is your turn to give a clue, you can say, “Pass.” Your partner will give the clue for that turn and will be the clue-giver every turn for the rest of the game.

For example, you might pass if your partner has only one word left to guess and you have already given a clue for it.

Once you pass, you give no more clues. If your partner runs out of words to give clues for, then the game ends with a sudden death turn, even if you have timer tokens left.



WITH 3 OR MORE PLAYERS

Duet works great with more players. Divide into 2 groups and sit on opposite sides of the table. As always, you see only your own side of the key card.

When your side is guessing, you can talk things over before making your guess – just don't give away anything about your side of the key.

When your side is thinking up clues, you can consult by whispering or writing suggestions down. Or you can just say, “I have a good one,” and, if no one minds, give your clue without discussion.



LIMITED COMMUNICATION

Your information should be limited to what you can deduce from each other's clues. You can comment on your guess, but don't give away any information about your side of the key card. If you guess a word that your partner marks as a green agent, do not tell your partner what the word looks like on your side. Do not give your partner advice on when to stop guessing, and do not tell your partner how many words are left to guess until all the words you see as green have been marked with green agent tiles.

VALID CLUES

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Some clues are invalid because they violate the spirit of the game.

Your clue must be about the meaning of the words. You can't use your clue to talk about the letters of a word or its position on the table. You can't tie CAKE, CANE, and CRAB together with a clue like *c: 3*, nor with *four: 3*, however ...

Letters and numbers are valid clues as long as they refer to meanings. You can use *one: 2* as a clue for METER and DOLLAR, and you can use *b: 2*, as a clue for LETTER and FLAT. (It might work, if your partner is musical.)

You can't say any form of a word visible on the table. Until SCIENTIST is covered, you can't say *scientific* or *neuroscience*. (But *conscience* is okay.)

You can't say any part of a compound word on the table. Until EARTHQUAKE is covered, you can't say *earth*, *quake*, *quaking*, or *earthenware*.

You can't use melodies or accents as a clue. Don't say *pancake* in a French accent as a clue for FLAT and NAPOLEON.

SOUNDALIKES AND WORDPLAY

In traditional Codenames, clues must be about the meanings of words. In the Codenames app, more wordplay is allowed.

Because Duet is a cooperative game, it is up to your group to decide how strictly you must stick to a word's actual meaning. If you need to give a clue for SUN and BROTHER, you have to decide if you will allow the clue *boy: 2* – or even *son: 2*.

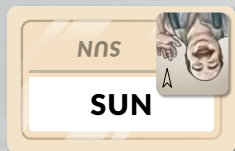
BENDING THE “ONE WORD” RULE

One-word names are valid clues, and your group agree to allow all names. So your group can agree to allow *Leonardo da Vinci*, *New Brunswick*, and even *Lord of the Rings*.

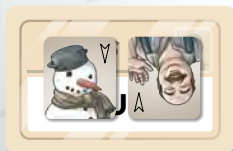
Some groups even agree to allow all clues that “feel like they could be” one word, like *guinea pig* and *moth-eaten*.

PENALTY FOR INVALID CLUE

If someone accidentally gives an invalid clue, you should take a 1-turn penalty by discarding one of the timer tokens, then go ahead and play out the turn as though a valid clue was given.



Not covered. Don't use *sun*, *sunflower*, or *sunny* in a clue.



Covered. These words (whatever they are) cannot be guessed again. So it is now okay to use them as clues.



ONE MORE WAY TO PLAY



CODENAMES APP

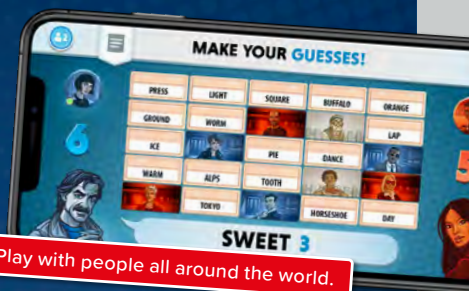
4.9 ★★★★★

The newest way to play Codenames can be installed on your phone. We've made Codenames into a mobile app. You can challenge players from all around the world, and you can play with your friends, no matter where they are.

Actually, it's a lot more than "one more" way to play. The Codenames app offers solo challenges, thematic word packs, and special modes with game-changing rules tweaks.

And more is coming! At the end of 2025, the Duet expansion will launch in the app, enhancing the two-player cooperative experience with challenging missions, more game modes, and dual challenges that will test your clue-giving skills.

Add the Codenames app to your device and play Codenames whenever you want!



CODENAMES DUET

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Special thanks to: our families, colleagues, and friends for their unwavering support and love for our work; our digital team for creating the awesome Codenames mobile app; Lukáš Novotný for the sleek web implementation; and most importantly, the millions of players around the world who have been enjoying Codenames – on the table, online, and in the app – throughout the past decade.

Thanks to you, our work has meaning!



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REMINDERS AND TIPS

DIFFERENCES FROM CODENAMES

Duet has only one team. Either both players win or both players lose.

Both players are spymasters. You and your partner take turns giving clues to each other.

There is no “plus one” rule. When it is your turn to guess, you can keep guessing as long as you guess right. (And no one needs to give an “unlimited” clue.)

The key card does not show you all your agents. It shows you 9 agents your partner can contact. But some words that look like bystanders or an assassin are words you must contact.

A bystander guessed by your partner is still available for you to guess from your side. When you guess it, it might be an agent!

Duet is harder to win. Duet has more assassins. And because there is no other team, you cannot benefit from the other team’s mistakes.

SECRETS OF THE KEY CARD

One of the black words is a word you must guess. (But one is an assassin from both sides.)

Three words are green on both sides. They only need to be guessed by one side.



CODENAMES

4–8+ players

400 more words

can mix with

Codenames Duet



CODENAMES

PICTURES

4–8+ players

play with pictures

instead of words



CODENAMES COMPANION

Enhance your board game sessions.

- Includes challenging Duet missions.
- Randomizes key cards for easy setup.
- Optional turn timer to keep the pace.
- Completely free to download.



CODENAMES APP

Standalone digital game, anytime, anywhere.

- Play with friends or new opponents.
- Interesting twists and game modes.
- Solo challenges and puzzles.
- Thematic words to collect.
- Tons of upgrades and achievements.

