



A New Pub Game by James Ernest
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Background: In the firelit pubs of Schoffield, gamblers try their luck at a fast-playing game called Whispers, where the goal is to avoid getting a pair. In the Old World they play *Ageda Brava*, a related game with 6-sided dice. But in the New World, that game has fallen to the side, and has been transformed into *Whispers*.

Players: 2 to 8

Playing Time: 5 Minutes per hand

Equipment: A *Whispers* deck, a button, and chips for betting, roughly 100 per player

The Format: *Whispers* is a gambling game, so the goal is simply to finish with more money than you started with. For a home game, you can start every player with 100 chips. Start the button with a random player, and pass it to the left after each hand. On every round, the action begins with the button, or on the active player closest to their left.

The Deck: The deck is based on an older game with 6-sided dice, so it includes the numbers 1 through 6, eight times each. It also includes six *whispers*, which are essentially blank cards that cannot pair with anything, including each other.

You can make your own *Whispers* deck, using cards from two poker decks or one UNO deck, and use any distinct card (Jacks, for example) as the Whisper cards. You can also buy the *Whispers* deck from Crab Fragment Games at DriveThruCards. We offer a traditional standard deck, with only numbers and suits, as well as an illustrated deck, with art for every card.

Definition: Whispers. There are six whisper cards in the deck. Cards that pair on the deal also become whispers. A whisper can't form a pair with another card, even another whisper. However, each whisper in your hand *doubles your penalty* for receiving a pair.

The Deal: To begin, each player *antes* one coin into the pot. Shuffle the deck and deal two cards face up to each player, starting with the button. If any player receives a pair on the deal, turn one of them face down. That card becomes a whisper.

Each Round: Starting on the button, each player in turn must now declare whether they are “in” or “out” of the next round. They can do this by resting a finger on their cards, to show that they are in, or by turning their cards face down, to show that they are out.

After at least one player has been eliminated, a player has a third choice in this step: they may offer to *split the pot*. However, if this offer is not accepted by everyone, any player who offers to split is automatically *in*.

After every player has declared in or out, deal one card face up to all players who are in. If any player gets a pair in their hand (any two cards of the same rank) they are *knocked out*.

Players who are knocked out must pay a penalty into the pot, which is equal to the rank of the paired card. For example, if you get a pair of 4s, you pay 4 coins. Each whisper in your hand *doubles this penalty*, so a pair of fours with a whisper costs 8 coins, with two whispers would cost 16 coins, and so on.

If more than one player remains in the hand, play another round. This repeats until the players agree to split the pot, or until only one player is left, in which case that player takes the pot.

Washout: If all active players are knocked out on the same round, this is a *washout*. In this case, the active player(s) who paid the *highest penalty* will win the pot. This means that you actually want to pay the highest price, if everyone who remains is knocked out at the same time, because this makes you the winner.

For example, suppose three players remain, and they all get a pair. Player A has 2-2, Player B has 6-6, and Player C has 4-4 with a whisper. Player C pays the highest penalty, 8 coins, and so she wins this hand.

Splitting the Pot: The pot can be split on any round when all players agree to split it, or if more than one player is tied for the highest penalty in a washout. Divide the pot as evenly as possible, leaving any odd coins for the next pot.

Playing Again: Each hand is a self-contained game, and you may play for as long as you like. Pass the button to the left after each hand.

Next Steps: Whispers is still new and we'd love to invent some more variations, fine-tune the core rules, and even work backwards to the dice game that it's supposedly based on. Let us know what you think at <https://crabfragmentlabs.com/feedback-form>.

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