

# Cowl and Mask

by Fin Coe

2 players

5 minutes

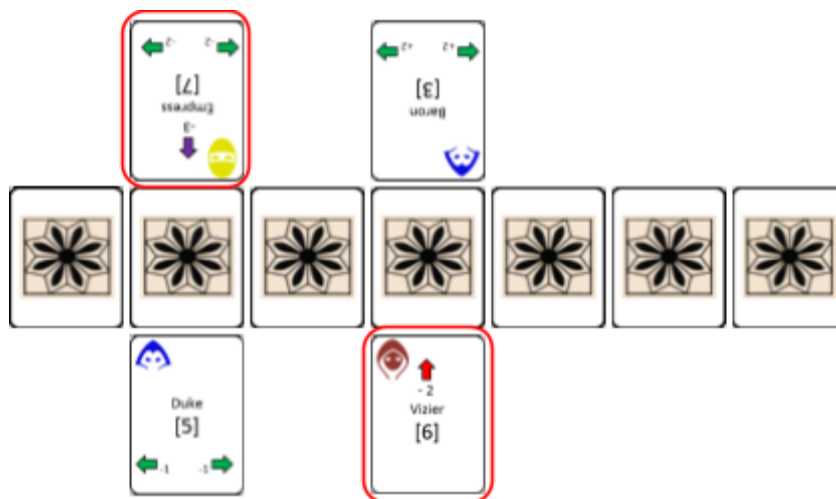
Ages 10 and up

*In the distant land of Insuluda, there is a yearly festival called Ludenalia, held every solstice to honor the Royal family. A tradition of the Ludenalia festival is Cowl and Mask - part dance, part game, part masquerade. Once the cowls are pulled away, the masks are revealed, but who's behind the masks? Is it noble or commoner, or perhaps the Empress herself, slipping away from her palace? Who can say - on Ludenalia, all that matters is the next game, the next dance, the next step, the next song.*

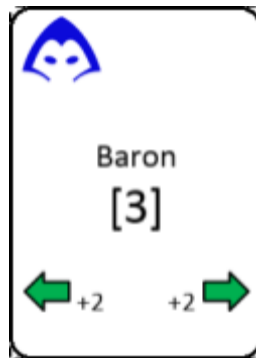
Cowl and Mask is a thinky filler game of bluffing and tactics.



In Cowl and Mask, you lay out the seven Floor Tile cards, face-down in a line. These cards form the seven lanes into which both you and your opponent will play cards. The player with a higher total strength on her side of the card, wins that Floor Tile. The object of the game is to win the most of these Floor Tiles.



Each player has an identical hand of seven Court cards. A player's Court cards will be played on her side of the Floor Tile cards. Each card has three special qualities: The Cowl (Cardback), the Mask (identity / base strength) and the Power (special effects granted by adjacency or pointing).



A Court card can have one of three cardbacks: The Cowl of the Stars (shared by #7 the Empress and #1 the Fool); the Cowl of the Sun (#6 the Vizier and #2 the Courtesan); or the Cowl of the Moon (#5 the Baron, #4 the Count, and #3 the Duke). Thus, you always have an idea of what a card might be if it is played Cowl-side up.



A Court card's strength is based on its Mask, which ranges from 1 to 7. At the end of the game, each Floor Tile will go to the Court card played on it that has the highest total strength. A Court card also has a unique power to go with its Mask. These powers can be beneficial, neutral, or negative, and can alter the strength of a player's other cards, for better or for worse. Choosing when to reveal a Mask, where to play it, and how to best use its powers are the strategic core of this seemingly simple game!

Now that you understand the initial Setup and what's in your hand, here's how you play.

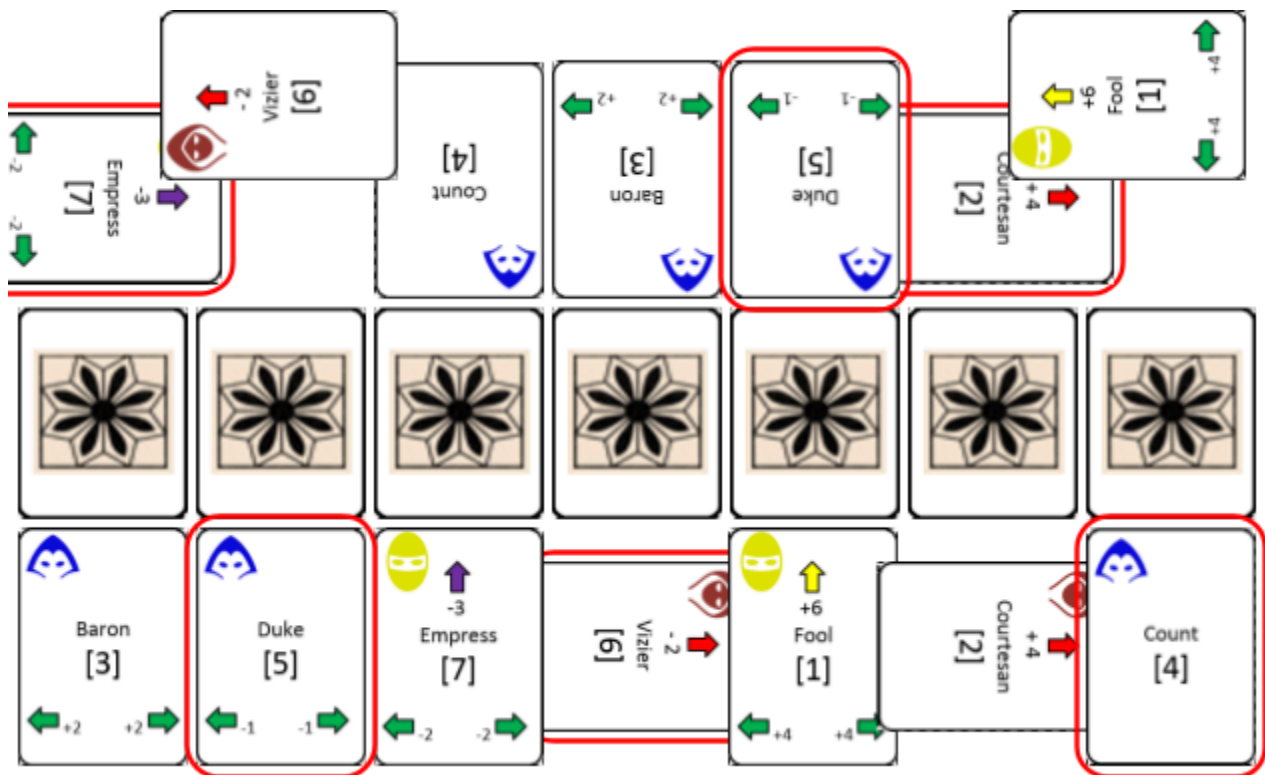
The player with the best claim to a throne goes first.

The starting player plays a card from their hand next to a Floor Tile of her choice, on her side. It may be Cowl-side up or Mask-side up, at the player's discretion, but a player may only ever have three of her own cards Cowl-side up at a time. If a player has three cards out that are Cowl-side up and plays a fourth Cowl-side up, she must choose one of those cards to flip, revealing its Mask side.

When a card is played or flipped to be Mask-side up, and the player has the option to point the card in a certain direction, that player must make that choice then. Once a card is Mask-side up and has been pointed (or not pointed), its orientation is fixed for the rest of the game.

The two players alternate playing Court cards until all seven lanes have been filled by a card from each player.

Once all seven Court cards have been played by each player, play continues, but instead of playing a new card, the next player spends her turn flipping over a Cowl card, if she has one, and pointing the card, if she chooses to or if the Mask's power compels her to. Play continues back and forth until all cards have been revealed Mask-up, at which point the game ends.



At this point, all that remains is the scoring. Starting from the first player's left, check each Floor Tile. The card with the higher total Strength (the Mask's base strength, plus or minus any modifiers from adjacent cards) wins that Floor Tile. Ties do not go to either player. For each Floor Tile, check to see which player wins. At the end, the player with more Floor Tiles is the winner of Cowl and Mask.

Note: The first player has a half-point handicap for the disadvantage of going first. If ties on Floor Tiles would result in both players taking the same number of Floor Tiles, the first player wins.

For the Advanced game, use the non-uniform side of the Floor Tiles. Shuffle the Floor Tile cards and randomly deal them into a line colour-side up. The different Floor Tiles are now worth different amounts of points, and the player who captures the most points at the end is the winner.



Thanks for reading, and I hope you enjoy Cowl and Mask!

- FC

[Court Cards](#)

[Floor Tiles](#)