Bear Hugs

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1-4 Players / 30 min / Ages 8+

Components

- 21 card Bear Deck (18 Bears & 3 Park Rangers)
- 21 card False Bear Deck (18 False Bears & 3 Junior Rangers)
- 39 card Food Deck
- 25 Berry Tokens

Objective

In Bear Hugs, you are wildlife enthusiasts with one goal: to befriend the best bears! In this trick-taking and bidding meets set-collecting game, you will venture out into the wilderness, encounter Bears and False Bears, and use your Food to try and make these wild animals become your fluffy new friends. But watch out for the Park Rangers who may try to take your new friends away. The player with the most Friend Points after 2 Expeditions is the winner!

Setup

1. **The Wilderness:** Individually shuffle the Bears and False Bears decks. Set both decks side-by-side, face down, in the center of the play area (see example setup picture). These decks represent "The Wilderness."

2. **Berries:** Give each player 2 Berries. Place the remaining Berries in a pile within easy reach of all players.

3. **Food:** Shuffle the Food deck and deal 9 cards, face-down, to each player to form their starting hand. Place any remaining Food cards face up to form the discard pile. If playing with 2 or fewer players, see Robo-player variant (pg. 8).

4. **Sharing Food:** Each player chooses 3 cards from their hand to pass, face down, to the player on their left. Note that, generally, higher numbered cards are more desirable. However, it may be wise to reserve some lower number cards as well. See the Contests section for more details.

How To Play

Bear Hugs is a trick-taking inspired game with 2 rounds, or "Expeditions." In each Expedition, you will play cards from your hand in a series of 8 contests to befriend Bears and False Bears.

Possible Friends

At the start of each contest: reveal the top cards of the Bear deck and the False Bear deck and place them into the center of the play area (see example right). These are the Friends you will be competing to win in this contest.

There are three kinds of Bears you may run into:
Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, and Polar Bears.

There are also three kinds of False Bears you may encounter:
Koalas, Tardigrades (also known as "Water Bears"), and Teddy Bears.

The player revealing the Friend cards should call out the kind of Bear and False Bear they see in the contest and point out any costumes they may be wearing. There are three different costumes: Hats, Mustaches, and Sunglasses.

Note: Not every Bear has a costume.

Food Cards

Each Food card has a number (the amount of food) and a type (the type of food). The type is printed on both the front and back of each Food card, but the number of each food is only printed on the face of the card. Always deal starting hands of Food cards for each round face-down with the number-side of the cards hidden.

Note: The type of Food (back of Food card) is always public information and must be shown if asked by a player.

Food Cards
Example Front and Back:
1 of Fish, 2 of Honey, 3 of Meat

What Bears Want

The Bears and False Bears that you see in the wilderness will want to be your friend if you offer them the largest quantity of Food, preferably of the type they want. There are three types of Food cards: Fish, Meat and Honey. Each Food type (or in trick taking terms: "suit") consists of cards ranging in amount (rank) from 1 to 7. Each Bear has a desired type of Food (or in trick-taking terms: "trump suit"):

- Grizzly Bears always want Fish.
- Polar Bears always want Meat.
- Black Bears always want Honey.

This Food preference is listed at the bottom of each Bear card. False Bears on the other hand are less picky and don't have a food preference because they are just happy to be included in the game.

Contests

Starting with the first player and continuing clockwise, players each take a turn playing a single Food card from their hand (and any Berries they may choose to add) to try and win the friendship of the Bear or False Bear in the contest. All players must play a Food card into the contest, but it may be any type of card and doesn't have to match the desired Food of the Bear (or in trick-taking lingo: you do not have to "follow suit").

Determining the Contest Winner

Food cards are ranked by a few different criteria in order to determine which is best and will attract the attention of the Bear or False Bear in the contest.

1. Most important is the food type. Matching the Bear's preferred food type is better, regardless of number (in trick-taking lingo, this is the trump suit).
   For example, a Grizzly Bear (who wants Fish) will prefer a 1 of Fish over a 7 of Meat.

2. Next, the number on the card is used to determine which card is better. Higher numbers are better. Each berry played on top of a card increases this number by one.

3. Finally, if there is a tie, turn order determines whether or not a card is better. The earliest played card wins the tie.
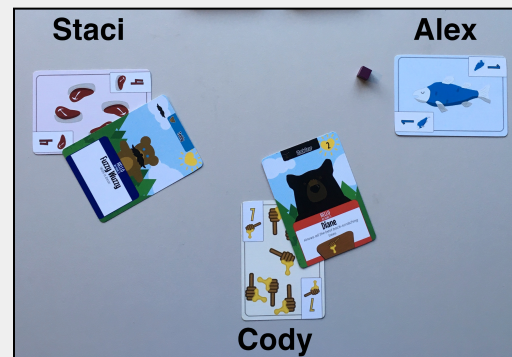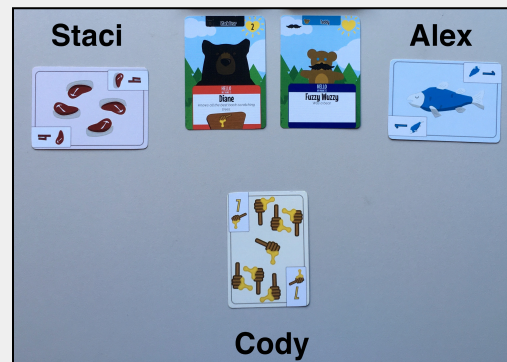

Contest Example 1

Staci, Cody, and Alex are playing a game of Bear Hugs.

The first bear to come up is a Black Bear, which wants Honey.
- Cody goes first and plays the 7 of Honey.

- Staci goes next and doesn't have any Honey so she plays the 4 of Meat.

- Alex goes last and also doesn't have any Honey, so he plays the 1 of Fish.

Outcome
- Cody wins the friendship of the Grizzly Bear— he was the only player with a card matching the desired food type. Since Cody won the Bear, he will also be the first player in the next contest.

- Staci wins the friendship of the Teddy, as he played the next highest card — even though it didn't match the desired Food type.

- Alex didn't win anything, so he collects 1 Berry.

Contest Example 2

The next Bear to come up is a Grizzly Bear, who wants Fish.

- Since Cody won the previous round, he goes first again. He plays the 2 of Fish with 2 berries on it (equivalent to the 4 of Fish).

- Staci goes next and plays the 3 of Fish.

- Alex goes last and plays the 6 of Fish.
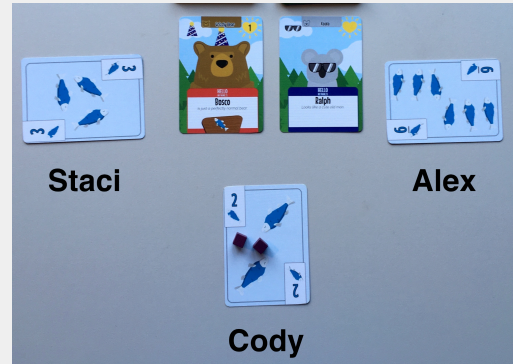
Outcome
- Alex wins the friendship of the Grizzly Bear with the highest matching card.

- Cody wins the friendship of the False Bear (the Koala) with the next highest Fish card, thanks to the Berries he played on top of his card, boosting the value.

- Staci came in last, so she collects 1 Berry.
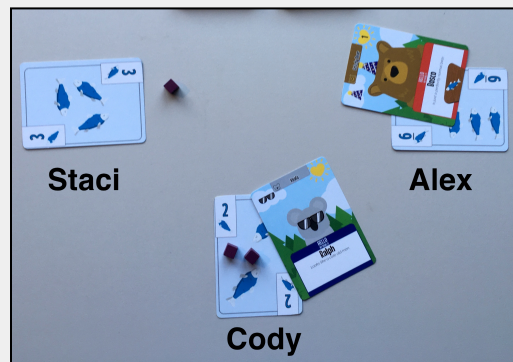
Park Rangers

Occasionally a Park Ranger or Junior Ranger might stumble out of the Wilderness. Park Rangers have a desired Food type (they act as the Bear for the round) and Junior Rangers do not (and act as the False Bear for the round). Both Park Rangers and Junior Rangers are "Ranger Cards."

All Rangers (rightly) don't want you to feed or disturb wildlife, so if you attract the attention of a Ranger by winning them in the contest, you MUST choose one Bear or False Bear you've already made friends with and cover them with the Ranger Card, removing them from the rest of the game. Ranger-covered Friends do not score points. If you attract the attention of the Ranger AND have no Friends, just place the Ranger in front of you — they won't cover any future Friends, but they still can count toward the "Ranger in Training" "shoot-the-moon" scoring bonus (see Scoring section).

Spoils of the Contest

At the end of a contest:
- The winner takes the Bear and places it face-up in front of them.
- The player in second place takes the False Bear and places it in front of them.
- All other players who did not win a friend will take 1 Berry to use in a future Contest.

Note: if the Berry Supply runs out, players do not take Berries until the Berry Supply restocks enough for all Berry-taking players in a contest to each take 1 Berry.

NEW FIRST PLAYER and Clean Up: the winner of the previous contest also becomes the new First Player for the next contest. Then place all played Food cards into the Food discard pile and return all played Berries to restock the Berry Supply.

A Table Full of Friends

You can arrange the friends you've won along the way however you'd like. Note that you can stack the cards with just the top name and icons showing to save on table space.

Ending an Expedition & Next Expedition

The 1st Expedition is over when all players have a single Food card remaining. Discard your remaining Food card. Players then "return to camp," where they stock back up on Food for the 2nd Expedition. Shuffle the entire Food deck and deal out new hands to each player (9 cards each). Players keep their remaining Berry supply from the previous round and any Friends they've won.

Just like at the start of the game, players will then choose 3 cards from their hand to pass to the player on their left.

The 2nd Expedition is over when all players have a single Food card remaining. Discard your remaining Food card.

Who starts as the First Player in Each of the 2 Expeditions?
- **1st Expedition (start of the game):** The player who last went on a hike, or went out into nature.
- **2nd Expedition:** The player who currently has the most total friends (Bears and False Bears, Rangers are not friends), with ties broken by most Berries, and if there is still a tie, most Bears

End of the Game

The game is over after 2 Expeditions. Players will then score all of their friends according to the Scoring section.

Scoring

Players score points based on your Friends, both Bears and False Bears. Berries do not score points, so make sure you remember to use them during the game! The Friends you've made along the way score you points in 4 ways:

1. **Bear Points:** The number in the top right sun icon is the points you score.

2. **Costumes:** For **each** type of costume, score points according to the number of that costume you have in your Friend group. The more the better!

Number of a Costume	1	2	3	4	5+
Points	1	2	4	6	10

3. **Ranger in Training:** If you manage to gather a number of Rangers, you gain a bonus. The number of Rangers needed and bonus depends on player count:
   - **1-3 Players:** Collect 5+ Rangers to earn +20 points
   - **4 Players:** Collect 4+ Rangers to earn +16 points

The winner is the player with the most total points. In the case of a tie, the player with the most Bear Friends is the winner (do not count False Bears). If there is still a tie, the player with the most remaining Berries is the winner. If the tie persists, the tied players share the victory and their love of Bears.

Scoring Example: Total = 13 Points

- **Bare Bear Points** = Add up the numbers in the sun icons = **6 points**
- **Costumes:** 2 Hats (+2), 3 Sunglasses (+4), 1 Mustaches (+1) = **7 points**
- **Rangers:** No points (didn't gather enough Rangers), but one Bear was covered up.

Variants

Bear Hugs includes 4 Variants: *Party*, *Extra Scoring*, *Future Vision* and *ROBO-Player*. All 4 Variants can be mixed and matched in any combination to create the game experience best for your group.

Party Variant

If your group wants a little more surprise and bluffing, Bear Hugs can be played with simultaneous food offerings in each Contest. The Party Variant plays the same as regular Bear Hugs with the following changes:

Simultaneous Food Offerings
- At the start of each Contest, all players simultaneously choose a secret Food card from their hand to play FACE-DOWN into the contest along with any Berries.

- Players then each make a statement to the group about the identity of their Food card (eg. "my card is the 5 of Fish," etc.). Your statements do not have to be true (you can bluff or say whatever you want, but you must make a Statement.

- After Player Statements are made, each player has one chance to alter their bid by adding or removing Berries from their Offering.

- Once all players have locked in their Food Offering and Berries, all players simultaneously reveal their Food card and resolve the Contest, claiming any new friends they have made or berries.

- If there is a tie, all tied players are eliminated from the round and only take a Berry as their reward.

- If all players except for one are eliminated from a round, the remaining player wins the Bear (the False Bear is discarded from the game and returned to the box).

- If all players tie and are eliminated from the round, both the Bear and False Bear in that contest are discarded and all players take a Berry.

Extra Scoring Variant

For groups who want a slightly more complicated game. The Extra Scoring Variant plays the same as normal Bear Hugs with the following changes:

Earn Pair Points: At the end of the game, in addition to Bear Points and Costume Points, score Pair points:

- **Pairs:** Each pair of the same type of Bear or False Bear scores +2 points. Each Friend can only count toward a single pair.

Note: In this mode, when organizing the friends you've made on the table, we suggest grouping cards by species type.

- In the Extra Scoring Variant, the Ranger in Training Bonus is increased:
  - **1-3 Players:** Collect 5+ Rangers to earn +25 points
  - **4 Players:** Collect 4+ Rangers to earn +20 points

Future Vision Variant

If your group wants a little more nuance and strategy, try the Future Vision Variant.
The Future Vision Variant works the same way as normal Bear Hugs with the following changes:

- After setting up the Bear and False Bear in the current contest. Flip over the top cards of each deck. These are the Friends you will be competing to win in the next contest. You can see them poking out of the Wilderness and can use this foreknowledge to make decisions when playing a Food card in the current Contest.

- Play all 9 Food cards each Expedition (there will be 9 Contests each round). In normal Bear Hugs, you play 8 out of your 9 Food cards each Expedition, discarding the last Food card in your hand at the end of an Expedition. In the Future Vision Variant, since you can see the final contestants of each Expedition beforehand, this decision of choosing your final card has more meaning and you play a final 9th Contest at the end of each Expedition.

ROBO-Player Variant

Bear Hugs can be played with fewer than three human players by using Robot Players! To play, deal out a 3 or 4-player game with Robot hands substituting for any absent players. Set up the game as normal, except:
- Deal out Robot hands face-down and then spread it out in a line without looking at the cards. This is a Robot player's hand and they are part of the turn rotation.
- Do not give the Robot any starting Berries. They will never earn (or play) Berries.
- When starting a new round, Robots do not pass cards after being dealt their hand. Any human players will still pass 3 Food cards each among themselves. If you are the only human playing against Robots, you do not pass cards and must play each round with the Food cards you are dealt.

Robot Turns
When it is a Robot's turn, they will always play the left-most card (from their perspective) that matches the Bear's desired Food. If the Robot does not have a matching Food, they will play their left-most Food (of any type).

Robots and Rangers
If the Robot alerts a Ranger, they add the ranger to their group of friends, WITHOUT covering up any previously won friends. Robots can still score the "Ranger In Training" bonus. Robots have an advantage in that they are immune to Ranger scrutiny, but have a disadvantage in that they do not earn or play Berries. AND, because they cannot love, Robots are sometimes terrible at making friends.

Card Frequencies

Bear Deck	Number of Cards		False Bear Deck	Number of Cards
Grizzly Bear	6		Koala	6
Polar Bear	6		Tardigrade	6
Black Bear	6		Teddy	6
Park Ranger	3		Junior Ranger	3

Costumes	Number in Bear Deck	Number in False Bear Deck	Total Number
Hats	3	6	9
Mustaches	3	6	9
Sunglasses	3	6	9