



Card Game Rules

Rules for games you can play with an ordinary deck of cards.



MAU MAU · CABO · GIN RUMMY · GOLF · CASINO · BEZIQUE · SCHNAPSEN ·
PRESIDENT · BURA · SCHAFKOPF · DOPPELKOPF · SKAT · RUMMY (ROMMÉ)
· BRIDGE · CRIBBAGE · BIG TWO · OH HELL! · ORBIT

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Card game basics

♠ The standard 52-card deck

A standard deck has 52 cards, split into four **suits**: ♠ spades, ♥ hearts, ♦ diamonds and ♣ clubs (in German-speaking countries these are called Pik, Herz, Karo and Kreuz). Each suit has the same 13

ranks: Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King.

- **Face cards** are the Jack, Queen and King – the cards with a picture of a person on them. In some games the Ace also counts as a face card.
- Most decks also include 2 **jokers**. They are not part of the 52 and are only used in games that call for a wild card.

♠ Playing with 32 cards

Some games (like Mau Mau) use only 32 of the 52 cards: the ranks **7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, Ace** in each of the four suits, and no jokers.

Example: to turn a 52-card deck into a 32-card deck, take out every 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and both jokers. What's left – 7 through Ace, four suits – are the 32 cards you play with.

♠ Shuffling, cutting and dealing

- **Shuffling** mixes the cards into a random order before every deal. The riffle shuffle (splitting the deck in two and interleaving the halves) and the over-hand shuffle (letting small packets fall from one hand into the other) are the two most common methods – either is fine as long as the result is random.

- **Cutting** happens after shuffling: offer the deck to the player on your right, who lifts off a packet and places it on the table; you then put the rest of the deck on top. This stops the dealer from secretly keeping a favourable card on top.
- **Dealing** means giving out the cards: the dealer deals one card at a time, face down, to each player in turn, moving **clockwise** around the table, until everyone has the number of cards the game requires. Deal to yourself last.
- After the round, the role of **dealer** normally moves one seat to the left (clockwise) so everyone gets a turn to deal.

♠ Common terms

TERM	MEANING
hand	the cards you are currently holding
draw pile / stock	the face-down pile you draw new cards from
discard pile	the pile of cards players have played or thrown away, usually face up
face up / face down	whether a card's front (up) or back (down) is showing
turn	one player's chance to act before play passes to the next player
round	one full cycle in which every player has had a turn, or one complete hand of the game
trick	the cards all players play in one round of a trick-taking game; the winner collects them
meld	a valid group of cards (e.g. three of a kind, or a run of consecutive cards) that scores points or can be laid down
deadwood	the cards left in your hand at the end of a round that don't form a meld – they usually count against you
wild card	a card that can stand in for any other card you need

♠ **Good manners**

Card games run on trust as much as on rules, so a few habits make every table more pleasant:

- Don't look at other players' cards, even by accident – hold your hand close and angled away from your neighbours.
- Keep your own hand hidden until the rules ask you to reveal it.
- Wait for your turn; don't play or comment on your cards out of turn.
- Shuffle and cut carefully, so everyone trusts the deal was fair.
- If you spot a mistake, say so – don't quietly fix it.
- Win and lose gracefully: no gloating, no sulking.

Once you're comfortable with these basics, pick a game and read its rules – every game on this site builds on what you just learned here.

Mau Mau

Match suit or rank, dodge the sevens and be the first to shout “Mau-Mau!”

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2–5	15 min	6+	easy

CARDS 32 cards (7–A) of a 52-card deck, no jokers

♥ Overview

Mau Mau is a fast shedding game: everyone tries to be the first to get rid of all their cards. You play one card at a time onto a shared pile, but it must match the card on top – either in **suit** (♠ spades, ♥ hearts, ♦ diamonds, ♣ clubs) or in **rank** (the value, such as 7, 10 or Queen). A few special cards make your opponents draw, skip their turn or change the suit.

- **Players:** 2–5 (with more players, shuffle two decks together).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck.

♥ Setup

1. **Cards:** remove the jokers and all 2s, 3s, 4s, 5s and 6s. You play with the remaining 32 cards: 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King and Ace in every suit. With 5 or more players, or for a longer game, use all 52 cards.
2. **Deal:** pick a dealer. The dealer shuffles and deals the cards one at a time, face down, clockwise, until everyone has **5 cards**. This is your **hand** – keep it hidden from the others.

3. **Draw pile:** the remaining cards go face down in the middle. This is the **draw pile** (also called the stock).
4. **Discard pile:** the dealer turns the top card of the draw pile face up next to it. This starts the **discard pile** – all played cards go on top of it.

The player to the dealer's left starts. Play then continues **clockwise** (to the left).

♥ Playing a turn

On your turn, look at the top card of the discard pile and do **one** of the following:

- **Play a card** from your hand onto the discard pile. It must match the top card in **suit or rank**. On a 9♥ you may play any heart (e.g. K♥) or any 9 (e.g. 9♣).
- **Draw one card** from the draw pile, if you cannot play or don't want to. If the drawn card fits, you may play it straight away. Otherwise your turn is over.

You never play more than one card per turn.

Example: The top card is 10♦. Anna holds 7♣, 10♠, Q♦, K♥. She may play 10♠ (same rank) or Q♦ (same suit). She plays Q♦. Ben has no diamond and no Queen, so he draws a card. It is Q♣, which fits (same rank), so he plays it at once.

♥ Special cards

CARD EFFECT

7	The next player must draw 2 cards and loses their turn – unless they play a 7 themselves. Then the penalty passes on and grows by 2: the following player must draw 4, then 6, 8 ...
8	The next player is skipped . With 2 players, you simply play again.
Jack	Wild card: may be played on any card except another Jack. You then name a suit ("I want hearts"), and the next player must play that suit (or draw).
Ace	Nothing special in the basic rules (see Variants).

Example: The top card is K ♠. Ben plays J ♥ and says "I want clubs". Carla must now play a club (any ♣ card) – or draw one card.

"Jack on Jack" is not allowed – a standard rule almost everyone plays by.

A player who has to draw because of a 7 draws the cards and their turn ends; they do not play a card that turn.

Example: Carla plays 7 ♠. Dan has 7 ♥, so he plays it – now Emil must draw 4 cards. Emil has no 7, draws 4 cards and his turn is over. Anna continues and must match the 7 ♥.

Special card as the first upcard: if the card turned up at the start is a 7, the first player draws 2 cards. If it is an 8, the first player is skipped. If it is a Jack, the first player may play any card (free choice of suit).

♥ Saying "Mau"

- When you play your second-to-last card and have **one card left**, you must say "**Mau!**".
- When you play your **last card**, you say "**Mau-Mau!**".
- If you forget to say "Mau" and another player notices before your next turn, you draw **1 penalty card**.

Common house rule: you may not play a **Jack as your last card**. Agree on this before you start.

♥ Running out of cards

If the draw pile runs out, leave the top card of the discard pile where it is. Shuffle all the other discarded cards and place them face down as the new draw pile.

♥ End of a round

The round ends as soon as a player plays their last card – that player wins the round.

♥ Scoring

For a single round no scoring is needed. For several rounds, every other player adds up the points of the cards still in their hand:

CARD	POINTS
Ace	11
King	4
Queen	3
Jack	2
10, 9, 8, 7	face value (10, 9, 8, 7)

With 52 cards, the 2–6 also count their face value.

Example: Anna goes out. Ben still holds $A\clubsuit$ and $8\heartsuit = 11 + 8 = 19$ points. Carla holds $J\diamondsuit = 2$ points. Anna scores 0.

Simpler alternative: the winner of each round gets 1 point; whoever first reaches an agreed number (e.g. 5) wins.

♥ Winning the game

Play several rounds and keep a running total. When someone reaches **100 points** (or another agreed limit), the game ends. The player with the **lowest total** wins. For a single round, the first player to go out simply wins.

♥ Tips for beginners

- Save a Jack for when you are stuck – it fits anywhere.

- Keep a 7 in your hand to defend against an opponent's 7.
- When you name a suit, choose one you hold several cards of.
- Watch players with only one or two cards left and play 7s and 8s against them.
- Get rid of Aces early if you are scoring – they are worth 11 points.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **No stacking 7s:** a 7 cannot be answered with another 7; the next player always draws exactly 2.
- **Ace = play again:** after an Ace, the next player is skipped (you play again with 2 players).
- **9 reverses direction:** after a 9, play continues counter-clockwise (or back again).
- **2 = draw 2:** in games with 52 cards, the 2 sometimes works like the 7.
- **Harsher "Mau" penalty:** forgetting "Mau" costs 2 cards instead of 1.
- **No Jack to finish:** your last card may not be a Jack (see above).
- **6 cards each:** deal 6 cards instead of 5 for a longer round.
- **Jack worth 20:** when scoring, a Jack left in hand counts 20 points.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Shedding game (Eights group)

ORIGIN: Germany, probably shortly after the Second World War (sources disagree)

ALSO KNOWN AS: Tschau Sepp (Switzerland), NeunerIn (Bavaria/Austria), Pesten (Netherlands), Prší (Czech Republic), Makao (Poland), Huit américain (France)

RELATED GAMES: Crazy Eights, Switch, Whot!, Uno

Mau-Mau is Germany's version of a worldwide family of shedding games: you match the top card of the discard pile by suit or rank and try to be the first to get rid of all your cards. Card game expert John McLeod's site pagat.com calls this the Eights group, after the American game Crazy Eights, and lists Mau Mau as its German name alongside Switch in England, Pesten in the Netherlands, Prší in the Czech Republic, Makao in Poland and Hungary and Tschau Sepp in Switzerland.

Nobody knows exactly where the game comes from. According to English Wikipedia, Mau-Mau surfaced in Germany shortly after the Second World War; its rules were first printed in 1958, and the 1961 book *Alte und neue Kartenspiele* still called it "a very recent game" that had become astonishingly popular within a few years. German Wikipedia instead says that, according to tradition, the rules date from the 1930s, while stressing that no clear first mention is known. The origin of the name is unexplained.

How Mau-Mau relates to Crazy Eights is also unclear: Crazy Eights is said to have appeared in the USA as "Eights" in the 1930s, and English Wikipedia notes it *may* have developed from Mau-Mau. The best-known commercial offshoot is Mattel's Uno; the English game Whot!, patented in 1935, was perhaps the earliest of these commercial versions.

SOURCES

- Mau-Mau (card game) – Wikipedia
- Mau-Mau (Kartenspiel) – Wikipedia (German)
- Crazy Eights – Wikipedia
- Eights group – pagat.com
- Crazy Eights – pagat.com



QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** get rid of all your cards first.
- **Cards:** 7–A (32); all 52 with 5+ players. Deal **5 each**, turn up one card.
- **Turn:** play one card matching the top card in **suit or rank** – or **draw 1** (play it at once if it fits).
- **7:** next player draws **2** – or adds a 7 (+2).
- **8:** next player is **skipped**.
- **Jack:** wild, **name a suit**. No Jack on Jack.
- One card left: say **"Mau!"** (forgot: draw 1). Last card: **"Mau-Mau!"**
- Draw pile empty: reshuffle discards, keep top card.



CHEAT SHEET

SPECIAL CARDS

CARD	EFFECT
7	Next draws 2 – or plays a 7 (4, 6, 8 ...)
8	Next player skipped
J	Wild, name a suit – not on a Jack
A	Nothing (variant: play again)

Start card 7: first player draws 2 · 8: skipped · J: free choice.

"Mau!" with one card left – forgot it: draw 1.

POINTS LEFT IN HAND

A 11 · K 4 · Q 3 · J 2 · 10–7 face value. Play to **100** – lowest total wins.



Cabo

Remember your hidden cards, swap away the high ones and call “Cabo!” when you think you’re lowest.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2–4	30 min	8+	medium

CARDS 52 cards: 52-card deck plus 2 jokers, without ♥K and ♦K

♠ Overview

Cabo is a memory game. Every player has four cards lying face down in front of them, and you only know some of them. Over the course of a round you try to swap your high cards for low ones, so that at the end your cards add up to as few points as possible. Whoever thinks they are lowest calls “Cabo!” – but if they are wrong, it costs them.

This is an adaptation of the commercial game *CABO* for a standard deck of cards. The deck described below has exactly the same card values as the original, so you can also play these rules with the original *CABO* cards.

- **Players:** 2–4 (5 is possible, but the draw pile runs out faster).
- **You need:** one 52-card deck plus 2 jokers, and paper and pen for the scores.

♠ The cards

Take a normal 52-card deck, add the two jokers and **remove the two red Kings** (♥K and ♦K). That leaves exactly 52 cards. Every card is worth points; the suit (♠ ♥ ♦ ♣) does not matter.

CARD	POINTS	ACTION (ONLY WHEN DRAWN AND DISCARDED DIRECTLY)
Joker	0	–
A	1	–
2–6	face value	–
7, 8	7, 8	Peek – look at one of your own cards
9, 10	9, 10	Spy – look at one card of another player
J, Q	11, 12	Swap – swap one of your cards with one of another player's
K (♠ ♣ only)	13	–

♠ Setup

1. Shuffle the cards. One player deals: each player gets **4 cards face down** (picture side hidden), one at a time. Don't look at them!
2. Each player arranges their four cards in a **2 × 2 grid** in front of them: two cards in a row close to you, two cards in a row behind them.
3. Now every player looks **once** at the **two cards nearest to them**, memorises them and puts them back face down in the same place. From now on you may only look at your cards when an action allows it – so remember well!
4. Put the remaining cards face down in the middle as the **draw pile**. Turn the top card face up next to it: this starts the **discard pile**.

The player to the left of the dealer starts; play then continues clockwise (to the left). The dealer changes clockwise each round.

♠ Playing a turn

On your turn you do **exactly one** of these three things:

- **A) Draw** the top card from the draw pile,
- **B) Take** the top card of the discard pile, or

- **C) Call “Cabo!”** to end the round.

A) Draw from the draw pile

Take the top card of the draw pile and look at it without showing it to anyone.

Then choose:

- **Exchange it:** Pick one of your face-down cards. Put the new card face down in its place and put the old card face up on the discard pile. You now know that card, so remember it! (No action happens.)
- **Discard it:** Put the new card straight onto the discard pile, face up. If it is a 7–Q, you **may** now use its action:
- **7 or 8 – Peek:** secretly look at one of your own cards, then put it back face down.
- **9 or 10 – Spy:** secretly look at one card of another player, then put it back face down.
- **J or Q – Swap:** swap any one of your cards with any one card of another player. Neither of you looks at the cards; each goes into the other's place, still face down.

Example: You draw a 9. It is too high to keep, so you discard it and use its action: you look at one of Ben's cards and see a Joker. Good to know – maybe you can swap it later with a Jack or Queen!

Actions only work when you draw the card from the draw pile and discard it immediately. A card you get rid of by exchanging never triggers an action.

B) Take from the discard pile

Take the top card of the discard pile. You **must** exchange it with one of your cards (exactly as above). You may not use its action. Because everyone saw this card, the other players now know one of your cards.

Exchanging several cards at once

When you exchange a card (in A or B), you may instead exchange it for **two or more** of your cards – but only if all of them have the **same value**. Turn the chosen cards face up:

- **They really match:** put all of them on the discard pile and place the new card face down where one of them was. You now have fewer cards – great!
- **They don't match:** turn them face down again in their places. As a penalty, the new card is also placed face down next to your cards. You now have one card more!

Example: You remember two 5s in your grid. You draw an A. You turn over both 5s – they match – so you discard both and put the A in their place. You now have three cards, and 9 points fewer.

C) Call “Cabo!”

If you think you have the lowest total, call “**Cabo!**” at the **start** of your turn instead of drawing. Your turn is over.

- Every other player now takes **exactly one more turn**.
- Your cards are protected: nobody may swap with your cards any more (but they may still spy on them).
- Then all players turn their cards face up and the round is scored.

♠ End of a round

A round ends when

- someone called “Cabo!” and everyone else has had their last turn, or
- the draw pile runs out: the round ends **immediately** and is scored normally (there is no Cabo penalty, since nobody called).

♠ Scoring

Everyone turns up their cards and adds up their points.

- The player with the **lowest total** scores **0** points.
- Every other player scores **their total**.
- **Cabo penalty:** if the player who called Cabo does *not* have the strictly lowest total (someone else has the same or less), the caller scores their total **+10**. The player with the lowest total scores 0 as usual.
- **Kamikaze:** a player who ends the round with exactly **two Queens and two Kings** ($12 + 12 + 13 + 13 = 50$) scores **0**, and **every other player scores 50**.

Write down each player's score and keep a running total.

Example: Anna calls “Cabo!”. Ben and Clara each take one more turn, then everyone reveals: Anna: Joker, A, 3 = **4** · Ben: 2, 5, 4, 6 = **17** · Clara: 8, A, 2, 3 = **14**. Anna is lowest and scores 0; Ben writes down 17, Clara 14.

Next round Anna calls again with 6 points, but Ben also has 6. Anna is not strictly lowest, so she scores $6 + 10 = \mathbf{16}$. Ben has the lowest total and scores 0; Clara scores her total.

♠ Winning the game

Play several rounds. As soon as a player's running total goes **over 100**, the game ends after that round. The player with the **lowest** running total wins.

Lucky 100: if a player's running total reaches **exactly 100**, it is reset to **50**. This can happen only once per player per game.

♠ Tips for beginners

- Your memory is your most important tool. Say your known cards quietly to yourself every few turns.
- Use Peek (7, 8) early in the round to learn your unknown cards.
- Watch what the others take from the discard pile – then you know some of their cards, and whether a Swap would be worth it.

- Call “Cabo!” when you are fairly sure you have about 5 points or less. Waiting too long gives the others time to catch up.
- Jokers and black Kings are the extremes: keep a Joker, get rid of a King (unless you're going for Kamikaze!).

♠ Variants

These are optional house rules – agree on them before you start.

- **No early Cabo:** nobody may call “Cabo!” before every player has had at least one full turn.
- **No lucky 100:** play without the rule that resets exactly 100 to 50.
- **Six cards:** each player gets 6 cards in a 2×3 grid (still looking at the two nearest cards at the start). Rounds are longer and harder to remember.

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Golf family (memory, draw-and-swap)

ORIGIN: Commercial game from 2010, designed by Melissa Limes and Mandy Henning

ALSO KNOWN AS: Cambio, Pablo, Cactus (folk versions with a standard deck)

RELATED GAMES: Golf, Rat-a-Tat Cat, Skyjo, Kombio

CABO is a commercial card game by Melissa Limes and Mandy Henning, first published in 2010. According to Trey Hunner, Melissa Limes founded Eventide Games LLC, registered Cabo as a trademark and registered a copyright for the rules. Bezier Games published a second edition in April 2019 with new artwork, modified rules and a scorepad, followed by a werewolf-themed spin-off, *Silver*. According to Wikipedia, a third edition by Shareful Games appeared in 2025; in German-speaking countries the game is published by Smiling Monster Games.

Like many modern memory card games, Cabo builds on the traditional game Golf: every player has a few face-down cards, knows only some of them, and tries

to end the round with the lowest total. pagat.com groups Cabo with the four-card Golf variants in which certain "power cards" let you peek at or swap cards; these folk games go by names such as Cambio, Pablo, Cactus or Dacz. It is not clear from the sources whether these folk versions came before the commercial game or grew out of it. Similar published games are Rat-a-Tat Cat (1995), Skyjo (2015) and Kombio (2019).

The rules on this site are an adaptation of CABO for a standard 52-card deck plus two jokers, without the two red Kings. The card values are the same as in the original, so the original CABO cards can be used as well.

SOURCES

- Cabo (game) – Wikipedia
- Golf – pagat.com
- The Cabo card game – Trey Hunner
- Cabo – Smiling Monster Games
- Skyjo – Wikipedia (German)

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♠

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** lowest card total at round end.
- **Setup:** 4 cards face down in a 2×2 grid; peek once at your nearest two. Flip one card as discard pile.
- **Turn – do one:**
- **Draw:** exchange it with a card, or discard it and use its **action** (7/8 peek, 9/10 spy, J/Q blind swap).
- **Take** the top discard and exchange it.
- **Call “Cabo!”** – everyone else gets one more turn.
- Exchange **several equal cards** at once; mismatch = penalty card.
- Lowest scores **0**; wrong Cabo **+10**.
- Over **100** ends the game.

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CHEAT SHEET

CARD	POINTS	ACTION
Joker	0	–
A–6	1–6	–
7, 8	7, 8	Peek own card
9, 10	9, 10	Spy on another's card
J, Q	11, 12	Swap blind with another
K ♠ ♣	13	–

Actions only when drawn and discarded directly. Deck: no ♥ K ♦ K.

- **Lowest total:** 0 · others: their total
- **Wrong Cabo** (tie or not lowest): total **+10**
- **Kamikaze** (Q Q K K): you 0, all others **50**
- Draw pile empty: round ends, no penalty
- **Exactly 100 → 50** (once) · **over 100:** game ends, lowest wins

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Gin Rummy

Build sets and runs, keep your leftover points low and knock before your opponent does.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2	45 min	10+	medium
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers			

♥ Overview

Gin Rummy is a classic card game for two. You try to arrange the cards in your hand into matching groups called **melds**. The cards you cannot fit into a meld are called **deadwood** and count against you. Once your deadwood is small enough, you end the hand by **knocking** – and if your opponent is left with more deadwood than you, you score the difference. Several hands are played until one player reaches 100 points.

- **Players:** exactly 2.
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck without jokers, and paper and pencil for scoring.

♥ Card order and values

The cards rank from low to high: **A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K**. The Ace is always the **lowest** card – it can only follow the 2 from below (A-2-3), never the King (Q-K-A is not allowed).

For counting deadwood, each card has a point value:

CARD	POINTS
K, Q, J	10
10 to 2	face value (10, 9 ... 2)
A	1

♥ Melds and deadwood

A **meld** is a group of cards that belong together. There are two kinds:

- **Set:** 3 or 4 cards of the **same rank**, e.g. 8♠ 8♥ 8♣ or K♠ K♥ K♦ K♣.
- **Run:** 3 or more cards of the **same suit in a row**, e.g. 4♥ 5♥ 6♥ or 9♣ 10♣ J♣ Q♣ K♣. A-2-3 of one suit is a run; Q-K-A is not.

Each card can belong to **only one** meld at a time. If you hold 7♠ 7♥ 7♦ 8♦ 9♦, you can use the 7♦ either in the set of sevens or in the diamond run – not in both.

Deadwood is every card in your hand that is not part of a meld. Its **deadwood count** is the sum of the point values of those cards.

Example: You hold 3♣ 3♦ 3♥ · 9♠ 10♠ J♠ · K♥ · 5♦ · 2♣ · A♠. The three 3s form a set, 9♠ 10♠ J♠ form a run. Your deadwood is K♥, 5♦, 2♣ and A♠: $10 + 5 + 2 + 1 = 18$ points.

Important: during play you keep all your cards in your hand. Melds are only shown at the very end of a hand.

♥ Setup

1. **First dealer:** each player draws a card from the shuffled deck; the lower card deals first (or decide at random). After that, the **loser of each hand deals** the next one.

2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles and deals **10 cards** to each player, face down, one at a time, alternating, starting with the opponent. This is your **hand** – keep it hidden.
3. **Upcard:** the dealer turns the next card face up in the middle. This starts the **discard pile**.
4. **Stock:** the rest of the cards go face down next to it as the **stock** (draw pile).

♥ The first turn

The first turn works a little differently, because of the face-up card (the **upcard**):

1. The **non-dealer** may take the upcard. If they do, they then discard a card and play continues normally with the dealer.
2. If the non-dealer does not want it, the **dealer** may take it (and then discards).
3. If both refuse, the **non-dealer** draws the top card of the stock and discards. From then on, play proceeds normally.

♥ Playing a turn

Players take turns. On your turn:

1. **Draw** one card: either the top card of the **stock** (unseen) or the top card of the **discard pile** (face up).
2. **Discard** one card face up onto the discard pile. You now have 10 cards again.

You may **not** discard the card you just took from the discard pile in the same turn. (A card drawn from the stock may be discarded straight away.)

Instead of discarding normally, you may **knock** (see below) if your hand is good enough.

Example: The top discard is 7♣. You hold 5♣ 6♣ and would like a run, so you take the 7♣. Now you must discard another card – for instance your K♦, a lonely high card.

♥ Knocking

After drawing, you may end the hand by **knocking** if, after your discard, your deadwood count is **10 or less**. You don't have to knock – you can keep playing to improve your hand.

To knock:

1. Discard one card **face down** onto the discard pile (this shows you are knocking).
2. Lay your 10 remaining cards face up, sorted into your melds and your deadwood.

Gin: if you knock with **no deadwood at all** – all 10 cards are in melds – you have **gone gin**. This earns a bonus.

Big Gin (common rule): if, right after drawing, all **11** cards form melds, you may lay them all down without discarding. This is **Big Gin** and earns an even bigger bonus.

♥ The opponent's reply and laying off

After a knock, the opponent (the **defender**) lays out their hand too, sorted into melds and deadwood.

Then the defender may **lay off**: add deadwood cards to the **knocker's** melds, which removes those cards from the defender's deadwood. For example, a 4th card of a set, or a card that extends a run at either end.

- The defender **cannot** lay off if the knocker went **gin**.
- The **knocker never lays off** onto the defender's melds.

Example: Anna knocks with $7\spadesuit\ 8\spadesuit\ 9\spadesuit \cdot K\clubsuit\ K\heartsuit\ K\diamondsuit\ K\spadesuit$ and deadwood $A\diamondsuit\ 2\clubsuit\ 4\clubsuit$ ($1 + 2 + 4 = 7$). Ben shows $5\heartsuit\ 6\heartsuit\ 7\heartsuit \cdot Q\spadesuit\ Q\diamondsuit\ Q\clubsuit$ and deadwood $10\spadesuit\ 2\diamondsuit\ 4\diamondsuit\ J\heartsuit$. He lays off $10\spadesuit$ on Anna's spade run ($7\spadesuit\ 8\spadesuit\ 9\spadesuit\ 10\spadesuit$). His remaining deadwood is $2\diamondsuit\ 4\diamondsuit\ J\heartsuit = 2 + 4 + 10 = 16$.

♥ Scoring a hand

Compare the two deadwood counts (after laying off):

SITUATION	WHO SCORES	POINTS
Knocker has less deadwood	Knocker	difference
Knocker went gin	Knocker	25 + defender's deadwood
Big Gin (common rule)	Knocker	31 + defender's deadwood
Undercut: defender's deadwood equal or lower (no gin)	Defender	difference + 25

Example (continued): Anna has 7, Ben has 16. Anna scores $16 - 7 = 9$ points. Had Ben ended with only 6 deadwood, he would have **undercut** her: $7 - 6 = 1$, plus 25 = **26 points** for Ben. A tie also counts as an undercut: with 7 against 7, Ben scores $0 + 25 = 25$.

Write down each player's points after every hand and keep a running total. Also note **how many hands** each player has won – you need this at the end.

Draw: if only **2 cards** are left in the stock and the player who drew the third-to-last card discards without knocking, the hand ends as a **draw**. Nobody scores, and the same dealer deals again.

♥ Winning the game

The game ends as soon as a player reaches **100 points** or more. Then add the bonuses:

- **Game bonus:** the winner gets **100** points.
- **Line (box) bonus:** each player gets **25** points for every hand they won.
- **Shutout:** if the loser did not win a single hand, the winner's total (including bonuses) is **doubled**.

The winner's final advantage is their total minus the loser's total – handy if you play for stakes or keep a longer record.

Example: Anna reaches 104 points and won 5 hands. Ben has 62 points and won 3 hands. Anna: $104 + 100 \text{ (game)} + 5 \times 25 = \mathbf{329}$. Ben: $62 + 3 \times 25 = \mathbf{137}$. Anna wins by $329 - 137 = \mathbf{192 \text{ points}}$.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Watch the discard pile.** What your opponent picks up tells you what they collect; what they throw away tells you what they don't need.
- **Get rid of high deadwood early.** Kings, Queens and Jacks that don't fit anything cost 10 points each if your opponent knocks.
- **Knock early.** Once you can knock, it is usually better to do so than to wait for gin – every turn gives your opponent a chance to catch up.
- **Don't feed your opponent.** Avoid discarding cards that obviously fit what they have taken, e.g. another 9 after they picked up a 9.
- **Keep flexible cards.** A card that could join a set or a run (like 7♦ next to 7♠, 7♥ and 8♦) improves your chances.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Oklahoma Gin:** the value of the first upcard sets the knock limit for that hand (e.g. a 6 means you need 6 or less to knock; a picture card means 10; an Ace means you must go gin). If the upcard is a **spade**, all scores for that hand are **doubled**.
- **Older bonuses:** gin bonus **20** instead of 25, undercut bonus **10** instead of 25.
- **Straight Gin:** knocking is not allowed – you can only end the hand by going gin.
- **Longer game:** play to **150** or **250** points instead of 100.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Rummy game (draw-and-discard, melding)

ORIGIN: USA (New York), early 20th century – traditionally dated 1909 or around 1911

ALSO KNOWN AS: Gin, Gin Poker, Poker Gin

RELATED GAMES: Rummy, Conquian, Knock Rummy, Oklahoma Gin, Hollywood Gin, Canasta, Rommé

According to the story most sources repeat, Gin Rummy was invented by Elwood T. Baker of the Knickerbocker Whist Club in New York – in 1909 according to Wikipedia, "around 1911" according to pagat.com – and his son Graham named it "Gin" after the drink, as a pun on "Rum". The card-game historian David Parlett points out that this account goes back to Morehead and Mott-Smith (1952), who did not say where they got it from. He also notes that early Hoyle editions (1913) called the game "Gin Poker" or "Poker Gin", so whether Baker really named it "Gin Rummy" is uncertain. Baker's likely contribution was the rule that you may only lay down once you can go out with 10 or fewer points of deadwood; a game called Rum or Knock Rummy was already being played before that.

Rummy games themselves appeared in the early 20th century and are probably derived from the Mexican game Conquian. Another theory links rummy to Chinese draw-and-discard games related to Mahjong; Parlett suggests both lines share a common origin.

Gin stayed a New York game for years until, around 1941, it became a craze in Hollywood. Gambling bonuses were added, as well as a way of playing three games at once, known as Hollywood Gin. From there it spread across the USA and the world and became one of the most popular two-player card games. Oklahoma Gin, where the first upcard sets the knock limit, is its best-known variant.

SOURCES

- Gin Rummy – pagat.com

- Rummy games – pagat.com
- Gin Rummy history – David Parlett
- Gin rummy – Wikipedia
- Rummy – Wikipedia

3



QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** form **sets** (3–4 of a rank) and **runs** (3+ in suit, A low); keep **deadwood** low.
- **Deal:** 10 cards each, one upcard, rest is the stock.
- **First turn:** non-dealer, then dealer may take the upcard; else non-dealer draws from stock.
- **Turn:** draw from **stock or discards**, then discard one (not the card just taken).
- **Knock** with deadwood ≤ 10 : discard face down, show melds. **Gin** = 0 deadwood.
- Defender **lays off** onto knocker's melds (not after gin).
- Lower deadwood scores the difference. Game to **100**.



3



CHEAT SHEET

HAND SCORES

RESULT	POINTS
Knock, less deadwood	difference
Gin (no lay-off)	25 + opponent's deadwood
Big Gin (11 cards)	31 + opponent's deadwood
Undercut (defender $\leq$ knocker)	difference + 25 to defender

GAME END

- Deadwood: **J Q K = 10**, **A = 1**, others face value.
- Knock limit: **10**. Stock down to **2 cards** → draw, same dealer.
- At **100**: winner +**100**, each player +**25** per hand won.
- **Shutout** (loser won no hand): winner's total doubled.



Golf

Six hidden cards, nine holes – pair up your columns and play the lowest round of the day.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2–8	30 min	8+	easy
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers (two decks for 5–8 players)			

♠ Overview

Golf is a simple game of swapping cards. Everyone has a small grid of six cards in front of them, most of them hidden at first. On your turn you take one new card and swap it for one of yours, trying to end up with cards worth as few points as possible. Like in real golf, the **lowest score wins**.

A game lasts **9 rounds**, called **holes**.

- **Players:** 2–8.
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck without jokers for 2–4 players; for 5–8 players, shuffle two decks together. You also need paper and pencil to write down the scores.

♠ Setup

1. **Dealer:** pick one player to be the **dealer** – the person who shuffles and hands out the cards.
2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles and deals the cards one at a time, face down (picture side hidden), clockwise, until everyone has **6 cards**.

3. **Your grid:** without looking at them, lay your 6 cards face down in front of you in **2 rows of 3**. One card sits above another, so your grid has 3 **columns** of 2 cards each. Your cards stay in this grid for the whole round – you never hold them in your hand.
4. **Stock:** the remaining cards go face down in the middle. This is the **stock** (the draw pile).
5. **Discard pile:** the dealer turns the top card of the stock face up next to it. This starts the **discard pile**.
6. **Peek:** each player turns **2 of their own cards face up**, whichever two they like. Everyone can now see these cards.

A grid at the start might look like this ("□" is a face-down card):

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3
8♣	□	□
□	K♥	□

♠ Playing a turn

The player to the dealer's left starts. Play then continues **clockwise** (to the left).
On your turn:

1. Take one card – either

- the **top card of the discard pile** (you can see what it is), or
- the **top card of the stock** (a surprise – look at it without showing it yet).

2. Use it or throw it away:

- **Replace** one of your 6 cards with it – face-up or face-down, it doesn't matter. The card you remove goes **face up on the discard pile**. The new card is placed **face up** in the empty spot. If the card you remove was face down, you see it for the first time as you discard it.
- **Or discard it:** if you drew from the **stock**, you may simply put the card face up on the discard pile without using it.

A card taken from the **discard pile must always be used** to replace one of your cards – you may not take it and put it straight back.

Your turn is then over. Once a card is face up in your grid, it stays face up.

Example: *The discard pile shows a 3 ♦. Anna has a face-up 9 ♠ in her grid, so she takes the 3 ♦, puts it where the 9 ♠ was, and discards the 9 ♠. Ben doesn't want the 9 ♠, so he draws from the stock: a Q ♣ (worth 10). Too high – he discards it without using it.*

♠ End of a round

As soon as any player has **all 6 cards face up**, the end is near: **every other player gets exactly one more turn**. Then the round (the "hole") ends.

Now all players turn their remaining face-down cards face up, and everyone counts their score.

If the stock runs out during a round, leave the top discard where it is, shuffle the rest of the discard pile and place it face down as the new stock.

♠ Scoring

Each card is worth:

CARD	POINTS
Ace	1
2	−2 (minus two)
3 to 10	face value
Jack, Queen	10
King	0

Pairs: if both cards in a **column** have the **same rank** (for example two 7s, or two Queens), that column scores 0, no matter what the cards are worth. This even applies to two 2s: they cancel each other out to 0 instead of giving −4.

Add up your three columns – that is your score for the hole. Scores can be negative.

Example: *At the end of a hole, Carla's grid looks like this:*

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3
7 ♠	K ♥	5 ♦
7 ♣	2 ♠	Q ♦

- Column 1: two 7s form a pair → 0
- Column 2: King (0) + 2 (-2) → -2
- Column 3: 5 + Queen (10) → 15

Carla scores $0 - 2 + 15 = 13$ points for this hole.

Write down everyone's score after each hole.

♠ Winning the game

Play **9 holes**. After each hole, the player to the dealer's left becomes the new dealer. After the ninth hole, add up each player's scores. The player with the **lowest total** wins.

♠ Tips for beginners

- **Build pairs.** A pair in a column wipes out the column, so a pair of Queens is as good as two Kings.
- **Keep your Kings and 2s** – they are the best cards in the game.
- **Don't reveal high cards.** Swap a hidden card only for a low card; turning up a card by accident can show a 10 you're then stuck with.
- **Watch your neighbour.** Before discarding, check whether the player after you can use that card to make a pair.
- **Don't rush to finish.** Turning up your last card ends the hole – if your score is still high, the others get one more turn to improve and you may lose badly.

♠ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Flip after discarding:** when you discard a card drawn from the stock, you may (or, at some tables, must) turn one of your face-down cards face up.
- **Jokers:** add the jokers to the deck. Each is worth –2 (or –5 at some tables).
- **4-card Golf:** each player has a 2×2 grid. Quicker and more luck-based.
- **9-card Golf:** each player has a 3×3 grid; a column scores 0 only if all **three** cards have the same rank.
- **18 holes:** play a full course for a longer game.
- **Four of a kind bonus:** at some tables, four cards of the same rank in two neighbouring columns score **–20** instead of 0.
- **Harsher court cards:** Jack = 11 and Queen = 12, so only Kings are "free".

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Draw-and-discard game (reduce the value of a card layout)

ORIGIN: unknown; widespread in North America and Britain

ALSO KNOWN AS: Polish Polka, Polish Poker; Turtle (4 cards), Hara Kiri (6 cards), Crazy Nines (9 cards)

RELATED GAMES: Cambio / Cabo, Rat-a-Tat Cat, Skyjo, 4-, 8-, 9- and 10-card Golf

Golf belongs to a small group of draw-and-discard games in which each player has a rectangular layout of cards, most of them face down at first, and tries to bring its point value as low as possible by drawing and swapping. The name comes from the scoring: as in golf, the lowest total wins, and a game usually lasts nine deals, or "holes".

Where and when the game was invented is not documented. According to pagat.com it is quite widespread in North America, Britain and perhaps other English-speaking countries, yet seldom appears in card-game books – it has

spread mainly by word of mouth, which also explains its many names. The 6-card game is the most common; the 4-card game is known to some players as Turtle, the 6-card game as Hara Kiri and the 9-card game as Crazy Nines. Golf patience (solitaire) is an unrelated game.

Golf has inspired several relatives. Cambio (also called Cabo, Cactus or Pablo) adds power cards that let you peek at or swap cards; John McLeod of pagat.com suspects it is of Spanish origin. It was published commercially as Cabo in 2010 and resembles Rat-a-Tat Cat (1996). The German game Skyjo (Alexander Bernhardt, 2015) is also based on Golf, using a layout of 12 cards.

SOURCES

- Golf – pagat.com
- Golf (card game) – Wikipedia
- Skyjo – Wikipedia (German)

4
♣

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** lowest score after **9 holes** (rounds).
- **Deal 6** face down in **2 rows of 3**, unseen. Flip **2** face up.
- Rest = **stock**; top card turned up = **discard pile**.
- **Turn:** take the top **discard** or **stock** card.
- **Swap** it for any of your 6 cards (new card face up, old one discarded) – or, if from the stock, **discard** it.
- A discard you take **must** be swapped in.
- **All 6 face up** → everyone else gets **one last turn**; reveal all and score.
- Dealer passes left.

♣
44
♣

CHEAT SHEET

CARD VALUES

CARD	POINTS
A	1
2	-2
3–10	face value
J, Q	10
K	0
Pair in a column	0 (two 2s too)

END

- Someone has **all 6 face up** → each other player gets **one more turn**, then reveal and score.
- **9 holes**, dealer rotates left. **Lowest total wins.**

♣
4

Casino

Capture cards from the table by pairing and adding, build clever combinations and grab the Big Casino before your opponent does.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2–4	30 min	8+	medium
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers			

♥ Overview

Casino is a classic fishing game: instead of playing cards into tricks, you use the cards in your hand to **capture** cards lying face up on the table. You capture by matching a card of the same rank, or by adding table cards up to the value of the card you play. At the end of each round you score points for capturing the most cards, the most spades, the aces and two special cards: the **Big Casino** (10 ♦) and the **Little Casino** (2 ♠). The first player to reach 21 points wins.

- **Players:** 2 (3 or 4 are possible, see *Variants*).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck without jokers, and paper and pencil for scoring.

♥ Card values

For capturing, number cards count their value:

CARD	VALUE
A	1
2 to 10	face value
J, Q, K	no value

Jacks, Queens and Kings (the **face cards**) have no number value. They can only be captured by pairing – a King takes a King, a Queen takes a Queen – and can never be part of a sum or a build.

♥ Setup

1. **First dealer:** each player cuts or draws a card; the lower card deals first. After that, the deal alternates between rounds.
2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles and deals **2 cards** face down to the opponent, **2 cards face up** to the table, then **2 cards** face down to themselves. Repeat once more, so each player has **4 cards** in hand and **4 cards** lie face up in the middle.
3. The rest of the deck stays face down next to the dealer. It is only used for dealing.

Each player keeps a face-down **pile** in front of them for the cards they capture.

♥ Playing a turn

The non-dealer starts, then you take turns. On your turn you play **exactly one card** from your hand and do one of three things with it: **capture**, **build** or **trail**.

Capture

You **capture** (take) table cards with the card you play:

- **Pairing:** your card takes table cards of the **same rank**. A number card takes **all** table cards of its rank (a 5 takes every 5 on the table). A face card takes only **one** card of its rank.
- **Summing:** a number card takes a **group** of table cards whose values add up to its value (a 9 takes 5 + 4, or 6 + 2 + 1).

You may capture several things at once with the same card, as long as every group matches on its own. Put the captured cards together with the card you played face down on your pile.

Example: *The table shows $9\clubsuit \cdot 5\heartsuit \cdot 4\diamondsuit \cdot 6\spadesuit \cdot 2\clubsuit \cdot A\heartsuit \cdot K\spadesuit$. You play $9\heartsuit$. You may take $9\clubsuit$ (pair), $5\heartsuit + 4\diamondsuit$ (sum 9) and $6\spadesuit + 2\clubsuit + A\heartsuit$ (sum 9) all together – seven cards in one go. Only the $K\spadesuit$ stays on the table.*

Build

A **build** prepares a capture for your next turn. You play a card from your hand onto one or more table cards so that they add up to a total, and you announce it out loud. You may only build if you hold another card of that value to capture it with later.

Example: *The table shows $4\clubsuit$ and $K\heartsuit$. You hold $3\spadesuit$ and $7\diamondsuit$. You put the $3\spadesuit$ on the $4\clubsuit$ and say “**building seven**”. On your next turn you capture the build ($4\clubsuit + 3\spadesuit$) with your $7\diamondsuit$.*

A build stays together as one unit: it can only be captured as a whole, by a card of its total.

A **multiple build** is a pile of several groups that each make the same total. It is announced like “building eights”.

Example: *The table shows $3\heartsuit$ and $8\clubsuit$. You hold $5\spadesuit$ and $8\diamondsuit$. You put the $5\spadesuit$ on the $3\heartsuit$ ($5 + 3 = 8$) and add the $8\clubsuit$ to the same pile: “**building eights**”. Your $8\diamondsuit$ will capture all three cards.*

What your opponent can do with your build:

- **Capture it** with a card of the build's total. Builds are never safe!
- **Increase it** (single builds only): add a card from hand to raise the total, if they hold a card of the new total. The build now belongs to them. A multiple build can never be increased.

Example (continued): You built seven (4 ♣ + 3 ♠). If your opponent holds a 7, they simply take it. If instead they hold 2 ♥ and 9 ♣, they can add the 2 ♥ and say “**building nine**” – now it is their build, and your 7 ♦ can no longer take it.

Owning a build: as long as you own a build on the table, you **may not trail**. On your next turn you must capture it or build further (another capture or build elsewhere is also allowed, but sooner or later your build must be taken).

Trail

If you cannot or do not want to capture or build, you **trail**: lay your card face up on the table. You may not trail while you own a build.

Sweep

If your capture takes **every** card on the table, it is a **sweep**, worth 1 extra point. Mark it by placing one of the captured cards face up in your pile. Your opponent must then trail, since there is nothing left to take.

(Common rule: the very last capture of the round does not count as a sweep.)

♥ Later deals

When both players have played all four cards, the dealer deals **4 more cards** to each player, 2 at a time. **No new cards** go to the table. With two players there are **6 deals** in all, which uses up the whole deck. On the final one, the dealer announces “**last deal**”.

♥ End of a round

After the last card of the last deal is played, any cards still on the table go to the player who made the **last capture**. Then both players count their piles.

♥ Scoring

Each round is worth 11 points, plus any sweeps:

ITEM	POINTS
Most cards (27 or more)	3
Most spades (7 or more)	1
Big Casino (10 ♦)	2
Little Casino (2 ♠)	1
Each Ace	1
Each sweep	1

If you tie for most cards (26 each), **nobody** scores those 3 points. (With 3 or 4 players spades can tie too – then nobody scores that point either.)

Example: At the end of a round Anna has 30 cards, including 6 spades, the 10 ♦, three Aces and 1 sweep. Ben has 22 cards, including 7 spades, the 2 ♠, one Ace and 2 sweeps. Anna: most cards 3 + Big Casino 2 + Aces 3 + sweep 1 = **9 points**. Ben: most spades 1 + Little Casino 1 + Ace 1 + sweeps 2 = **5 points**. Together that is 11 + 3 sweeps = 14, as it should be.

♥ Winning the game

Play rounds until a player reaches **21 points**. If both could reach 21 in the same round, count the items in this order: **cards, spades, Big Casino, Little Casino, Aces, sweeps**. Whoever reaches 21 first in that count wins.

Simpler alternative: play a fixed number of rounds (e.g. 6) and the higher total wins.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Watch the valuable cards.** Keep track of where the 10 ♦, the 2 ♠, the Aces and the spades are.
- **Count the cards.** Know how many cards are left so that the last capture – and the leftover table cards – is yours.

- **Don't trail high-value cards.** A trailed Ace, 10 ♦ or 2 ♠ is a gift to your opponent.
- **Build to protect.** A build ties table cards together; a multiple build cannot even be increased.
- **Avoid leaving easy sums.** If the table adds up to 10 or less, your opponent may sweep it.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **3 players:** deal 4 cards to each player and 4 to the table, as usual; there are **4 deals** in all. Everyone plays for themselves.
- **4 players:** play in two partnerships, partners sitting opposite. Deal 4 each and 4 to the table; there are **3 deals**. Partners combine their piles for scoring.
- **Royal Casino:** face cards get values too – **J = 11, Q = 12, K = 13** – and an **Ace = 1 or 14**. Face cards can then capture sums and be used in builds.
- **Spade Casino:** instead of 1 point for most spades, every spade counts **1 point**, and the **J ♠ 2 points**. Play to 61.
- **Capturing face cards:** a face card captures **all** cards of its rank on the table (up to three), not just one.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Fishing game (capturing cards from a face-up layout)

ORIGIN: England, first recorded 1792

ALSO KNOWN AS: Cassino

RELATED GAMES: Royal Casino, Spade Casino, Nordic Casino, Krypkasino, Zwickern, Tablanette, Scopa, Xeri, Basra, Pasur

Casino belongs to the fishing games: each player in turn plays a card from hand and, if it matches cards in the face-up layout on the table, captures them. The

family is found all over the world – Scopa in Italy, Xeri in Greece, Basra and Pasur in the Middle East and Iran, and flower-card games such as Go Stop in Korea. According to Wikipedia, Casino is the only fishing game to have really penetrated the English-speaking world.

The game is often said to come from Italy, but research by the card-game historian Franco Pratesi found no evidence of it ever being played there. It first appears in London in 1792, in Robert Long's *Short Rules for Playing the Game of Cassino*, and was evidently a fashionable craze: in Frederick Reynolds' 1797 comedy *Cheap Living* a character sighs "I do long for a game of Cassino". Rules were published in Vienna and Prague as early as 1795. Sources disagree about the spelling: according to pagat.com the earliest sources wrote *Casino* and the double "s" came later, while Wikipedia says the 1792 rules already used *Cassino*.

Early Casino had no building; that was added to the English rules in the 19th century. While the game faded in England and Germany in the late 19th century, it became fashionable in America, where variants such as Royal Casino and Spade Casino appeared – until Gin Rummy eclipsed it. Today it survives in regional forms, for example as Nordic Casino in Sweden, Norway and Finland, and in southern Africa.

SOURCES

- Casino – pagat.com
- Fishing games – pagat.com
- Casino (card game) – Wikipedia

5



QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** capture table cards; score for cards, spades, Aces, 10 and 2 . Game to **21**.
- **Deal:** 4 each + 4 face up on the table, 2 at a time. Later: 4 more each, none to the table.
- **Turn:** play one card to **capture** (same rank, or table cards **summing** to it), **build** a total you can take next turn, or **trail** it face up.
- Opponent may take or **increase** your build. With a build you may not trail.
- Clearing the table = **sweep**.
- Last capturer takes the leftover table cards.



5

5



CHEAT SHEET

ROUND SCORING

ITEM	POINTS
Most cards (27+)	3
Most spades (7+)	1
Big Casino 10	2
Little Casino 2	1
Each Ace	1
Each sweep	1

REMINDERS

- **A = 1**, 2–10 face value. **J Q K** only pair, one at a time.
- Ties score nothing. Multiple builds can't be increased.
- At **21**: count cards, spades, 10 , 2 , Aces, sweeps in that order.



5

Bezique

Win tricks, lay out marriages and sequences, and hunt for the Queen of Spades and Jack of Diamonds – twice, for a 500-point double bezique.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2	60 min	10+	tricky

CARDS 2 × 52 cards: 64 cards A–7 (remove 2–6 and jokers)

♠ Overview

Bezique is a classic trick-taking game for two, played with a double deck. You score points in two ways: by winning **Aces and 10s** in tricks, and above all by showing certain card combinations called **melds** – for example a King and Queen of the same suit, or the famous **bezique**: the Queen of Spades together with the Jack of Diamonds. Several hands are played until one player reaches 1000 points.

- **Players:** exactly 2.
- **You need:** two standard 52-card decks (same size, ideally the same back design) and paper and pen – or counters – for scoring. Scores run into the hundreds, so keep a running total after every hand.

♠ The cards

From **each** deck, take out all 2s, 3s, 4s, 5s and 6s and the jokers. Shuffle the remaining cards of both decks together. This gives **64 cards**: A, 10, K, Q, J, 9, 8, 7 in each of the four suits – and **every card exists twice**.

In every suit the cards rank from high to low:

A – 10 – K – Q – J – 9 – 8 – 7

Note the unusual position of the **10**: it ranks **below the Ace but above the King**.

Aces and 10s are called **brisques**. Each brisque you win in a trick is worth **10 points** at the end of the hand. There are 16 brisques in the deck, so 160 points in total.

♠ Setup

1. **First dealer**: each player cuts the deck; the lower card deals first (or decide at random). After that, the **deal alternates** from hand to hand.
2. **Deal**: the dealer shuffles and deals **8 cards** to each player, face down, in packets of **3, then 2, then 3**, starting with the opponent. These cards are your **hand** – keep them hidden.
3. **Trump**: the dealer turns the next card face up. Its suit is **trump** for this hand. Trump is the strongest suit: any trump card beats any card of another suit. If the turned-up card is a **7**, the dealer scores **10 points** straight away.
4. **Stock**: the rest of the cards go face down as the **stock** (draw pile). Slide the turned-up trump card half underneath it, face up, so everyone can see it.

♠ How a hand works

A hand has two phases:

- **Phase 1** – while there are cards in the stock. Tricks are played loosely, and after each trick the winner may **meld** (show a combination for points). Both players then draw, so everyone always has 8 cards.
- **Phase 2** – the last 8 tricks, once the stock is empty. Now strict rules apply and nobody melds.

♠ Phase 1: playing a trick

A **trick** is one round in which each player plays one card face up; the higher card wins both cards.

1. The **non-dealer leads** (plays the first card) to the first trick. After that, the winner of each trick leads to the next one.
2. The other player plays any card. In phase 1 you do **not** have to play the same suit, and you do not have to try to win.
3. **Who wins the trick:** - If a **trump** was played, the highest trump wins. - Otherwise the higher card **of the suit that was led** wins. A card of a different suit (not trump) never wins. - If both cards are **identical** (e.g. both play K♣), the card played **first** wins.
4. The winner puts the two cards face down in their own pile of won tricks. Only the Aces and 10s in it will count later.
5. The winner may now **declare one meld** (see below).
6. Then the **winner draws** the top card of the stock, and after them the **loser** draws. Both are back to 8 cards.

♠ Melds

A **meld** is a scoring combination. You **declare** it by laying the cards face up on the table in front of you and saying what it is. Only the **winner of the trick** may meld, and only **one meld** per trick. Melding is never compulsory.

MELD	CARDS	POINTS
Common marriage	K + Q of the same suit (not trump)	20
Royal marriage	K + Q of trump	40
Bezique	Q♠ + J♦	40
Four jacks	any four Jacks	40
Four queens	any four Queens	60
Four kings	any four Kings	80
Four aces	any four Aces	100
Sequence	A, 10, K, Q, J of trump	250
Double bezique	both Q♠ + both J♦	500

For the "four of a kind" melds the suits don't matter – four Aces could even be A♥ A♥ A♠ A♣.

Cards on the table still belong to your hand. You can play them to a trick at any time, just like cards held in your hand; your opponent simply sees them. Your hand plus your table cards always make 8.

Example: Hearts are trump. Anna leads 9♣. Ben plays 7♥ – a trump – and wins the trick. Ben holds K♥ and Q♥, so he lays them on the table and says "royal marriage, 40". He writes down 40 points. Then Ben draws a card from the stock, then Anna. Ben now leads the next trick – he may even lead the K♥ from the table.

♠ The 7 of trumps

The two 7s of the trump suit are special. Each time you win a trick, you may do **one** of these with a trump 7 – in addition to your normal meld:

- **Show** it and score **10 points**, or
- **Exchange** it for the face-up trump card under the stock (take that card into your hand, put the 7 in its place) and score **10 points**. This is worth doing if the trump card is a good one, such as an Ace or 10.

♠ Using a card in more than one meld

A card on the table can be used again in a **different kind** of meld, but never in a second meld of the **same kind**. Each new meld must be declared after a new trick win.

- A King from four kings may later marry a Queen: that is a different kind of meld.
- But once K♥ and Q♥ have been declared as a marriage, the K♥ cannot marry the other Q♥, and a fourth King added to three Kings from an earlier four kings does not count again.
- A **royal marriage** can be extended to a **sequence**: after declaring K+Q of trump (40), add A, 10 and J of trump later for 250. The other way round doesn't work: a marriage taken **out of** an already declared sequence scores nothing.
- A **bezique** can grow into a **double bezique**: if your first Q♠ and J♦ are still on the table, add the second Q♠ and J♦ later and score 500 (on top of the 40 you already scored). If you declare all four cards at once, you score only the 500.

Example: Anna wins a trick and lays out K♣ K♥ K♦ K♠: "four kings, 80". Two tricks later she wins again and adds Q♥ from her hand to the K♥ on the table: "marriage, 20". Allowed – a marriage is a different kind of meld than four kings. Could she later marry the same K♥ to the second Q♥? No – that K♥ has already been used in a marriage.

♠ The end of the stock

When only **two cards** are left – one face-down card and the face-up trump card – the winner of the next trick draws the face-down card and the loser takes the trump card (or the 7 if it was exchanged). The winner of this trick may still meld before drawing.

Now both players **pick up their table cards** into their hand. Each player has 8 cards, and phase 2 begins.

♠ Phase 2: the last 8 tricks

The winner of the previous trick leads. Now the rules are strict:

- You **must follow suit**: play a card of the suit that was led if you have one.
- If you can, you **must win** the trick: play a higher card of that suit.
- If you have no card of that suit, you **must trump** (play a trump) if you can. Only if you can't do either may you play any card.
- **No more melds** are allowed.

The winner of the **very last trick** scores **10 points**.

♠ Scoring a hand

Melds are scored the moment you declare them – write them down straight away. At the end of the hand, each player counts the **brisques** (Aces and 10s) in their won tricks: **10 points each**.

Example: During the hand Anna scored four kings (80) and a marriage (20) = 100. Ben scored a royal marriage (40), a bezique (40) and the trump 7 (10) = 90. Ben also won the last trick: +10, so 100. Now they count brisques: Anna has 9 Aces and 10s in her tricks (90 points), Ben has 7 (70 points). Hand total: Anna 100 + 90 = **190**, Ben 100 + 70 = **170**.

♠ Winning the game

Keep adding up the scores. The first player to reach **1000 points** wins. If both pass 1000 in the same hand, the higher total wins. For a longer game, agree on 1500 or 2000 before you start.

♠ Tips for beginners

- **Keep your Aces and 10s safe.** Don't throw brisques onto tricks your opponent will win; play low cards (7s, 8s, 9s) on tricks you don't need.

- **Hold on to Q♠ and J♦.** A bezique is worth 40, a double bezique a huge 500 – don't play these cards to tricks while there is still hope.
- **Don't waste trumps early.** Only win tricks with trumps when you have something to meld or brisques to capture. In phase 2, trumps decide the game.
- **Remember what is gone.** Every card exists twice. Keep track of which Aces, 10s and trumps have been played – in phase 2 you can then tell which of your cards will win.
- **Win a trick when you have a meld ready.** You can only meld after winning a trick, so time your wins.

♠ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Last trick of the stock:** some players award the 10 points not to the very last trick of the hand but to the last trick of phase 1 (the one before the last card is drawn).
- **Brisques during play:** instead of counting at the end, score each Ace and 10 as soon as you win it in a trick.
- **Three players:** use **three** decks (96 cards). Play clockwise; the trick is won by the highest card as usual, and only the winner melds and draws first. A triple bezique scores 1500.
- **Rubicon Bezique:** a popular larger version for two with **four** decks (128 cards) and **9 cards** each. No trump card is turned up – the first marriage or sequence declared decides trump. Triple and quadruple beziques score 1500 and 4500, and each hand is a complete game.

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game with melds (marriage/Sixty-six family)

ORIGIN: France, first rules printed in Paris in 1847

ALSO KNOWN AS: Bésigue, Bésique

RELATED GAMES: Piquet, Sixty-six, Binokel, Pinochle, Cinq-Cents, Rubicon Bezique, Chinese (six-pack) Bezique

Bezique is a 19th-century French game, originally called *bésigue*. Its roots are uncertain: French historians traced it to regional games called *bezi* or *besit* on the Atlantic coast (Angoulême, Poitou, Saintonge), and German Wikipedia also names Poitou as its home. An 1864 story that it was invented by a Swedish schoolmaster in a royal competition is, according to Wikipedia, not supported by evidence. The earliest known rules appeared in Paris in 1847, where the writer Méry described it as "a new game". The name may come from the Italian game *bazzica*.

According to Wikipedia, Bezique derives from Piquet, probably by way of Marriage (Sixty-six) and Briscan. Its trademark is the special pairing of the Queen of Spades and Jack of Diamonds, which it shares with Binokel and Pinochle. The German Binokel grew out of Bezique and Cinq-Cents, and in America the name turned into Pinochle – a game that pagat.com calls very similar in structure, especially for two players.

Bezique was at its most popular in Paris around 1860 and reached England in 1861. It was extremely fashionable in Britain in the early 20th century and was Winston Churchill's favourite card game; Wikipedia describes him as an avid player of six-pack ("Chinese") Bezique. Wilkie Collins and Christina Rossetti were also fans. Besides Chinese Bezique, Rubicon Bezique is a well-known variant.

SOURCES

- Bezique – pagat.com
- Bezique – Wikipedia
- Bézique – Wikipedia (German)

6
♠

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** score **melds** and win **brisques** (A, 10 = 10 each). Game to **1000**.
- **Deck:** 64 cards A-7 (two decks). Order: **A 10 K Q J 9 8 7**.
- **Deal:** 8 each (3-2-3), turn up **trump**. Trump 7 → dealer +10.
- **Phase 1:** no need to follow suit. Trick winner may **meld once**, then draws first.
- Melded cards still count as hand cards.
- **Last 2 cards:** winner takes stock card, loser the trump.
- **Phase 2:** follow suit, **must win**, else trump. No melds. **Last trick +10**.

♥
96
♠

CHEAT SHEET

MELDS

MELD	POINTS
Marriage K+Q / in trump	20 / 40
Bezique Q ♠ + J ♦	40
Double bezique	500
Four A / K / Q / J	100 / 80 / 60 / 40
Sequence A 10 K Q J trump	250
Trump 7 (show or exchange)	10

ALSO

- Brisques (A, 10) in tricks: **10 each**. Last trick: **10**.
- Reuse a card only in a **different kind** of meld.
- Marriage → sequence OK; sequence → marriage scores 0.

♥
9

Schnapsen

Austria's classic two-player game – race to 66, announce your marriages and know when to close the stock.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2	20 min	10+	medium
CARDS 20 cards: A, 10, K, Q, J of each suit			

♠ Overview

Schnapsen is Austria's classic card game for two. It is a **trick-taking** game: each player plays one card, and the higher card wins both cards – together they form a **trick**. The cards in your won tricks are worth points, and so are **marriages** (King and Queen of the same suit) that you announce. The first player to reach **66 points** in a hand says so and wins that hand. Several hands make up a **Bummerl** (a match), played until one player has scored 7 game points.

- **Players:** exactly 2.
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck, and paper and pencil for scoring.

♠ The cards

Take out the **Aces, Tens, Kings, Queens and Jacks** of all four suits – **20 cards**. The other 32 cards are not used.

In Schnapsen the **Ten ranks just below the Ace**, above the King. From high to low, each card has these **card points**:

CARD	CARD POINTS
A	11
10	10
K	4
Q	3
J	2

All 20 cards together are worth **120 card points**. You need more than half – **66** – to win a hand.

♠ Setup

1. **Dealer:** decide the first dealer at random. After each hand, the deal **alternates**.
2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles, lets the opponent cut, and deals **3 cards** to each player, face down, starting with the opponent.
3. **Trump card:** the dealer turns up the next card. Its suit is **trump** for this hand – trump cards beat all cards of the other suits. This **trump card** is laid face up and crosswise **under** the remaining cards, so it stays visible.
4. Then the dealer deals **2 more cards** each. Everyone now has **5 cards**.
5. **Stock:** the remaining face-down cards lie on top of the trump card. Together they form the **stock** (draw pile).

The **non-dealer** leads to the first trick.

♠ Playing a trick

The player **on lead** plays any card face up. The other player answers with one card. Then:

- If both cards are of the **same suit**, the higher card wins.
- If only one card is a **trump**, the trump wins.
- If the second card is of a **different suit** and not a trump, the lead card wins.

The winner takes both cards and places them face down in front of them. You may look at your own tricks at any time to count your points, but not at your opponent's.

♠ **Phase 1: while the stock is open**

As long as there are cards in the stock and it has not been closed, play is relaxed:

- You **don't have to follow suit** – you may answer with any card you like, including a trump, or throw away a low card.
- After each trick, the **winner draws** the top card of the stock first, then the other player. Both have 5 cards again.
- The **winner leads** to the next trick.

At the very end, the winner of the trick takes the last face-down card, and the other player takes the face-up trump card.

♠ **Marriages**

A **marriage** is the King and Queen of the same suit in your hand. When it is **your turn to lead**, you may show both cards, announce the marriage and then lead one of them:

- Marriage in a normal suit (a "**twenty**"): **20 points**.
- Marriage in the trump suit (a "**forty**"): **40 points**.

Marriage points are added to your card points. However, they only **count once you have won at least one trick** in this hand. Until then, just remember them.

Example: Hearts are trump. You are on lead and hold K♠ Q♠. You show both, say "twenty" and lead the Q♠. Your opponent plays the A♠ and wins the trick (11 + 3 = 14 card points). You have no trick yet, so your 20 points are on hold. Next trick, your opponent leads J♣ and you win it with 10♣: 10 + 2 = 12 card points. Now your marriage counts too: you have **32 points**.

♠ Exchanging the trump Jack

If you hold the **Jack of trumps** and it is your turn to lead, you may **swap** it for the face-up trump card under the stock. Do this before you lead. It is only allowed while the stock is open and still holds at least one face-down card on top of the trump card.

Example: Clubs are trump and the A♣ lies under the stock. You hold J♣. When you are on lead, you put J♣ in its place and take the A♣ into your hand.

♠ Closing the stock

When you are on lead, you may **close** the stock: turn the trump card face down on top of the stock. You may do this before or after exchanging the Jack or announcing a marriage, but before you lead your card. From now on, nobody draws any more cards.

The stock is also used up automatically after the last card has been drawn. In both cases, **strict rules** apply for the rest of the hand:

1. **Follow suit:** you must play a card of the suit that was led.
2. **Win if you can:** if you can follow suit, you must play a **higher** card if you have one.
3. **Trump if you can't follow:** if you have no card of the suit led, you must play a trump. Only if you have neither may you play any card.

Marriages may still be announced in this phase.

Risk: the player who closes the stock **must** reach 66. If they fail, the **opponent** scores **2 game points** – or **3** if the opponent had not won a single trick at the moment the stock was closed.

Example: Spades are trump. Anna has two tricks and a marriage, **48 points**, and is on lead with $A \spadesuit 10 \spadesuit A \heartsuit K \heartsuit J \heartsuit$. She closes the stock. She leads $A \spadesuit$; Ben must follow with a spade and plays $J \spadesuit$: Anna gains $13 \rightarrow 61$. She leads $10 \spadesuit$; Ben has no spades left and no other trumps, so he may play any card – he plays $Q \clubsuit$: Anna gains $13 \rightarrow 74$. She says "I have enough!" and wins the hand. Had she closed too early and got stuck below 66, Ben would have scored 2 game points.

♠ Claiming 66 and ending the hand

As soon as you believe you have **66 or more** points (card points in your tricks plus counted marriages), you say so – e.g. "I have enough!". Play stops immediately and the points are counted.

- If you are right, you win the hand.
- If you are wrong, your **opponent** scores **2 game points** – or **3** if they had not won a trick at that point.

If all cards have been played and nobody has claimed, the winner of the **last trick** wins the hand.

♠ Scoring

The winner of a hand scores **game points** depending on how well the loser did:

LOSER'S RESULT	GAME POINTS FOR WINNER
33 card points or more	1
Fewer than 33 (Schneider)	2
Not a single trick (schwarz)	3

(Here "card points" includes the loser's counted marriages.)

Example: Ben claims 66. His tricks hold 48 card points and he announced a twenty – 68, correct. Anna's tricks hold 35 card points: Ben scores **1 game point**. With only 28, Anna would be *Schneider* and Ben would score **2**. Without any trick, Anna would be *schwarz* – **3** for Ben.

♠ **Winning the Bummerl**

Each player starts at **7** and counts **down** by the game points they win. The first to reach **0** wins the **Bummerl** (match). The loser "gets a Bummerl" – many players mark it with a little stroke and play the next one.

♠ **Tips for beginners**

- **Count your points.** Keep a running total of your tricks and marriages in your head so you can claim 66 at the right moment.
- **Save your big trumps.** Don't waste the trump Ace or Ten early; they are worth a lot and win the important tricks later.
- **Keep King and Queen together.** Don't break up a pair – a twenty or forty can decide the hand.
- **Close when it's safe.** If your hand can surely win the tricks you still need, close the stock and take away your opponent's chances to draw good cards.
- **Throw low cards in phase 1.** When you can't win a trick cheaply, give away a Jack rather than a Ten.

♠ **Variants**

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Sechsendsechzig (Sixty-six):** the German cousin, played with **24 cards** – the **9s** are added (worth 0 points). Each player gets 6 cards.
- **Bauernschnapsen:** a popular four-player partnership version with bidding.
- **Marriages without a trick:** some tables let marriage points count even if the player never wins a trick.

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Marriage game (point-trick, trick-and-draw; Ace-Ten family)

ORIGIN: German-speaking Central Europe, probably 19th century; developed from Sixty-six

ALSO KNOWN AS: Schnapser; Snapszer (Hungary)

RELATED GAMES: Sixty-six (Sechsendsechzig), Mariage, Bauernschnapsen, Dreierschnapsen, Bezique, Tausendeins

Schnapsen is essentially a tightened-up Sixty-six (Sechsendsechzig): the Nines are removed, leaving 20 cards instead of 24. Both descend from the old German game Mariage, whose earliest known description appears in the Leipzig *Frauenzimmer-Lexicon* of 1715; Mariage survives in Czechia as Mariáš. According to German Wikipedia, a Saxon relative called Schnorps (also Schnarpsen or Schnurpsen) appeared around 1833 in Leipzig and Jena, and one writer, Vanderheid (1880), claimed that Schnapsen or Sixty-six was brought to Austria "by the Prussians" in 1866. How much of this is reliable is unclear.

The name is also uncertain. It may come from *schnappen* ("to snap up", i.e. to trump), or from Schnorps; the popular explanation that people played for a glass of schnaps is, according to Wikipedia, a folk etymology.

Today Schnapsen is widely played in Bavaria and the lands of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it is often called the national card game of Austria and Hungary. In Austria large tournaments are held; at the traditional *Preisschnapsen* the winner used to receive a goose. Scores are kept in *Bummerl* – a series of games – and the Austrian saying *das Bummerl haben* ("to have the Bummerl") means to end up with the disadvantage.

In Austria it is traditionally played with German-suited cards (hearts, bells, leaves, acorns), but a French-suited deck works just as well – as used here. Popular variants include Bauernschnapsen for four players in partnerships and Dreierschnapsen for three.

SOURCES

- Schnapsen – pagat.com
- Schnapsen – Wikipedia
- Schnapsen – Wikipedia (German)

7
♣

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** first to **66** points (tricks + marriages) wins the hand.
- **Cards:** A 10 K Q J of each suit (20). Deal 3, turn **trump**, deal 2. Non-dealer leads.
- **Stock open:** play any card; winner draws first and leads.
- **On lead:** announce **K+Q** (20, trump 40; counts after a trick), swap **trump J**, or **close** the stock.
- **Closed/empty:** follow suit, beat, else trump.
- **Claim 66** – wrong claim or failed close: opponent +2 (+3).
- From **7** down to **0** wins the Bummerl.

7
♣

CHEAT SHEET

CARD / RESULT	POINTS
A · 10 · K · Q · J	11 · 10 · 4 · 3 · 2
Marriage (trump)	20 (40)
Loser 33+	1 game pt
Loser < 33 (Schneider)	2 game pts
Loser no trick (schwarz)	3 game pts
Wrong claim / failed close	opponent 2, or 3 if they had no trick

- **120** card points in total. Marriages count only after a trick.
- No claim → winner of the **last trick** wins.
- Count down from **7**; first at **0** wins the Bummerl.



President

Beat the last play with higher cards, shed your hand first and rise from Beggar to President – who gets the Beggar's best cards next round.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
4–7	30 min	8+	easy

CARDS 52 cards, no jokers (two decks for 7+ players)

♠ Overview

President is a lively **climbing game**: each player in turn must play higher cards than the player before – or pass. Whoever gets rid of all their cards first becomes **President**, the last one left holding cards becomes the **Beggar**. Your finishing position matters in the next round: the Beggar has to hand their best cards to the President.

- **Players:** 4–7 (it also works with 3 or 8).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck, no jokers. From 7 players on, you can shuffle two decks together.

♠ Card order

Suits don't matter in President – only the **rank** (the value) of a card counts. The **2 is the highest** card, the **3 the lowest**:

2 (highest) – A – K – Q – J – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – **3** (lowest)

♠ Roles

After each round, the players get a title according to the order in which they ran out of cards:

FINISHED	TITLE
1st	President
2nd	Vice-President
in between	Citizens
second to last	Vice-Beggar
last	Beggar

With 4 players there are no Citizens; with 3 players there is only a President, a Citizen and a Beggar. It is fun (but optional) for the President to sit in the most comfortable chair and the Beggar on a stool.

♠ Setup

1. **Deal:** for the first round, pick a dealer at random. The dealer shuffles and deals **all** the cards one at a time, face down, clockwise. It doesn't matter if some players get one card more than others.
2. **Hand:** everyone picks up their cards (their **hand**) and sorts them by rank. Keep your hand hidden.
3. **First lead:** in the first round, the player to the dealer's left starts.

♠ Playing a trick

The game is played in **tricks**. A trick is a series of plays onto a pile in the middle of the table, going clockwise, until nobody can or wants to beat the last play.

1. **Lead:** the first player of a trick puts down any **single card**, or a **set** of cards of the same rank: a **pair** (two 7s), a **triple** (three 7s) or **four of a kind** (four 7s).
2. **Beat or pass:** on your turn, you either **beat** the last play or **pass** (say "pass" or knock on the table). - To beat it, play **the same number of cards**, all of **one**

rank that is **higher** than the last play. A single card is beaten by a higher single card, a pair by a higher pair, a triple by a higher triple. - You may always pass, even if you could beat the play. Passing does not stop you from playing again when your turn comes round in the same trick.

3. **End of the trick:** the trick ends when everyone else has passed in a row after someone's play. The cards in the middle are put aside face down; they are out of the game for this round. The player who made the last play **leads** the next trick with any card or set.

Example (a trick with pairs): Anna leads 5♣ 5♥. Ben plays 9♠ 9♦. Carla has a pair of Jacks but saves them and passes. Dan plays K♣ K♥. Anna passes, Ben passes, and now Carla plays A♠ A♦ after all. Dan, Anna and Ben pass. The trick is over; Carla puts the cards aside and leads the next trick – she may now play a single card, a pair or anything else.

Example: Ben leads a single J♥. Carla may not play a pair of Queens on it – only a single card higher than a Jack (Q, K, A or 2).

♠ Running out of cards

When you play your last card, you are out of this round – and the earlier you get there, the higher your title. The others keep playing without you. If your last play wins the trick (everyone passes), the next player still holding cards leads the next trick.

The round ends when only **one player** has cards left. That player is the **Beggar**.

♠ The next round: card exchange

From the second round on, the titles have an effect:

1. **Deal:** the **Beggar** collects and shuffles all the cards and deals them as before.
2. **Card exchange:** before anyone plays, cards change hands: - The **Beggar** gives the President their **two highest cards**. The **President** gives back **any two cards** they don't want. - The **Vice-Beggar** gives the Vice-President their

highest card. The **Vice-President** gives back **any one card**. - Citizens don't exchange. With 3 players, only the President and Beggar exchange two cards.

3. **Lead:** the **Beggar** leads the first trick. After that, play continues as usual.

"Highest" means highest in the card order – a 2 is the best card you can give away. If you have two cards of the same rank, you may choose which one to hand over.

Example (card exchange): *Emil was the Beggar and holds, among others, 2♦, A♣, A♥ and K♠. He must give the President his two highest cards: the 2♦ and one of the Aces (A♣). Anna, the President, gives him her two worst cards in return, 3♠ and 4♥. Dan, the Vice-Beggar, gives Ben (Vice-President) his only 2♣, and Ben gives him a 5♦.*

The President is not forced to give back low cards – but of course it is smartest.

♠ Scoring

You can simply play for your title: whoever is President at the end of the evening wins. If you'd rather keep score, write down points after each round:

TITLE	POINTS
President	2
Vice-President	1
everyone else	0

Whoever first reaches an agreed total, for example **10 points**, wins the game.

Example: *After three rounds Anna has been President twice and Vice-President once: 2 + 2 + 1 = 5 points.*

♠ Winning the game

The game has no natural end – you play round after round. Agree in advance on a points target, a number of rounds or a time limit. Whoever has the most points (or is President in the last round) wins.

♠ Tips for beginners

- Get rid of low cards early; lead your 3s, 4s and 5s while you have the lead.
- Keep a 2 or an Ace to win a trick when you need the lead back.
- Don't break up pairs and triples lightly – a pair of 6s is harder to beat than a single 6.
- Passing is often wise: let the others use up their high cards first.
- Before your last few cards, think ahead: finish with a card or set you are sure can win the lead.

♠ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **3♣ starts:** in the first round, whoever holds the 3♣ leads, and may play it alone or with other 3s.
- **President leads:** in later rounds, the President (not the Beggar) leads the first trick – this is how pagat.com describes the standard game.
- **Passed is out:** once you have passed, you may not play again until the trick is over. This makes the game faster.
- **Jokers:** add one or two jokers. They rank above the 2s – or play them as **wild cards** that can stand in for any rank in a set.
- **2s clear the pile:** a single 2 beats any play, even a pair or triple, and ends the trick at once. The player who played it leads again.
- **Skip:** you may also play the **same rank** as the last play (a 9 on a 9). Then the next player is skipped.
- **Revolution:** whoever plays four of a kind reverses the card order – now 3 is highest and 2 lowest – until the next revolution or the end of the round.
- **8s or 10s clear the pile:** an 8 (or 10) can be played on anything and ends the trick immediately; the player who played it leads.

♠ **Background & history**

FAMILY: Climbing game (climbing and shedding)

ORIGIN: probably based on East Asian climbing games; played worldwide since the 1980s

ALSO KNOWN AS: Arschloch (Germany), Einer ist immer der Arsch, Bettler, As-shole/Arsehole, Scum, Capitalism, Rich Man Poor Man, Landlord, Trouduc (France), Røvhul (Denmark)

RELATED GAMES: Dai Hin Min / Daifugō (Japan), Zheng Shangyou (China), Tiến Lên (Vietnam), Big Two, The Great Dalmuti (commercial)

President belongs to the family of **climbing games**, in which each player must beat the previous play with a higher card or combination. According to pagat.com, such games are widespread in East Asia, especially China, and became known in the West only fairly recently. Pagat.com says President spread through the Western world "especially among young people, towards the end of the 20th century" and has been played worldwide since the 1980s. It is probably of Chinese origin; its immediate ancestor is perhaps the Japanese game Dai Hin Min ("grand pauper"), also called Daifugō ("grand millionaire"). Wikipedia calls President a westernized version of Chinese climbing games such as Zheng Shangyou, the Vietnamese Tiến Lên and the Japanese Daifugō.

Zheng Shangyou ("struggling upstream") came to Britain via John McLeod, who learned it on a trip to China with British Go players in 1979. Daifugō already contains the famous "revolution" rule, where four of a kind reverses the card order.

The game has countless names, many of them rude, because the loser's title is usually an insult. In Germany it is best known as „Arschloch“; this site uses the neutral name President, which is also the most common English name. In 1995 Richard Garfield published *The Great Dalmuti* (Wizards of the Coast), a commercial variant with its own deck.

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PRESIDENT

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- The Great Dalmuti – [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Dalmuti)
- Arschloch (Kartenspiel) – [Wikipedia \(German\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arschloch_(Kartenspiel))

8



QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** be first to shed all your cards – become **President**.
- **Rank:** 2 high, A K Q J 10 ... 3 low. Suits don't count.
- **Deal all cards.** Dealer's left leads.
- **Lead** a single, pair, triple or four of a kind.
- **Turn:** play the **same number**, **higher** – or **pass** (you may play again later).
- All others pass: pile aside, **last player leads**.
- Out first: President ... last: **Beggar**.
- Then: Beggar deals, **cards are exchanged**, Beggar leads.

♥
8

8



CHEAT SHEET

TITLES AND CARD EXCHANGE

TITLE	GIVES	GETS
President (1st)	any 2	Beggar's best 2
Vice-President (2nd)	any 1	Vice-Beggar's best 1
Citizens	–	–
Vice-Beggar (2nd last)	best 1	any 1
Beggar (last)	best 2	any 2

Order: 2 A K Q J 10 ... 3. Beat with the **same number** of cards, one rank, **higher**.

Passing is always allowed. Out of cards: next player in line takes over the lead.

Points (optional): President 2, Vice 1 – first to **10** wins.

♥
8

Bura

Russia's fast gambling classic – lead up to three cards at once, count your points in your head and stop the game at 31.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2–4	20 min	10+	medium
CARDS 36 cards: A–6 (remove 2–5 and jokers)			

♥ Overview

Bura is a fast Russian gambling game. It is a **trick-taking** game: players take turns playing cards, and whoever plays the best cards wins them all – together they form a **trick**. What makes Bura unusual is that you may **lead up to three cards at once**. The cards in your tricks are worth points, and you win the hand by being the first to **stop the game** and correctly claim that you have **31 points or more** – counted only in your head. Three trumps in your hand – a **Bura** – win straight away.

- **Players:** 2 to 4; best with 2 (up to 6 are possible).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck and some chips or tokens (matches, beans, coins) for the **pot** – the pile of stakes the winner of each hand collects.

♥ The cards

Take out the **2s, 3s, 4s and 5s** and the jokers. You play with the remaining **36 cards**: A, 10, K, Q, J, 9, 8, 7, 6 of each suit.

The **Ten ranks just below the Ace**, above the King. From high to low, the cards are worth these **card points**:

CARD	CARD POINTS
A	11
10	10
K	4
Q	3
J	2
9 · 8 · 7 · 6	0

All 36 cards together are worth **120 card points**.

♥ Setup

1. **Dealer:** choose the first dealer at random. Later, whoever claimed in the last hand deals.
2. **Stakes:** everyone puts the same stake – say **1 chip** – into the pot.
3. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles and deals the cards face down, **one at a time**, clockwise, until everyone has **3 cards**.
4. **Trump card:** the dealer turns up the next card. Its suit is **trump** for this hand – trump cards beat all cards of the other suits. The trump card lies face up on the table.
5. **Stock:** the remaining cards are placed face down and crosswise **on top of** the trump card, so it stays visible. This pile is the **stock** (draw pile); the trump card is its bottom card and is drawn last.

With 2 players the **non-dealer** leads to the first trick. With more players, the player to the **dealer's left** leads, and play goes clockwise.

♥ Playing a trick

The player **on lead** chooses what to play:

- **one card**, or
- **two or three cards of the same suit** together.

Everyone else in turn must play **the same number of cards**. You may play **any cards you like** – you never have to follow suit, and you never have to win the trick even if you could.

What beats what: a card is beaten by a **higher card of the same suit**, and any non-trump card is beaten by **any trump**. A card of a different, non-trump suit never beats anything.

Beating several cards: if two or three cards were led, you must beat **each of them** with one of your cards. Your cards don't have to be the same suit as each other. If even one card stays unbeaten, you don't win the trick.

Example: Hearts are trumps. Anna leads ♣K ♣9 together. Ben holds ♣A, ♥6 and ♠10. He beats the ♣K with the ♣A and the ♣9 with the trump ♥6 – both cards are beaten, so Ben wins the trick, worth $4 + 0 + 11 + 0 = 15$ card points. Had Ben held ♣A, ♠8, ♠7 instead, he could beat only one of the two cards and would lose the trick anyway – so he throws ♠8 ♠7, which are worth nothing, and keeps his Ace.

With more than two players, each player has to beat the cards that are **currently winning** the trick – not just the lead.

Example (3 players): Diamonds are trumps. Anna leads ♠Q ♠7. Ben plays ♦9 and ♠J: the trump beats the Queen and the Jack beats the 7, so Ben is now winning. Carl holds ♦K, ♦8 and ♠9. To take the trick he would have to beat Ben's ♦9 and ♠J – that needs both his trumps. He may prefer to throw ♦8 and ♠9, keep the ♦K for later and let Ben win.

The winner of the trick puts all its cards face down in a pile in front of them.

Don't look at your tricks again – you have to remember what they are worth.

♥ Drawing from the stock

After each trick, everyone draws cards from the stock, **one at a time**, clockwise, **starting with the trick winner**, until everyone has **3 cards** again. Then the trick winner leads to the next trick.

If there are not enough cards left in the stock for everyone to fill up, the remaining stock cards are **not used**. You carry on playing with the cards in your hands until they are gone.

♥ Special combinations

Some three-card hands let you **take the lead** at the start of a trick even if you didn't win the last one. Announce them before anyone leads. From highest to lowest:

1. **Bura** – any **three trumps**. Show them: you **win the pot at once**, and the hand is over.
2. **Three Aces** – you take the lead and lead all three Aces together.
3. **Molodka** ("young lady") – **three cards of the same non-trump suit**. You take the lead and lead them together.

If two players announce the same kind of combination, the one who would normally play **earlier** to the trick gets the lead. If two players have a Bura, the earlier one leads it, the other plays theirs to it, and whoever wins that trick wins the pot.

♥ Claiming 31

Whenever you believe your tricks hold **31 card points or more**, you may **stop the game** and claim. Turn your tricks face up and count:

- **31 or more**: you win and take the **whole pot**. Everyone then puts in a new stake for the next hand.
- **30 or fewer**: a wrong claim – you must **double the pot** by adding as many chips as it already holds. The pot stays for the next hand.

Either way, **the player who claimed deals** the next hand.

If all cards have been played and **nobody has claimed**, nobody wins: the cards are thrown in, everyone adds **another stake** to the pot, and the same dealer deals again.

Example: Anna and Ben each put 1 chip in – the pot holds **2**. Ben has won three tricks. He remembers ♣K ♣9 ♣A ♥6 (15), ♠10 ♦J (12) and ♥Q ♦7 (3) – 30 points. Then he wins ♠K ♠8 (4), which makes **34**. He stops the game, turns his tricks over, the count is right: Ben takes the **2 chips** and deals next. Had he claimed after the third trick with only 30, he would have had to add **2 chips**, and the next pot would start at 4 plus the new stakes.

♥ Winning the game

Bura has no fixed end – each hand is won or lost on its own. Play as long as you like, or until someone runs out of chips; whoever has the most chips at the end is the winner.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Count every trick.** Keep a running total in your head – claiming too early doubles the pot, claiming too late lets your opponent get there first.
- **Watch your opponent's tricks too.** If they must be close to 31, it may be time to take a risk.
- **Lead in pairs and threes.** Two or three cards of one suit are hard to beat, because every single card has to be topped.
- **Give away zeros.** When you can't win a trick, throw 6s to 9s, not Tens and Aces.
- **Hold on to trumps.** Two trumps in your hand are one draw away from a Bura.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before you start.

- **Closed cards:** a very popular way to play. The lead is face up, and so is any play that beats the best cards so far. All other cards are played **face down**. You may also play a card that would win face down on purpose, but then it can't win. Nobody – not even the trick winner – may look at face-down cards until someone claims, so you are never quite sure what your tricks are worth.

- **Three Aces win:** three Aces win the pot like a Bura (if nobody has a Bura). Other players don't use three Aces or Molodka at all.
- **Moscow and Little Moscow:** in some Russian rules, three Aces are called **Moscow** and beat even a Bura. **Little Moscow** – three 6s including the trump 6 – lets you take the lead and beats a Molodka.
- **Redeal:** a Bura, Moscow or Molodka held straight from the deal doesn't count – the cards are dealt again.
- **Claim on your turn only:** you may only stop the game when it is your turn to play.
- **32 cards:** leave out the 6s as well.
- **Playing for points:** instead of chips, the loser of each hand (and anyone who claims wrongly) gets **2 penalty points**; whoever reaches **12** loses the game. Or count won hands: first to **21** (or **11**) wins, with a lead of at least 2.
- **Kozel ("goat"):** a longer relative. Everyone gets **4 cards**, you may lead one card or three of the same suit, and the hand is played to the end: whoever has taken the most card points wins. Four Aces or a Bura win at once.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game (point-trick game, Ace-Ten family)

ORIGIN: Russia; date unknown

ALSO KNOWN AS: Bypa; Thirty-one (Russian *tridsat' odno*)

RELATED GAMES: Kozel (Burkozel), and more distantly the other Ace-Ten games such as Sixty-six and Schnapsen

Bura is a Russian gambling game that, according to pagat.com, is "particularly characteristic of Russian prisoners and ex-prisoners". Its rules on pagat.com are based on information from Alexey Lobashev and Alexander Tvaladze. The word *bura* is also the name of the winning combination of three trumps; English Wikipedia translates it as "borer" or "cutter". The Russian Wikipedia gives *tridsat' odno* ("thirty-one") as its other name – after the 31 points you need to win.

Its link to the Russian criminal world is well documented. In his story *Zhul'nicheskaya krov'* (roughly "Swindlers' Blood", 1959) the writer Varlam Shalamov, who spent many years in Soviet labour camps, calls bura the criminals' word for "thirty-one", describes it as their most widespread game and says that, like *ochko* (a Russian form of Twenty-one), it remained a game of the underworld. Bura appears in Russian films and songs about that milieu, for example in the film *The Cold Summer of 1953*, where criminals play it. The exact age of the game is not known.

Bura belongs to the Ace-Ten family: the cards have the same point values as in Sixty-six or Schnapsen (Ace 11, Ten 10, King 4, Queen 3, Jack 2), and 120 points are in play. Unlike those games, several cards of one suit can be led at once, and the winner must claim 31 from memory. Its best-known relative is **Kozel** ("goat"), also called Burkozel, played with four cards per hand and usually played through to the end. Like Durak, the Russian national card game, Bura uses the Russian 36-card pack from Ace down to Six.

SOURCES

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QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** first to **claim 31+** card points – from memory.
- **Cards:** A–6 (36). All stake into the **pot**. Deal **3** each, turn **trump**.
- **Lead** 1 card or **2–3 of one suit**; others play as many, any cards.
- To win, beat **each** card (higher same suit or trump).
- Winner **draws first**, all refill to 3, winner leads.
- **Seize the lead: Bura** (3 trumps, wins pot), **3 Aces, Molodka** (3 of a plain suit).
- **Claim** right: take pot. Wrong: **double** it.



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CHEAT SHEET

CARD / EVENT	POINTS / EFFECT
A · 10 · K · Q · J	11 · 10 · 4 · 3 · 2
9 · 8 · 7 · 6	0
Bura (3 trumps)	wins the pot at once
3 Aces	take the lead
Molodka (3 of a plain suit)	take the lead
Claim 31+ right	take the pot
Claim wrong (≤ 30)	double the pot
Nobody claims	all restake, same dealer

- **120** card points in total. Never look at your tricks.
- Same combination twice: earlier player leads.
- The claimer deals next.



6

Schafkopf

Bavaria's great pub game – call an Ace to find a secret partner, or take on all three alone with a Solo.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
4	60 min	12+	tricky
CARDS 32 cards: 7 to A of each suit			

♥ Overview

Schafkopf is the classic card game of Bavaria, played by four at the kitchen table and in the pub. It is a **trick-taking** game: each player plays one card, and the highest card wins all four – together they form a **trick**. The cards in your tricks are worth **card points**. In every hand one player, the **declarer**, chooses a game: either together with a secret partner (the **Sauspiel**) or alone against the other three (a **Solo** or **Wenz**). The declarer's side needs **61 of the 120 card points** to win.

- **Players:** exactly 4. Partnerships change from hand to hand.
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck, and coins or paper and pencil for scoring.

♥ The cards

Take out the **7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K and A** of every suit – **32 cards**. The 2s to 6s are not used.

Card points:

CARD	CARD POINTS
A	11
10	10
K	4
Q	3
J	2
9, 8, 7	0

All cards together are worth **120 card points**.

♥ Trumps and card order

Trumps are special cards that beat every non-trump card. In Schafkopf the trumps are not just one suit: the **Queens and Jacks are always trumps** (except in a Wenz, see below), whatever their suit. In the normal game – the Sauspiel – the **Hearts** are trumps as well. That makes **14 trumps**, from highest to lowest:

1. Q♣ Q♠ Q♥ Q♦
2. J♣ J♠ J♥ J♦
3. A♥ 10♥ K♥ 9♥ 8♥ 7♥

The other three suits (♣ ♠ ♦) are **plain suits**. Each has only six cards left, ranking **A 10 K 9 8 7** – note that the **10 ranks above the King**.

Important: a Queen or Jack belongs to the trumps, **not to its suit**. The J♠ is a trump, not a spade.

♥ Setup

1. **Dealer:** pick the first dealer at random; afterwards the deal passes to the left.
2. The dealer shuffles, the player on the right cuts, and the dealer deals **4 cards** to each player, then another **4** – everyone has **8 cards**.

3. The player to the dealer's left is called **forehand**. Forehand speaks first in the bidding and leads to the first trick.

♥ Bidding: who plays?

Starting with forehand and going clockwise, each player says whether they want to play:

- **"I'd play"** – you want to be declarer, or
- **"Pass"** (in German: "Weiter").

You don't name your game yet. If two or more players want to play, the **higher game wins** (see the list below). With games of equal rank, the player who spoke earlier wins. Only then does the winner announce the exact game.

The games, from low to high:

1. **Sauspiel** (Rufspiel with an Ace)
2. **Wenz**
3. **Solo**
4. **Wenz-Tout**
5. **Solo-Tout**
6. **Sie**

If **everyone passes**, the cards are thrown in and the next dealer deals (or you play a Ramsch, see Variants).

♥ The Sauspiel: call an Ace

The Sauspiel is the normal game. Its name comes from the Bavarian word for Ace; think of it as a **Rufspiel with an Ace** ("calling game"). The declarer names the Ace of a plain suit – ♣, ♠ or ♦, never A♥, which is a trump – for example **"I play with the Ace of Spades"**. Whoever holds that Ace is the declarer's **partner**. The partner must not reveal it: everyone finds out only when the called Ace is played.

You may only call an Ace that you **don't hold yourself**, and you must hold **at least one card of that suit** (a plain card – Queens and Jacks don't count). If you hold all three plain-suit Aces, you can't play a Sauspiel.

Example: You hold $Q\clubsuit Q\heartsuit J\spadesuit J\diamondsuit A\heartsuit 10\heartsuit 9\spadesuit 7\diamondsuit$ – six trumps and two plain cards. You may call the $A\spadesuit$ (you have the $9\spadesuit$) or the $A\diamondsuit$ (you have the $7\diamondsuit$), but not the $A\clubsuit$, because you have no clubs.

Rules for the **called suit**:

- When the called suit is **led** for the first time, the partner **must play the called Ace** – even if a trump is already in the trick.
- The partner may not **discard** the called Ace on another suit. If the called suit is never led, the Ace is played in the last trick.
- The partner may only lead a **different card** of the called suit if they hold **four or more** cards of it (Ace included). This is called **running away** (*davonlaufen*). After that, the Ace may be played freely.

The declarer and partner together need **61 card points**; the other two need 60.

♥ Solo and Wenz

In both games the declarer plays **alone against three**. The three defenders form a team and may put their tricks on one pile.

- **Solo:** the declarer picks a suit that replaces Hearts as trumps – "Club Solo", "Heart Solo" and so on. Trumps are the four Queens, the four Jacks and then A 10 K 9 8 7 of the chosen suit. Hearts become a plain suit if another suit is chosen.
- **Wenz:** only the **four Jacks** are trumps ($J\clubsuit J\spadesuit J\heartsuit J\diamondsuit$). The Queens return to their suits, which rank **A 10 K Q 9 8 7**. There is no trump suit.
- **Tout:** a Solo or Wenz in which the declarer announces, before the first card is played, to win **all 8 tricks**. It counts double but is lost as soon as the defenders win one trick.

- **Sie:** a player dealt all four Queens and all four Jacks wins at once without playing.

♥ Playing a trick

Forehand leads any card. Then, clockwise, everyone plays one card:

- **Follow suit:** if a plain suit is led, you must play a card of that suit if you can. If a **trump** is led, you must play a trump if you can.
- If you can't follow, you may play **any card:** a trump to win the trick, or any other card. There is **no obligation to trump** and no obligation to beat.

The **highest trump** wins the trick. If there is no trump in it, the **highest card of the led suit** wins. The winner takes the trick face down and leads to the next one.

Example: *Sauspiel*, Hearts are trumps. Anna leads K♣. Ben plays A♣. Clara has no clubs and plays J♦ – a trump. David plays 7♣. Clara's J♦ wins the trick with 4 + 11 + 2 + 0 = **17** card points.

Example: Later Ben leads 7♥. That is a trump, so everyone must play a trump. David has no Hearts but holds Q♠ – he must play it, and it wins the trick.

♥ Scoring

After 8 tricks each side counts its card points:

- **61 or more** for the declarer's side: the declarer wins. At 60 the declarer loses.
- **Schneider:** the losing side has **30 or fewer** (to escape, the declarer's side needs 31, the defenders 30).
- **Schwarz:** the losing side won **no trick at all**.
- **Laufende** ("runners"): the highest trumps in an unbroken row, starting with Q♣, held by **one side** – counted from **3** in a *Sauspiel* or Solo (Q♣ Q♠ Q♥) and from **2** in a *Wenz* (J♣ J♠). They pay extra whether the declarer's side wins or loses, and the defenders can have them too.

Schafkopf is traditionally played for small money. The **tariff is agreed at the table**; a common one in cents:

GAME	VALUE
Sauspiel	10
Solo, Wenz	50
Schneider	+10
Schwarz	+20
each Laufender	+10
Tout	$(\text{game} + \text{Laufende}) \times 2$
Sie	$(\text{Solo} + \text{Laufende}) \times 4$

In a **Sauspiel** each loser pays the value to one winner. In a **Solo or Wenz** the declarer receives the value from **each** of the three defenders – or pays it to each of them.

Example: Anna calls the A♦; Ben holds it. Anna has Q♣ and Q♥, Ben has Q♠ – together they hold the top three trumps, but not Q♦: **3 Laufende**. They take 95 card points; the defenders have 25, so they are **Schneider**. Value: 10 + 10 (Schneider) + 3 × 10 (Laufende) = **50 cents**. Clara pays 50 to Anna, David pays 50 to Ben.

In a Solo with the same result, Anna would get 50 + 10 + 30 = 90 cents from each of the three others.

♥ Winning the game

There is no fixed end. Play a set number of **rounds** (in a round everyone deals once) or an agreed time. Whoever has won the most money or points at the end is the winner.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Count trumps.** 14 trumps are in play in a Sauspiel. Keep track of which Queens and Jacks are gone.
- **Call a short suit.** Call the Ace of a suit where you hold only one card – then you can soon trump that suit yourself.
- **Defenders: lead the called suit.** It forces the partner to reveal themselves, and the Ace may be trumped.
- **Give points to your partner.** When your partner is sure to win a trick, play an Ace or 10 on it (*schmieren*).
- **Solo only with a strong hand:** at least six trumps including high Queens, or a Wenz with two Jacks and long plain suits.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Ramsch:** if everyone passes, the hand is played with the Sauspiel trumps, everyone for themselves. The player with the **most** card points loses and pays each other player 10; a player who won no trick is paid double.
- **Kurze Karte:** take out the 7s and 8s – **24 cards**, 6 each. Popular in the Upper Palatinate and Upper Franconia.
- **Hochzeit** ("wedding"): a player with only one trump offers it face down. The first player who accepts takes it, gives back a non-trump card, and the two play together without a called Ace.
- **Geier:** like a Wenz, but only the four **Queens** are trumps.
- **Farbwenz:** the Jacks plus a chosen suit are trumps (Queens are plain cards).
- **Klopfen, Kontra and Re:** after the first four cards, a player may **knock** to double the value. A defender may say **Kontra** ("Stoß") until the second card of the first trick is played; the declarer's side may answer **Re**. Each doubles the value.
- **Stock:** when everyone passes, each player pays into a pot, which goes to the next side to win a game.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game (point-trick, Schafkopf group with permanent trumps)

ORIGIN: Germany, 18th century; the Bavarian form developed in the 19th century

ALSO KNOWN AS: Schafkopfen, Bavarian Schafkopf; Sheepshead (American relative)

RELATED GAMES: Doppelkopf, Skat, Sheepshead, Wendish Schafkopf, Palatin-ate Schafkopf

According to Wikipedia, the earliest known mention of Schafkopf is in a comedy by Hartmann from 1780, followed in 1782 by a Saxon list of penalties that declared it no game of pure chance. By 1811 the game was well established; Paul Hammer described it in a Leipzig book on German card games. These early forms, such as Wendish and German Schafkopf, still found the partners through the two highest trumps – much as Doppelkopf does today.

The Bavarian game with the called Ace had taken off in Franconia by the 1840s; the first clear reference to Bavarian rules comes from Gräfenberg in 1849, a poem in the *Regensburger Conversations-Blatt* of 1876 lists all 14 trumps, and the oldest rulebook appeared in Würzburg in 1884. Official rules were first agreed at the 1st Bavarian Schafkopf Congress in Munich on 17 December 1989; the Schafkopfschule published its current rules in 2007. Pagat and Wikipedia see Skat as a sibling, developed around the same time from classic Schafkopf with ideas from Tarok and l'Hombre.

Nobody knows for sure where the name comes from. One theory says scores were kept with nine or twelve chalk strokes that together looked like a sheep's head. The popular story that people played on barrel lids (*Schaff*) is, according to Wikipedia, rejected by experts.

German emigrants took the game to North America in the 19th century, where it lives on as Sheepshead, especially in Wisconsin; Milwaukee declared it its official card game in 1983.

In Bavaria it is played with German-suited cards: Eichel (acorns) = ♣, Gras (leaves) = ♠, Herz = ♥, Schellen (bells) = ♦, with Ober = Queen and Unter = Jack. The Ace is called *Sau* (sow) – according to pagat because wild boars used to be pictured on it; hence "Sauspiel". The rules here use a French-suited deck.

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- Sheepshead – Wikipedia
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10
♥

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** declarer's side takes **61** of 120 points.
- **Cards:** 7–A of each suit (32), 8 each. Left of dealer leads.
- **Trumps:** all **Q**, all **J**, then ♥ A 10 K 9 8 7. Plain suits: A 10 K 9 8 7.
- **Bid:** "I'd play" or "Pass"; the higher game wins.
- **Sauspiel:** call a plain Ace you lack (holding its suit) – its holder is your secret partner.
- **Solo:** alone, any suit as trumps. **Wenz:** only Jacks trump.
- **Follow suit** (trump if trump led); otherwise play anything.

♥
OI10
♥

CHEAT SHEET

CARD / GAME	POINTS / VALUE
A · 10 · K · Q · J	11 · 10 · 4 · 3 · 2
Sauspiel · Solo, Wenz	10 · 50
Schneider · schwarz	+10 · +20
Each Laufender	+10
Tout	× 2

- **61** wins; declarer loses at 60.
- **Schneider:** losers ≤ 30. **Schwarz:** no trick.
- **Laufende:** top trumps in a row from Q♣ – from 3 (Wenz: 2 Jacks).
- Called Ace must be played when its suit is led. Run away only with 4+ cards.
- Games: Sauspiel < Wenz < Solo < Tout < Sie.

♥
OI

Doppelkopf

Germany's favourite four-player game – two against two, but nobody knows who is on which side until the Queens of Clubs show up.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
4	90 min	12+	tricky

CARDS 48 cards from two decks: 9, 10, J, Q, K, A, each twice

♥ Overview

Doppelkopf is a **trick-taking** game for four players, very popular in northern and western Germany. Everyone plays one card in turn; the highest card wins all four cards, which together form a **trick**. The cards in your tricks are worth **card points**.

In each game, two players play against the other two – but at first nobody knows who is on which team. The two players holding the **Queens of Clubs** (♣Q) form the **Re** team; the other two are the **Kontra** team. The Re team needs **121** of the 240 card points to win; Kontra wins with **120**. A session consists of many games, and each player keeps a running score of **game points**.

These rules follow the tournament rules of the German Doppelkopf Association (Deutscher Doppelkopf-Verband, DDV).

- **Players:** exactly 4.
- **You need:** two standard 52-card decks with the same back, and paper and pencil for scoring.

♥ The cards

From each deck take out the **9s, 10s, Jacks, Queens, Kings and Aces** – 24 cards per deck, **48 cards** together. Every card is now in the game **twice**. The other cards are not used.

Each card is worth these **card points**:

CARD	CARD POINTS
A	11
10	10
K	4
Q	3
J	2
9	0

All 48 cards together are worth **240 card points**.

♥ Trumps and plain suits

Trumps are special cards that beat every other card. In a normal game there are 26 trumps. From highest to lowest:

1. ♥10 – the two Tens of Hearts, called the **Dullen**
2. **Queens:** ♣Q (the "old ones", *die Alten*), ♠Q, ♥Q, ♦Q
3. **Jacks:** ♣J, ♠J, ♥J, ♦J
4. **Diamonds:** ♦A, ♦10, ♦K, ♦9

So all Queens, all Jacks, the ♥10s and all Diamonds are trumps. The remaining 22 cards are the **plain suits**, ranked from high to low:

- **Clubs and Spades:** A, 10, K, 9
- **Hearts:** A, K, 9 (the ♥10s are trumps!)

Important: a Queen or Jack belongs to the trumps, **not** to its suit. The ♣Q is a trump, not a club.

Because every card exists twice, two identical cards can meet in one trick. Then the one **played first** wins. According to the DDV rules this also applies to the ♥10: the first Dulle beats the second.

♥ Setup

1. **Seats and dealer:** draw lots for the seats and the first dealer. After each game the deal passes to the left.
2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles and lets the player on their right cut. Then they deal **3 cards at a time**, face down, starting with the player on their left, until everyone has **12 cards**.
3. **Reservations:** starting left of the dealer, each player says either "**healthy**" (*gesund*) – nothing special – or "**reservation**" (*Vorbehalt*) if they want to play a solo or have both ♣Q (see *Hochzeit* and *Solos* below). If everyone is healthy, a normal game is played.

The player **left of the dealer** leads to the first trick.

♥ Playing a trick

The player **on lead** plays any card face up. Then the others each play one card, clockwise.

- **Following:** if a **trump** was led, you must play a trump if you have one. If a **plain suit** was led, you must play a card of that suit if you have one (remember: Queens, Jacks and ♥10 don't count as their suit).
- If you can't follow, you may play **any card** – a trump to win the trick, or a plain card to throw away.

Who wins the trick? The highest trump in the trick. If there is no trump, the highest card of the suit led. Of two identical cards, the one played first ranks higher. The winner takes the four cards face down and leads to the next trick.

Example: Anna leads $\spadesuit K$ (a trump). Ben must play a trump and plays $\heartsuit J$. Carla plays $\heartsuit 10$, Dave the other $\heartsuit 10$. Carla wins – her Dulle was played first. The trick is worth $4 + 2 + 10 + 10 = \mathbf{26}$ card points.

Example: Ben leads $\heartsuit A$. Carla has no Hearts left except a $\heartsuit 10$ – but that is a trump, so she has no Heart and may play any card. She trumps with $\spadesuit 9$ and wins the trick, unless someone plays a higher trump.

♥ Finding your partner

In a normal game the two $\clubsuit Q$ holders are the Re team – but they don't know each other. You find out during play:

- A player who plays a $\clubsuit Q$ shows that they are Re.
- A player who **announces** "Re" or "Kontra" (see below) reveals their team.
- A player who can't follow when trump is led shows they have no $\clubsuit Q$ left.

Hiding or revealing your team at the right moment is a big part of the game. Signalling by any other means is not allowed.

♥ Announcements

To raise the stakes, a team may **announce** that it will win:

- "Re" (by a $\clubsuit Q$ holder) or "Kontra" (by a Kontra player): each is worth **+2 game points** for the winners.
- After their own team has said Re or Kontra, a player may add a **bid against the other team** – "**no 90**" (*keine 90*), "**no 60**", "**no 30**" or "**schwarz**" (the other team will win no trick). Each is worth **+1** more.

Deadlines: you may only announce while you still hold at least:

ANNOUNCEMENT	CARDS IN HAND
Re / Kontra	11
no 90	10
no 60	9
no 30	8
schwarz	7

In other words, Re or Kontra must be said before you play your second card. As a **reply** to the other team's announcement, "Re" or "Kontra" is allowed with **one card fewer** than they needed. You may skip steps (e.g. say "Re, no 90" at once) as long as every skipped step would still be allowed.

Announcements change the target:

- If only **Kontra** was announced, **Re wins with 120**, and Kontra needs 121.
- A team that bids "no 90" needs **151** card points (no 60: 181, no 30: 211, schwarz: every trick). The other team then wins with **90** (60, 30, one trick).
- If both teams miss their own bids, nobody wins; only the achieved points below are scored.

Example: Anna holds a ♣Q and a strong hand. Before playing her second card she says "**Re**". Dave, on the other team, still holds 11 cards and replies "**Kontra**" (a reply would even be allowed with 10). Now Re needs 121 and Kontra 120, and the winners get $2 + 2 = 4$ extra game points. Later Anna adds "**no 90**" while she still has 10 cards: now Re needs 151 – but Kontra wins as soon as it reaches 90.

♥ Hochzeit (marriage)

If you hold **both ♣Q**, you are the whole Re team – for now. Say "reservation" and then "**Hochzeit**" (marriage). The **first other player who wins one of the first three tricks** becomes your partner and plays Re with you; from then on it is a normal game. If you win all of the first three tricks yourself, you play alone as a **solo** (with normal trumps) against the other three.

In a Hochzeit, announcements are allowed only after the trick that decides the partner; if that is the 2nd (3rd) trick, the deadlines above drop by 1 (2) cards.

If you keep quiet with both ♣Q, you play a **silent Hochzeit**: you play alone against the other three, scored like a solo.

♥ Solos

A player may say "reservation" and then play a **solo**: alone against the other three. The soloist is Re, the others are Kontra. A solo beats a Hochzeit. There are four kinds:

- **Suit solo** (*Farbsolo*): the soloist names a suit. Trumps are as usual (♥10, Queens, Jacks), but the named suit's A, 10, K, 9 replace the Diamonds. In a Hearts solo only ♥A, ♥K, ♥9 are added.
- **Queen solo** (*Damensolo*): only the eight Queens are trumps. Plain suits: A, 10, K, J, 9.
- **Jack solo** (*Bubensolo*): only the eight Jacks are trumps. Plain suits: A, 10, K, Q, 9.
- **No trumps** (*Fleischloser*): no trumps at all. Each suit: A, 10, K, Q, J, 9.

As in a normal game, the player left of the dealer leads.

♥ Scoring

At the end, each team counts the card points in its tricks. The **winning team** gets these game points:

FOR	GAME POINTS
Won	1
Losers under 90 / 60 / 30 / schwarz	+1 each
Re announced / Kontra announced	+2 each
Each bid (no 90, no 60 ...) by either team	+1 each
Reaching 120 against "no 90" (90 against "no 60", 60 against "no 30", 30 against "schwarz")	+1 each

Special points (normal games only) go to whichever team earns them, even the losers:

- **Against the old ones** (*gegen die Alten*): Kontra wins – +1 for Kontra.
- **Doppelkopf**: a trick worth **40 or more** card points – +1.
- **Fox caught** (*Fuchs gefangen*): winning a trick containing an **♦A** of the other team – +1 per fox.
- **Karlchen**: winning the **last trick** with a **♣J** – +1.

Special points of both teams cancel each other out; the rest is added to or subtracted from the winners' game points. Each winner writes down **plus** the result, each loser **minus** the same amount – the four scores always add up to zero.

Solo: only the points from the table count, no special points. The soloist scores **three times** the value (plus or minus); each opponent scores it once with the opposite sign.

Example: Anna and Carla are Re and said "Re". Their tricks hold **185** card points, so Kontra has 55. Re wins: won 1 + Kontra under 90 1 + under 60 1 + "Re" announced 2 = **5**. Special points: Carla made a Doppelkopf (+1 Re), but Ben caught Anna's fox (+1 Kontra) – they cancel out. Anna and Carla each score **+5**, Ben and Dave **–5**.

Example: Dave plays a Queen solo and wins with 150 card points; nobody announced anything. Value: won 1 = 1 (Kontra reached 90). Dave scores **+3**, the other three **–1** each.

♥ Winning the game

Play an agreed number of games – in tournaments a session has 24 games. The player with the **highest total** of game points wins.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Know the trumps.** 26 of 48 cards are trumps – memorise the order before your first game: ♥10, Queens, Jacks, Diamonds.
- **Watch the ♣Q.** Keep track of who has played one; it tells you who your partner is.
- **Feed points to your partner.** When your partner is sure to win a trick, add an Ace or Ten to it ("fatten" the trick).
- **Protect your ♦A.** Your fox is a gift to the other team if they win it – play it into a trick your team is winning.
- **Announce only with a strong hand.** "Re" or "Kontra" doubles the risk, too: the losers pay the extra points.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Without nines:** remove the 9s – 40 cards, 10 each. Trumps become even more important. Agree on the announcement deadlines (e.g. two cards fewer, so the first trick is still free for Re/Kontra).
- **Schweinchen (piglets):** a player holding **both ♦A** may show them; they become the highest trumps, above the Dullen.
- **Second Dulle wins:** at many tables the second ♥10 beats the first – often except in the last trick.
- **Hochzeit rules:** the Hochzeit player may choose the partner trick, e.g. "first trick", "first trump trick" or "first plain trick".
- **Compulsory solo (Pflichtsolo):** each player must play one solo per session. The soloist leads, and the same dealer deals again afterwards. In tournaments a session is 20 normal games plus 4 compulsory solos.

- **Poverty** (*Armut*): a player with three trumps or fewer may declare poverty and pass their trumps face down to another player who accepts; that player returns the same number of cards. The two play Re together. If nobody accepts, the cards are redealt.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game (Schafkopf family, point-trick game)

ORIGIN: Germany; developed from Schafkopf, probably in Saxony around 1800

ALSO KNOWN AS: Doko; formerly Doppelschafkopf

RELATED GAMES: Schafkopf, Sheepshead, Skat

Doppelkopf grew out of Schafkopf, a partnership game for four players. The name says what changed: all cards are in the game twice – according to the German Doppelkopf Association (DDV), it is short for "Doppel-Schafkopf". German Wikipedia, citing research by Paul Eaton (2025), says double-deck versions of Schafkopf appeared in Saxony in the late 18th century and were described in detail in three versions by 1811. According to English Wikipedia, the name "Doppelschafkopf" is first recorded in 1873.

The modern game took shape in the 20th century. English Wikipedia cites a 1927 description by Robert Hülsemann with French-suited cards, the Queens and Jacks as top trumps and Diamonds as trump suit; in northern German legal circles it was then nicknamed the "lawyers' game" (*Juristenspiel*). Red Tens as extra-high trumps (the *Tolle*) appear in a 1931 account, and the bonus for the ♣J ("Karlchen Müller") winning the last trick in 1933. Earlier forms were played with German-suited cards.

Rules differ widely from region to region. To make fair competitions possible, the Deutscher Doppelkopf-Verband was founded on 27 March 1982 during the first German championship in Braunschweig, and it publishes standard tournament rules. Today Doppelkopf is played all over Germany, but mostly in the north and in the Rhine-Main area.

Doppelkopf's relatives include Bavarian Schafkopf, played with a single 32-card deck, and Sheepshead, its American descendant. It shares the card values A 11, 10 10, K 4, Q 3, J 2 with Skat.

SOURCES

- Doppelkopf – pagat.com
- Doppelkopf – Wikipedia
- Doppelkopf – Wikipedia (German)
- Turnier-Spielregeln des DDV (PDF, German)



QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** the ♣Q holders (**Re**) need **121** of 240; **Kontra** 120.
- **Deal** 3 at a time, **12** each (9–A of two decks). Left of dealer leads.
- **Trumps:** ♥10 · Q · J · ♦ A 10 K 9. ♥10 isn't a heart.
- **Follow** trump or suit, else any card. Equal cards: first wins.
- **Announce** Re/Kontra (+2) with 11 cards, then no 90/60/30/schwarz (+1).
- **Both ♣Q:** Hochzeit – first other winner of tricks 1–3 is your partner.
Solo ×3.



CHEAT SHEET

WINNERS SCORE	GAME PTS
Won	1
Losers < 90 / 60 / 30 / schwarz	+1 each
Re / Kontra announced	+2 each
Each bid, or reaching its target	+1 each
Kontra wins (against the Alten)	+1
Doppelkopf (trick 40+) · fox · Karlchen	+1 each
Solo: ×3 for soloist, no specials	

- **Points:** A 11 · 10 10 · K 4 · Q 3 · J 2 · 9 0 (240).
- **Win:** Re 121, Kontra 120; only Kontra announced: Re 120.
- **Deadlines** (cards in hand): Re/Kontra 11 · no 90: 10 · no 60: 9 · no 30: 8 · schwarz 7. Reply: one card later.



Skat

Germany's national card game – bid for the right to play alone against the other two and bring home 61 points.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
3	60 min	12+	tricky
CARDS 32 cards: 7 to A of each suit			

♠ Overview

Skat is Germany's most popular card game, played by **three players**. It is a **trick-taking** game: everyone plays one card, the highest card wins all three, and these three cards form a **trick**. Every hand begins with an auction called **bidding**. The highest bidder becomes the **declarer**, may pick up two extra cards and plays **alone against the other two**, who work together as a team. In a normal game the declarer needs **61 of the 120 card points** to win.

These rules follow the **International Skat Order** (ISkO), the official rules of the German and international Skat associations.

- **Players:** 3 (with 4, the dealer sits out each hand).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck, and paper and pencil for scoring.

♠ The cards

Skat uses **32 cards**: the **7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K and A** of each suit. Take out all **2s, 3s, 4s, 5s and 6s** (20 cards) and put them aside – the easiest way is to go through the deck face up and pull out every card lower than 7.

Trumps and card order

Trumps are cards that beat every non-trump card. In Skat the four **Jacks** are always the highest trumps, in this fixed order:

J♣ (highest) – J♠ – J♥ – J♦

In a **suit game**, the declarer also chooses a **trump suit**. Its cards follow directly below the Jacks. In every suit the order is:

A – 10 – K – Q – 9 – 8 – 7

Note that the **Ten ranks just below the Ace**. So in a game with clubs as trumps, there are 11 trumps: J♣ J♠ J♥ J♦ A♣ 10♣ K♣ Q♣ 9♣ 8♣ 7♣. The other three suits have 7 cards each.

A Jack **always belongs to the trumps**, never to its printed suit. The J♥ is not a heart – it is a trump.

Card points

The cards in your tricks are worth **card points**:

CARD	CARD POINTS
A	11
10	10
K	4
Q	3
J	2
9, 8, 7	0

All 32 cards together are worth **120 card points**.

♠ Setup

1. **Seats**: the player to the dealer's left is called **forehand** (in German *Vorhand*), the next one **middlehand** (*Mittelhand*), the next one **rearhand** (*Hinterhand*).

With three players the dealer is rearhand. After each hand the deal passes to the left.

2. **Shuffle and cut:** the dealer shuffles; the player to the dealer's right cuts.
3. **Deal:** clockwise, starting with forehand: **3 cards** to each player, then **2 cards** face down in the middle, then **4 cards** each, then **3 cards** each. Everyone has **10 cards**.
4. The two cards in the middle are called the **Skat**. Nobody looks at them yet.

♠ Bidding

Bidding decides who plays alone. You bid **numbers**; each number is the value of a game you might be able to play (see *Game value* below). The possible bids are:

18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 33, 35, 36, 40, 44, 45, 46, 48, 50, 54, 55, 59, 60 ...

Bidding happens in two rounds:

1. **Middlehand bids to forehand.** Middlehand *says* a number (starting at 18, then going up step by step). Forehand *listens*: they answer **"yes"** if they are willing to play at least that value, or **"pass"**. Middlehand keeps raising until one of the two passes.
2. **Rearhand bids to the winner** of the first round, starting with the next higher number. Again, the winner of round one answers "yes" or "pass", until one of them passes.

The survivor is the **declarer** and has promised to play a game worth **at least** the last bid. You may pass at any time, even before saying anything. If middlehand and rearhand both pass straight away, forehand may play at 18 or pass as well. If **all three pass**, the cards are thrown in and the next dealer deals.

Example: Anna is forehand, Ben middlehand, Clara rearhand. Ben: "18?" – Anna: "Yes." – Ben: "20?" – "Yes." – "22?" – "Yes." – "23?" – "Yes." – "24?" – "Yes." Ben: "Pass." Now Clara bids to Anna: "27?" – Anna: "Yes." – Clara: "30?" – "Yes." – Clara: "Pass." Anna is the declarer and must play a game worth at least **30**.

♠ Picking up the Skat

The declarer now has two choices:

- **Pick up the Skat:** take the two cards into your hand, then put **any two cards** face down back as the new Skat. These two cards count for the declarer at the end.
- **Play "Hand":** leave the Skat untouched. This makes the game worth more (see below). The Skat still belongs to the declarer and its points are added at the end.

Then the declarer announces the **game type**.

♠ Game types

- **Suit game:** the declarer names a trump suit – clubs, spades, hearts or diamonds. Trumps are the four Jacks plus the seven cards of that suit.
- **Grand: only the four Jacks** are trumps. All four suits have 7 cards each in the order A 10 K Q 9 8 7.
- **Null:** there are **no trumps**, card points don't matter, and the declarer must **not win a single trick**. In a Null game the order in every suit is the natural one: **A K Q J 10 9 8 7** (the Jacks are ordinary cards, the Ten sits between Jack and Nine). In **Null ouvert** the declarer puts all their cards face up on the table before the first card is played.

♠ Playing the tricks

Forehand always leads the first trick, no matter who is declarer. Play goes clockwise.

1. **Follow suit:** you must play a card of the suit that was led. Remember that Jacks belong to the trumps: if a Jack is led, you must play a trump if you have one; if the J♥ is led in a clubs game, hearts don't have to be followed.
2. If you **can't follow**, you may play **any card** – a trump or any other card. You don't have to trump.

3. The **highest trump** wins the trick. If there is no trump in it, the highest card of the suit led wins.
4. The winner takes the trick, places it face down in front of them and **leads** to the next trick.

The two defenders collect their tricks together. After all 10 tricks, each side counts its card points; the Skat counts for the declarer.

♠ **Winning and losing**

- **Suit game or Grand:** the declarer wins with **61 or more** card points. With 60 or less, the declarer loses (so 60 is enough for the defenders).
- **Schneider:** a side with **30 card points or fewer** is *Schneider* (literally "tailor"). If the declarer takes 90 or more, the defenders are Schneider; if the declarer takes 30 or fewer, the declarer is.
- **Schwarz:** a side that wins **no trick at all** is *schwarz* ("black").
- **Null:** the declarer wins if they take **no trick**, and loses as soon as they take one. The game usually ends at that moment.

♠ **Game value**

The **game value** is what the game is worth on the score sheet.

For **Null**, the value is fixed:

NULL GAME	VALUE
Null	23
Null Hand	35
Null ouvert	46
Null ouvert Hand	59

For **suit games and Grand**, multiply a **base value** by a **multiplier**:

GAME	BASE VALUE
Diamonds ♦	9
Hearts ♥	10
Spades ♠	11
Clubs ♣	12
Grand	24

The multiplier

First count the **tops**: look at the declarer's cards **together with the Skat** and check the trumps from the top down (J ♣, J ♠, J ♥, J ♦, then A, 10, K ... of the trump suit).

- If the declarer holds the J ♣, count how many top trumps in an unbroken row they hold: that is "**with 1**", "**with 2**", ... For example J ♣ J ♠ but no J ♥ = **with 2**.
- If the declarer does **not** hold the J ♣, count how many top trumps are missing before the first one they hold: that is "**without 1**", "**without 2**", ... For example no J ♣, no J ♠, but the J ♥ = **without 2**.

In a Grand only the four Jacks count, so there are at most 4 tops.

Then add **one** for each of these that applies:

LEVEL	ADD
Game (always)	+1
Hand (Skat not picked up)	+1
Schneider (either side)	+1
Schneider announced	+1
Schwarz (either side)	+1
Schwarz announced	+1
Ouvert (cards open)	+1

Announcing Schneider or Schwarz is only allowed in a Hand game and must happen before the first card is played. If you announce it, you must achieve it (at least 90 card points, or all tricks) or you lose. Schwarz announced includes Schneider announced. **Ouvvert** in a suit game or Grand means playing Hand with all cards face up and having to win every trick, so it always includes Hand, Schneider, Schneider announced, Schwarz and Schwarz announced.

Example: Anna bid 30. She picks up the Skat and plays **clubs**. In her hand and the Skat she has J♣ and J♠ but not J♥: **with 2**. Add 1 for game: **3**. Game value: $3 \times 12 = 36$. That is at least 30 – fine. If she had also made the defenders Schneider, it would be with 2, game 3, Schneider 4: $4 \times 12 = 48$.

Overbidding

After the hand, the game value is worked out from the actual cards and result. If it is **lower than the bid**, the declarer has **overbid** and **loses**, even with 61 or more card points. The value of such a lost game is the **lowest multiple of the base value** that reaches the bid.

Example: Ben bid 30 and plays **hearts**. He has the J♠ but not the J♣: **without 1**, game 2, so $2 \times 10 = 20$ – less than 30. Ben has overbid and loses. The game counts as 30 (3×10 , the smallest multiple of 10 that is at least 30).

Tip: check your tops **before** you bid – and remember that a Jack in the Skat can change them.

♠ Scoring

One player keeps a score sheet with a column for each player. After each hand, only the **declarer** scores:

- **Won:** plus the game value.
- **Lost:** minus **twice** the game value.

The defenders score nothing in the official list.

Example: Anna plays clubs with 2 (value **36**). At the end she counts her tricks and the Skat: 58 card points. That's not enough – she loses. Her score: **-72** (2×36). With 61 she would have scored **+36**.

♠ Winning the game

Agree beforehand how many hands you will play – a number that everyone can deal equally often (e.g. 18 or 36 at a three-player table). The player with the **highest total** at the end wins.

♠ Tips for beginners

- **Count Jacks first.** Jacks are the strongest cards. With two or more Jacks and a long suit (5 cards or more), you can usually bid for a suit game.
- **Don't overbid.** Before you say "yes", work out the highest value your hand can reach: tops + 1, times the base value of your best suit.
- **Discard wisely.** Put an Ace or a Ten into the Skat only if it would otherwise be lost – the Skat's points are safe for you. Discarding all cards of a short suit lets you trump that suit later.
- **Help your partner as defender.** When your partner is winning a trick, throw a high card (*schmieren*, "grease") – an Ace or a Ten. When the declarer wins, give away low cards.
- **Count the points.** Keep track of how many card points each side has, especially the Aces and Tens still out.

♠ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before you start. Ramsch, Bock rounds and Kontra/Re are popular house rules; Seeger-Fabian scoring is what clubs and tournaments use.

- **Ramsch:** when all three pass, instead of a new deal, a Ramsch is played. Everyone plays **for themselves**, only the Jacks are trumps (as in a Grand), and the Skat goes to the winner of the last trick. The player with the **most** card

points **loses** them (they are written as minus points). Many tables double the score for a player who took no trick at all.

- **Bock rounds:** after special events – e.g. a game won or lost 60 to 60, or a Kontra and Re – the next round (one deal per player) is a **Bock round** in which all scores count double.
- **Kontra and Re:** a defender who thinks the declarer will lose can say "**Kontra**" before the first trick; this doubles the game. The declarer can answer "**Re**" to double it again.
- **Seeger-Fabian scoring:** used in tournaments. In addition to the game value, the declarer gets **+50** for every game won and **–50** for every game lost; when the declarer loses, each defender gets **+40** (at a four-player table, the other three get **+30** each).

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game (point-trick game with bidding; Ace-Ten family)

ORIGIN: Altenburg, Thuringia (Germany), around 1810–1813

ALSO KNOWN AS: Scat (early spelling)

RELATED GAMES: Schafkopf, Wendish Schafkopf, Tarock, l'Hombre, Solo, Doppelkopf

Skat was created in the small town of Altenburg in Thuringia in the early 19th century. According to pagat.com, it was developed around 1810 by members of the Brommesche Tarok-Gesellschaft, a local card club, who took the local game Schafkopf and added ideas from Tarock and l'Hombre. German Wikipedia names a circle of Altenburg notables, among them Hans Carl Leopold von der Gabelentz and Friedrich Ferdinand Hempel. The earliest written evidence is an entry "Scat" in von der Gabelentz's account book dated 4 September 1813; a newspaper, the *Osterländische Blätter*, mentioned "Das Skadspiel" in 1818. Wikipedia names Wendish Schafkopf (in its three-player form), l'Hombre, German Solo and Tarock as forerunners – bidding came from l'Hombre and Solo, the two set-aside cards from Tarock. Doppelkopf is a cousin: both descend from Schafkopf.

The name is usually traced to Italian *scarto*, "discarded cards" – the two cards laid aside. The earliest known rules, from 1835, describe a game with German-suited cards; today Skat is played with both German- and French-suited cards – this site uses French suits.

Rules differed from region to region until the first Skat Congress in Altenburg in 1886, attended by about 1,000 players. The Deutscher Skatverband (German Skat Association) was founded in 1899, with Altenburg as its seat. The bidding with numbers (*Zahlenreizen*) used today was adopted in 1927–28, and since 1 January 1999 the International Skat Order (ISkO) has been the common rulebook of the German and international associations.

In December 2016 the German UNESCO Commission added Skat to Germany's national inventory of intangible cultural heritage. Altenburg still calls itself the *Skatstadt* (Skat town).

SOURCES

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- Skat (card game) – Wikipedia
- Geschichte des Skatspiels – Wikipedia (German)
- Skat spielen – Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission (German)
- Immaterielles Kulturerbe – Deutscher Skatverband (German)

12
♣

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** play alone against two and take **61** of 120 points.
- **Cards:** 7–A of each suit (32). Deal **3–Skat 2–4–3**.
- **Bidding:** middlehand bids to forehand, rearhand to the winner. Survivor is **declarer**.
- Declarer takes the **Skat** and discards 2, or plays **Hand**; names suit, **Grand** or **Null**.
- **Trumps:** J ♣ J ♠ J ♥ J ♦, then A 10 K Q 9 8 7.
- **Forehand leads.** Follow suit (Jacks are trumps), else any card.
- Won **+value**, lost **–2 × value**. Value below bid: **overbid**, lost.

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♣

CHEAT SHEET

GAME	VALUE
♦ · ♥ · ♠ · ♣	9 · 10 · 11 · 12
Grand	24
Null · Hand	23 · 35
Null ouvert · Hand	46 · 59
Multiplier	tops + game 1
Each +1	Hand, Schneider, announced, Schwarz, announced, ouvert

- **Bids:** 18 20 22 23 24 27 30 33 35 36 40 ...
- **Points:** A 11, 10 10, K 4, Q 3, J 2.
- **Schneider:** ≤ 30 points. **Schwarz:** no trick.
- **Example:** clubs with 2: $(2 + 1) \times 12 = 36$.

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ZI

Rummy (Rommé)

The German family classic – collect sets and runs, open with 40 points and be the first to get rid of every card.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2–6	60 min	8+	medium
CARDS 2 × 52 cards + 4 jokers			

♥ Overview

Rommé is the rummy game played in German-speaking countries. Everyone tries to arrange their cards into matching groups and lay them out on the table. The first player to get rid of **all** their cards wins the round; everyone else scores **penalty points** for the cards still in their hand. After several rounds, the player with the **fewest** penalty points wins.

- **Players:** 2 to 6, each playing for themselves.
- **You need:** two standard 52-card decks with their jokers – 104 cards plus 4 jokers, 108 cards in all – and paper and pencil for scoring. Both decks should have the same back design if possible.

♥ Melds

A **meld** is a group of at least three cards that belong together. There are two kinds:

- **Set:** 3 or 4 cards of the **same rank** in **different suits**, e.g. K♥ K♦ K♣ or 3♥ 3♦ 3♣. Because there are two decks, you may hold two identical cards (say two 7♠) – but they can never be in the same set.

- **Run:** 3 or more cards of the **same suit in sequence**, e.g. 8♦ 9♦ 10♦ J♦.

The **Ace** can be at either end of a run: A-2-3 (low) or Q-K-A (high). It cannot go "round the corner": K-A-2 is not a run.

♥ Jokers

A **joker** is a wild card: it can stand for **any** card you need in a meld. For example J♣ Q♣ Joker A♣ (the joker is the K♣), or 6♠ 6♥ Joker (the joker is a third 6).

- A meld may **not** consist of one natural card plus two jokers.
- Two jokers may sit directly next to each other only in a run of at least four cards, e.g. 3♠ Joker Joker 6♠.

♥ Card values

Card values matter twice: for your **first meld** (see below) and for the **penalty points** at the end of a round.

CARD	POINTS
K, Q, J	10
10 to 2	face value
Ace	11 (only 1 in a low run A-2-3 ...)
Joker in a meld	value of the card it stands for
Joker left in hand	20

An Ace left in your hand at the end always counts **11**.

♥ Setup

1. **First dealer:** everyone draws a card; the highest card deals first. After each round, the deal passes to the left (clockwise).

2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles, lets the player on the right cut, and deals the cards face down one at a time, clockwise, starting on the left. Everyone gets **13 cards**; the dealer takes **14**. This is your **hand** – keep it hidden.
3. **Stock:** the remaining cards go face down in the middle as the **stock** (draw pile). The discard pile will form next to it.

♥ Playing a turn

The **dealer** starts. Because they already have 14 cards, they do **not** draw: they may meld (if they can) and then discard one card face up next to the stock. This starts the **discard pile**. Then play passes clockwise.

From then on, every turn has three steps:

1. **Draw** one card: either the top card of the **stock** or the top card of the **discard pile**.
2. **Meld** (optional): lay out melds, lay off cards or exchange jokers – see below.
3. **Discard** one card face up onto the discard pile. This ends your turn.

Example: Clara holds 5♣ 6♣ and the top discard is 7♣. She takes it – now she has a run 5♣ 6♣ 7♣ – and ends her turn by discarding a card she doesn't need, say the 2♥.

♥ The first meld

Laying out cards for the first time is called **coming out** (German: *rauskommen* or *auslegen*). Your first meld must be worth at least **40 points** in total. You may lay out several melds at once to reach 40.

- For this count, a joker is worth the card it replaces, and an Ace in A-2-3 is worth only 1.
- If you can't reach 40, you must keep your cards in your hand.

Example: Ben holds A♦ 2♦ 3♦ 4♦ and J♠ J♥ J♣. The run is worth 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10, the set of Jacks 30 – exactly **40**, so he may come out. Without the 4♦ he would only have 36 and would have to wait.

Once your first meld is on the table (from the same turn on):

- you may lay out **more melds** of any value,
- you may **lay off** – add single cards to **any** meld on the table, your own or someone else's. For example, with 2♥ 3♥ 4♥ on the table, you may add A♥ and 5♥. Cards you lay off in the turn you come out don't count toward the 40.

Cards on the table stay there: you may never take a meld back into your hand.

♥ Exchanging a joker

If a meld on the table contains a joker and you hold the **real card** the joker stands for, you may put your card in its place and take the joker. This is allowed only **after your first meld**, and only on your turn. You must **use the joker straight away** in a new meld – it may not go into your hand.

Example: On the table lies 9♣ 10♣ Joker Q♣ – the joker is the J♣. Dana, who has already come out, holds J♣, 7♠ and 7♥. She puts her J♣ into the run, takes the joker and lays out 7♠ 7♥ Joker as a new set.

In a set of three with a joker (e.g. 6♠ 6♥ Joker), the joker can be exchanged for either missing suit – here 6♣ or 6♦.

♥ Going out

The first player to get rid of **all** cards goes **out** and ends the round. Usually you meld or lay off everything but one card and discard that last card **face down** – the sign that the round is over. If you can meld your very last card, you don't need to discard.

If the stock runs out before anyone goes out, the round ends: everyone scores the cards in their hand.

♥ Scoring

The player who went out scores 0. Everyone else adds up the cards left in their hand (see card values: Ace 11, joker 20) and writes that down as **penalty points** – even cards that would form a meld count if they are still in the hand.

Hand Rommé: if you go out by laying out **all** your cards in one turn, without having melded anything before and before **any other player** has melded, that is a **Hand Rommé**. The 40-point minimum does not apply, and the other players' penalty points are **doubled** for that round.

Example: Anna goes out. Ben still holds $K \spadesuit 7 \diamond A \heartsuit$ and a joker: $10 + 7 + 11 + 20 = 48$ penalty points. Clara holds $3 \clubsuit 3 \spadesuit 9 \heartsuit$: $3 + 3 + 9 = 15$. Had Anna gone out with a Hand Rommé, Ben would get 96 and Clara 30.

♥ Winning the game

Agree before you start how long to play – for example, until everyone has dealt the same number of times, or until one player passes an agreed penalty total such as 500. Then the player with the **fewest** penalty points wins.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Come out early.** As long as you haven't met the 40, cards pile up in your hand – and every point there counts against you.
- **Get rid of high cards** that don't fit anything: an unused King or Ace costs 10 or 11 points.
- **Keep your jokers** for melds, and don't discard them – a joker left in your hand costs 20, but one on the discard pile helps the next player.
- **Watch the discards.** What others pick up shows what they collect; don't feed them the cards they need.
- **Look at every meld on the table** before discarding – a card that fits someone's run can often be laid off instead.

♥ Variants

There are no binding rules for Rommé – agree on these before playing.

- **Lower opening:** the first meld needs only **30** points (sometimes 35) instead of 40.
- **Discard pile only for melding:** you may take the top discard only if you meld it immediately. Before your first meld, it then counts toward the 40.
- **Round the corner:** K-A-2 is allowed as a run.
- **Tournament jokers:** in the German Skat Association's tournament rules, a joker in a set can only be taken once the set is completed to four cards, and a joker may be discarded only to go out.
- **Joker 30:** a joker left in hand costs 30 instead of 20.
- **Fresh stock:** if the stock runs out, shuffle the discard pile (except its top card) and use it as a new stock instead of ending the round.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Rummy game (draw-and-discard, melding)

ORIGIN: American Rummy, which reached Germany via Austria; rules first recorded in Germany in 1933

ALSO KNOWN AS: German Rummy, Deutsches Rommé, Rommé mit Auslegen; Rummy (Austria), Rommee

RELATED GAMES: Conquian, Gin Rummy, Scala 40, Canasta, Rummikub, Kalooki, Jolly, Machiavelli

Rummy games first appeared in the early 20th century and are probably derived from the Mexican game Conquian, which pagat.com traces back to a reference from Mexico City in 1857. From Mexico it spread north into the USA, where the name "Rhum" or "Rhummy" appeared by about 1905 (according to David Parlett, as cited by Wikipedia). A second theory links rummy to Chinese draw-and-discard card games; Parlett suggests both lines share a common origin.

According to Wikipedia, the game came to Germany from Austria, and its rules were first written down there in 1933 (Friedrich Meister, *Rommee und Doppelkopf*). An Austrian book, *Das Rummyspiel*, had already reached its third edition in 1927. To this day Austrians call the game "Rummy", while the French-looking "Rommé" is the usual German name – in France itself, the game is called "Rami". There are no binding rules; families play their own versions. The German Skat Association has run Rommé tournaments with its own rulebook since the 2000s, and there is also a German Rommé Association.

Commercial Rommé decks contain **110 cards**: two 52-card packs with **three jokers each**. With ordinary poker decks you have only two jokers per deck, which is why these rules use four.

Rommé belongs to the melding branch of the rummy family: you lay your melds on the table and may add to other players' melds. **Gin Rummy**, the popular two-player game from the USA, works the other way round – melds stay in your hand until someone knocks. Close relatives include Italian **Scala 40** (40-point opening, two jokers per deck), **Kalooki**, **Jolly** and **Canasta**. In **Machiavelli** (Carousel) and Robbers' Rummy (Räuber-Rommé) you may rearrange the melds on the table; according to German Wikipedia, the tile game **Rummikub** grew out of this form.

SOURCES

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- Rommé – Wikipedia (German)
- Rummy – Wikipedia
- Rummy – pagat.com
- Conquian – pagat.com
- Scala Quaranta – pagat.com
- Carousel / Machiavelli – pagat.com
- Internationale Rommé-Ordnung des DSkV (German Skat Association, PDF)

13
♥

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** meld all your cards first; fewest **penalty points** win.
- **Deal:** 13 each; dealer gets **14** and starts by discarding.
- **Melds:** **sets** (3–4 of a rank) and **runs** (3+ in suit; not K-A-2).
- **Turn:** draw (stock or discard), meld, discard one.
- **First meld ≥ 40 .** Then lay off anywhere; swap **jokers** for the real card.
- **Out:** last card face down. Others count their hands.
- **Hand Rommé** (all at once, nobody melded yet): $\times 2$.

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♥

CHEAT SHEET

CARD VALUES

CARD	POINTS
K Q J	10
10 – 2	face value
Ace	11 (1 in A-2-3)
Joker in meld	card it replaces
Joker in hand	20

RULES TO REMEMBER

- **Jokers:** never 1 card + 2 jokers; two jokers side by side only in a run of 4+.
- **Joker swap / lay off:** only after your first meld.
- **Stock empty:** round ends, all count their hands.
- **Game:** agreed rounds; fewest points wins.

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Bridge

The great partnership game – bid what you and your partner can make, then bring it home with half your cards on the table.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
4	30 min	12+	tricky
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers			

♠ Overview

Bridge is a card game for **four players in two fixed partnerships**. Partners sit opposite each other. It is a **trick-taking** game: each player plays one card, the best card wins all four, and these four cards are called a **trick**. Each deal has 13 tricks.

Every deal has two parts. First comes the **auction**: both sides bid for the right to name the **trump suit** (or no trumps) and promise to win a certain number of tricks. The highest bid becomes the **contract**. Then comes the **play**: the side that won the auction tries to take at least as many tricks as it promised, and the other side tries to stop it. The special twist of Bridge: one partner of the bidding side, the **dummy**, lays all their cards face up on the table, and the other partner, the **declarer**, plays both hands.

These rules follow the *Laws of Rubber Bridge* with **Chicago** scoring (also called four-deal bridge): a game lasts exactly four deals, which makes it ideal for home play.

- **Players:** 4, in two partnerships.
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck without jokers, paper and pencil.

♠ The cards

In every suit the cards rank from high to low: **A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2**. The cards have no point values – only the **number of tricks** counts.

For the auction, the suits also have a rank. From lowest to highest:

♣ **clubs** – ♦ **diamonds** – ♥ **hearts** – ♠ **spades** – NT (**no trumps**)

Clubs and diamonds are called the **minor suits**, hearts and spades the **major suits**. The word **strain** means a suit or no trumps.

♠ Setup

1. **Partners:** everyone draws a card from the spread-out deck. The two highest cards play together against the two lowest (for equal ranks, the suit order ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ decides). The player with the highest card deals first.
2. **Seats:** partners sit opposite each other. The seats are named after the compass: **North** and **South** play against **East** and **West** (N–S against E–W).
3. **Shuffle and cut:** the dealer shuffles; the player to the dealer's right cuts.
4. **Deal:** the dealer deals all 52 cards one at a time, face down, clockwise, starting with the player to the left. Everyone gets **13 cards**.
5. After each deal, the turn to deal passes to the left.

♠ The auction

The **dealer** speaks first, then the others in turn clockwise. When it is your turn, you make exactly one **call**:

- a **bid**,
- **Pass** (you don't want to bid now),
- **Double**, or
- **Redouble**.

Bids

A bid names a **level** from 1 to 7 and a **strain**, for example "two hearts" (2♥) or "three no trumps" (3NT). The level says how many tricks **beyond six** your side promises to win:

BID LEVEL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tricks needed	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

Each new bid must be **higher** than the last bid: either a higher level, or the same level in a higher-ranking strain. So the bids go up like this:

1♣ – 1♦ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 1NT – 2♣ – 2♦ – ... – 7♠ – 7NT

After 2♥, for example, 2♠ or 2NT or anything at level 3 or more is allowed, but not 2♦. You may bid even if you have passed before.

Double and redouble

- **Double:** you may double the **last bid** if an **opponent** made it and nobody has bid since. It says "we think you won't make it" – if that bid becomes the contract, all scores for it are much larger.
- **Redouble:** if an opponent has doubled your side's last bid, you may redouble. This raises the stakes once more.
- A new bid **cancels** any double or redouble – they only count on the final contract.

End of the auction

- The auction ends when **three players pass in a row** after any bid. The last bid is the **contract**, with a double or redouble if one was made.
- If all four players pass at their first turn, the deal is **passed out**: nobody plays. In Chicago the **same dealer** shuffles and deals again, and the passed-out deal does not count.

Declarer and dummy

The side that made the last bid is the **declaring side**. Its **declarer** is the partner who **first named the strain of the contract** during the auction – not necessarily the one who made the last bid. The declarer's partner becomes the **dummy**. The other two players are the **defenders**.

Example: *North deals. The auction goes:*

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥	2 ♠
4 ♥	Double	Pass	Pass
Pass			

*After East's double there are three passes, so the auction is over. The contract is 4 ♥ doubled for N-S: hearts are trumps and N-S must win 10 tricks. North said hearts first, so **North is declarer** and South is dummy.*

♠ The play

1. **Opening lead:** the player to the **left of the declarer** plays any card face up. This first card of a trick is called the **lead**.
2. **Dummy goes down:** now the dummy puts all 13 cards face up on the table, sorted into suits in columns, trumps on dummy's right. The dummy takes no further part: the **declarer plays both hands**, their own and dummy's, each in its proper turn. The dummy may only play the cards the declarer names.
3. **Follow suit:** going clockwise, each player plays one card. You **must play a card of the suit that was led** if you can. If you can't, you may play **any card** – a trump or a card of another suit.
4. **Winning a trick:** if the trick contains trumps, the **highest trump** wins. Otherwise the **highest card of the suit led** wins. In a no-trump contract there are no trumps, so the highest card of the suit led always wins.

5. The winner of a trick **leads** to the next one. If a trick is won by dummy's card, the declarer leads next from dummy.
6. Each side collects the tricks it wins face down, so you can count them at the end.

After all 13 tricks, count the declaring side's tricks and score the deal.

♠ **Vulnerability**

Being **vulnerable** means that more is at stake: bonuses for game and slam are higher, and so are the penalties for failing. In Chicago, vulnerability follows a fixed schedule over the four deals:

DEAL	VULNERABLE
1	nobody
2	the dealer's side
3	the dealer's side
4	both sides

Because the deal passes to the left, the sides take turns: each side is vulnerable on exactly one of deals 2 and 3.

♠ **Scoring**

If the declarer **makes the contract** (wins at least the promised tricks), the declaring side scores trick points and bonuses. If not, the **defenders** score a penalty for every missing trick. Write both sides' scores in two columns ("We" and "They").

Trick points

For each trick **bid and made** above six:

STRAIN	PER TRICK	DOUBLED	REDOUBLED
♣ ♦	20	40	80
♥ ♠	30	60	120
NT, first trick	40	80	160
NT, each further trick	30	60	120

Only the tricks you **bid** count as trick points; extra tricks (**overtricks**) are scored separately.

Game and part-score

A contract worth **100 or more trick points** is a **game**. Without doubling, that needs **3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ or 5♦**. A smaller contract is a **part-score**.

- Part-scores **add up**: if your side has made part-scores earlier in the Chicago, a new part-score that brings the total to 100 completes a game.
- As soon as **either side** makes or completes a game, all earlier part-scores of **both sides** no longer count toward game.

Bonuses for making the contract

BONUS	NOT VULNERABLE	VULNERABLE
Game (made or completed)	300	500
Part-score on deal 4 (no game completed)	100	100
Small slam (6-level contract)	500	750
Grand slam (7-level contract)	1000	1500
Making a doubled contract ("insult")	50	50
Making a redoubled contract	100	100

The game bonus depends on the vulnerability of the side that makes the game **on that deal**. Part-scores on deals 1–3 get no bonus of their own. A slam also gets the game bonus.

Overtricks

EACH OVERTRICK	NOT VULNERABLE	VULNERABLE
Undoubled	trick value	trick value
Doubled	100	200
Redoubled	200	400

"Trick value" means 20 in ♣ ♦ and 30 in ♥ ♠ NT.

Undertricks

If the declarer falls short, the **defenders** score for each missing trick (**undertrick**):

UNDERTRICKS	UNDOUBLED	DOUBLED	REDOUBLED
Not vulnerable: 1st	50	100	200
Not vulnerable: 2nd and 3rd, each	50	200	400
Not vulnerable: 4th and more, each	50	300	600
Vulnerable: 1st	100	200	400
Vulnerable: each further	100	300	600

Honours

The **honours** are the A, K, Q, J and 10 of trumps. **Either side** scores a bonus if one player – dummy included – was dealt:

- **4 of the 5 trump honours:** 100.
- **All 5 trump honours:** 150.
- **All four Aces** in a no-trump contract: 150.

Claim honours after the play; vulnerability doesn't matter.

Examples

Example 1: On deal 1 (nobody vulnerable), N-S play **4♥** and take **11 tricks**. Trick points: $4 \times 30 = 120$. That's game: +300. One overtrick: +30. N-S score **450**.

Example 2: The same contract, but **doubled** (as in the auction above). Trick points: $4 \times 60 = 240$. Game bonus 300, insult 50, one doubled overtrick 100 (not vulnerable). N-S score **690**. Had North taken only 9 tricks, E-W would score **100** (one undertrick, doubled, not vulnerable).

Example 3: On deal 1, E-W make **2♠** exactly: 60 trick points, a part-score. On deal 2 East deals, so E-W are vulnerable. E-W make **2♦**: 40 more. $60 + 40 = 100$, so the game is completed: E-W add **540** ($40 + 500$, vulnerable on this deal). Now any part-score N-S had made no longer counts toward game.

♠ Winning the game

After **four deals** (passed-out deals don't count), add up each side's points. The side with **more points wins the Chicago**; the difference is the margin. Then you can draw for new partners and start the next Chicago.

♠ Tips for beginners

This is **one common, simple way to bid**, not a rule – you may bid anything you like, but your partner has to understand you. Partnerships usually agree on a bidding system beforehand.

- **Count high-card points (HCP):** Ace 4, King 3, Queen 2, Jack 1. The whole deck has 40, an average hand 10.
- **Open with 12 or more HCP.** Bid your **longest suit** at the 1-level; with two equally long suits, bid the higher-ranking one. With 15–17 HCP and no very short suit, open **1NT**.
- **Answer your partner** with about 6 HCP or more: show a new suit, or support partner's suit if you hold 3–4 cards in it.
- **Aim for game with 25 HCP together** – 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠ are the easiest games. With 33 or more, think about a slam.

- **Find a trump fit:** eight or more trumps between you and your partner make a good trump suit. As declarer, **plan before playing** to the first trick: count your sure winners in both hands.

♠ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before you start.

- **Rubber scoring:** the traditional scoring. Trick points are written "below the line", everything else "above". A side wins a **game** by reaching 100 trick points, in one deal or with several part-scores; then both sides start the next game from zero. A side that has won a game is **vulnerable**. The first side to win two games wins the **rubber** and scores **700** if the opponents have no game, **500** if they have one. There is no separate bonus per game; in an unfinished rubber, a side with the only game scores 300, and a side with the only part-score in an unfinished game 100. A passed-out deal is simply skipped – the next player deals. Slam, overtrick, undertrick and honours scores are as above.
- **Switched vulnerability:** by agreement, on deals 2 and 3 the side **not** dealing is vulnerable instead of the dealer's side.

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game (Whist family, with bidding and fixed partnerships)

ORIGIN: Whist-type games of the 19th century; contract bridge: USA, 1925

ALSO KNOWN AS: Contract Bridge; Chicago or four-deal bridge (the four-deal form); rubber bridge (traditional scoring)

RELATED GAMES: Whist, Biritch (Russian Whist), Auction Bridge, Plafond, Vint, Solo Whist, Spades

Bridge grew out of **Whist**, for centuries the leading partnership trick-taking game in Britain. The first known rule book, *Biritch, or Russian Whist*, was published in 1886 by John Collinson, an English financier working in Constantinople; according to Wikipedia, he traced the game to the Russian community there.

Biritch already had no trumps, a dummy, and doubling and redoubling. Versions called "bridge" or "bridge whist" became popular in Britain and the USA in the 1890s; the breakthrough came in 1894, when London's Portland Club accepted the game. The name *biritch* is thought to come from a Russian word for a herald.

In **auction bridge**, first recorded around 1904, the players bid for the contract – but all tricks taken counted toward game and slam, so there was no reason to bid high. The French game **Plafond**, which appeared around the First World War, counted only tricks that had been bid. According to pagat.com, the Russian game **Vint** had already anticipated several features of contract bridge in the late 19th century.

Contract bridge was the result of scoring changes worked out by the American millionaire **Harold S. Vanderbilt** in 1925 on board the SS *Finland* – only tricks bid count toward game and slam, and the new idea of **vulnerability** raises the stakes. In the 1930s, **Ely Culbertson** played a major role in making it popular, with books, his magazine *The Bridge World* (founded 1929) and publicised challenge matches such as the 1931–32 "Bridge Battle of the Century" against Sidney Lenz.

The World Bridge Federation was founded in 1958, and the International Olympic Committee recognised it as an International Sports Federation in 1999. Bridge and chess are the only mind sports recognised by the IOC, though neither is part of the Olympic Games. Chicago, the four-deal form used here, is named after the city where it originated, according to the Laws of Rubber Bridge.

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♠

QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** bid a **contract** with your partner, then make it.
- **Deal** 13 each. Dealer calls first, then clockwise.
- **Bid** level + strain: level + 6 = tricks; ♣ < ♦ < ♥ < ♠ < NT. Or **Pass**, **Double**, **Redouble**. Three passes end it.
- **Declarer:** first of the side to name the strain. Left opponent leads; partner lays cards open as **dummy**.
- **Follow suit**, else any card. Highest trump wins, else highest of suit led.
- **Chicago:** 4 deals. Vulnerable: none · dealer's side ×2 · both.

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CHEAT SHEET

SCORE	NOT VUL · VUL
Trick over 6	♣ ♦ 20 · ♥ ♠ 30 · NT 40, then 30
Game (100+)	300 · 500
Part-score, deal 4	100
Small · grand slam	500/1000 · 750/1500
Down, each	50 · 100
Down, doubled	100, 200, 200, 300 ... · 200, 300 ...
Made doubled · redoubled	+50 · +100

- **Doubled:** trick points ×2, overtricks 100 · 200. **Redoubled:** twice that.
- **Game:** 3NT, 4♥ 4♠, 5♣ 5♦. Part-scores add up.
- **Example:** 4♥ +1, not vul: 120 + 30 + 300 = **450**.



Cribbage

Count to fifteen, peg your way round the board and race your opponent to 121 – with an extra hand, the crib, for the dealer.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
2	30 min	10+	medium
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers			

♠ Overview

Cribbage is a classic two-player game in which you score points for card combinations: cards that add up to **15**, **pairs**, **runs** (consecutive ranks) and **flushes** (cards of one suit). Points are scored twice in every deal – first while the cards are played one by one onto a running total (**the play**), then when each player counts the combinations in their hand (**the show**). The dealer also owns an extra hand, the **crib**, made from cards both players throw away. The first player to reach **121 points** wins.

- **Players:** 2 (3 or 4 are possible, see *Variants*).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck without jokers, and a **cribbage board** with pegs – or just paper and pencil (see *Keeping score*).

♠ Card values

For adding up, every card has a value:

CARD	VALUE
A	1
2 to 10	face value
J, Q, K	10

For **runs**, cards go in their natural order **A 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 J Q K**. The Ace is always low: A-2-3 is a run, Q-K-A is not. Suits only matter for flushes and for the Jack called **his nobs** (see *The show*).

♠ Keeping score

Points come in small amounts all through the game, so you record them the moment you earn them. This is called **pegging**.

With a cribbage board: the board has a track of holes for each player (the usual board has 120 holes plus a final **game hole** at 121). Each player has **two pegs**. When you score, take your **rear** peg and move it that many holes **in front of** your front peg. The front peg always shows your total; the gap between the pegs shows your last score, so your opponent can check it.

With pen and paper: draw two columns, one per player. Each time someone scores, write the new running total in their column (e.g. 2, 5, 11, ...) – not just the points, so you never need to add up long lists. Say every score out loud so both players can check it. It helps to draw a line under the totals at the end of each deal.

♠ Setup

1. **Cut for deal:** each player cuts the shuffled deck and shows the bottom card of their cut. The **lower** card deals first (Ace is lowest). Equal cards: cut again. After that, the deal **alternates** every deal. In the next game, the loser of the last game deals first.

2. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles, lets the opponent (the **non-dealer**) cut, and then deals **6 cards** to each player, one at a time, face down, starting with the non-dealer. Put the rest of the deck face down on the table: this is the **stock**.
3. **The crib:** look at your cards and **discard 2 of them face down** into a separate pile. Both players do this, so the pile gets 4 cards. This pile is the **crib**: an extra hand that belongs to the **dealer** and is counted by the dealer at the end of the deal. Nobody looks at it until then. You now keep 4 cards in hand.
4. **The starter:** the non-dealer cuts the stock, and the dealer turns up the top card of the lower half and puts it face up on top of the stock. This is the **starter**. It is not played, but it counts as a fifth card for **both hands and the crib** in the show.
5. **His heels:** if the starter is a **Jack**, the dealer pegs **2 points** at once.

Tip for discarding: *as dealer you are happy to put good cards (fives, pairs, cards that add up to 15) in the crib, since it is yours. As non-dealer you throw cards that are unlikely to help your opponent.*

♠ The play

Now the four cards in each hand are played one at a time, and a **running total** (the **count**) is kept.

1. The **non-dealer** starts: play one card face up in front of you and announce the count (e.g. "seven").
2. Then the dealer plays a card and announces the new total ("fifteen"), and so on, alternately. Each player keeps their own played cards in a row in front of them.
3. The count may **never go over 31**.

Scoring in the play

You score when **your** card makes one of these:

YOUR CARD MAKES ...	POINTS
a count of exactly 15	2
a count of exactly 31	2
a pair with the card just played before it	2
three of a kind in a row (pair royal)	6
four of a kind in a row (double pair royal)	12
a run of 3 or more with the cards just played	1 per card
the go or the last card	1

- **Pairs** only count with cards played directly in a row. Two Queens, or a Queen and a King, are not a pair: pairs must be the same rank, not just the same value.
- **Runs** in the play count even if the cards were played out of order, as long as no other card is in between. If the last cards played are 4, 6, 5, the 5 completes a run of 3. If a 3 or 7 follows, that makes a run of 4, and so on.
- One card can score several things at once: a card that makes 15 **and** a pair scores 4.

Go

If you cannot play any card without going over 31, say "**Go**". Your opponent then keeps playing as many cards as they can without going over 31 (scoring pairs, runs and 31 as usual). Then:

- If they reach **exactly 31**, they score **2** for the 31.
- Otherwise, whoever played the **last card** before the stop scores **1** for the go.

Then the count starts again **from zero**. Cards played before are turned face down and no longer form pairs or runs. The player who did **not** play the last card starts the new count. Carry on until all eight cards have been played. The very **last card** of the play scores **1** (or 2 if it makes exactly 31).

Example (the play): Anna is non-dealer and holds 7 6 5 10. Ben holds 8 9 K Q. Anna plays **7** ("seven"). Ben plays **8** ("fifteen") and pegs **2**. Anna plays **6** ("twenty-one"): 7-8-6 is a run of three, **3** points. Ben plays **9** ("thirty"): 6-7-8-9 is a run of four, **4** points. Anna's 5 and 10 would both go over 31: she says "Go". Ben's K and Q don't fit either, so Ben pegs **1** for the go. New count, Anna starts: **5** ("five"). Ben plays **K** ("fifteen") for **2**. Anna plays **10** ("twenty-five"), her last card. Ben's Q would make 35, so he says "Go" and Anna pegs **1**. Ben plays his **Q** alone on a new count – last card, **1** point. Play total: Anna 3 + 1 = **4**, Ben 2 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 1 = **10**.

♠ The show

Now the hands are counted, always in this order:

1. the **non-dealer's** hand,
2. the **dealer's** hand,
3. the **crib** (for the dealer).

Each hand (and the crib) is 4 cards **plus the starter**, 5 cards in all. Count every combination below. A card may be used in as many **different** combinations as it fits.

COMBINATION	POINTS
Fifteen: each different group of cards adding up to 15	2
Pair: two cards of the same rank	2
Pair royal: three of a kind (= 3 pairs)	6
Double pair royal: four of a kind (= 6 pairs)	12
Run: 3, 4 or 5 cards in sequence (any suits)	1 per card
Flush in hand: all 4 hand cards of one suit	4
... and the starter of that suit too	5
Flush in the crib: only if all 5 cards are one suit	5
His nobs: the Jack of the starter's suit in hand or crib	1

Hints for counting:

- Count **fifteens** first, saying "fifteen two, fifteen four ...", then pairs, runs, flush and nobs.
- **Double runs**: a pair inside a run gives two runs. 5-6-6-7 has two runs of three (6 points) plus the pair (2) = 8, before fifteens.
- A run is only counted at its longest: 4-5-6-7 is one run of 4, not two runs of 3.
- The starter never counts for a 4-card flush: a flush needs all 4 cards **in the hand**.

Example (hand): you hold $5\heartsuit 5\spadesuit J\clubsuit K\diamondsuit$, and the starter is $5\diamondsuit$. Fifteens: each of the three fives with the J ($3 \times 2 = 6$) and with the K ($3 \times 2 = 6$), plus $5 + 5 + 5 (2)$ – that is 7 fifteens = **14**. The three fives are a pair royal: **6**. The $J\clubsuit$ is not the suit of the starter, so no nobs. Total: $14 + 6 = \mathbf{20}$ points. (With the $J\diamondsuit$ instead of the $J\clubsuit$, it would be 21.)

Example (crib): Ben's crib is $3\heartsuit 4\heartsuit 5\heartsuit 9\heartsuit$, the starter is $6\spadesuit$. Fifteens: $9 + 6$ and $4 + 5 + 6 = \mathbf{4}$. Run $3-4-5-6 = \mathbf{4}$. The four hearts do **not** score a flush, because in the crib the starter must match too. Total: **8 points**.

The 29 hand: the highest possible hand is three fives and a Jack, with the fourth five of the **Jack's suit** as starter – e.g. $5\clubsuit 5\diamondsuit 5\heartsuit J\spadesuit$, starter $5\spadesuit$. Fifteens: the J with each five ($4 \times 2 = 8$) and each group of three fives ($4 \times 2 = 8$) = 16. Four fives = 12. His nobs = 1. Total **29**.

A hand with no score at all is jokingly called a "**nineteen**", because 19 is impossible to score.

♠ Winning the game

The game is played over as many deals as needed. The first player to reach **121 points** wins **immediately** – during the play, in the show, or even with his heels. That's why the order of the show matters: the non-dealer counts first, so they can win before the dealer counts.

Skunk: if the loser has **not reached 91** points, they are **skunked**, and the win counts double. If the loser has not even reached 61, it is a **double skunk** (triple).

The British word for this is a **lurch** – depending on the source, for a loser below 91 or below 61. Agree on the details before playing if you keep a running tally of games.

♠ **Tips for beginners**

- **Fives are gold.** With so many 10-value cards, every 5 makes easy fifteens. Keep them – or give them to your own crib, never to your opponent's.
- **Discard with the crib in mind.** As dealer, throw a pair or two cards making 15 into your crib. As non-dealer, split your discards (e.g. a King and a 2) so they don't help each other.
- **Avoid leading a 5** in the play – any 10-card makes 15 for your opponent. Leading a 4 or lower is safe: no single card makes 15.
- **Avoid a count of 21:** a 10-card brings it to 31.
- **Be careful with pairs in the play.** If you pair your opponent's card, they may answer with a pair royal for 6.

♠ **Variants**

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Short game:** play to **61** instead of 121 (once round a board with 60 holes).
- **Muggins:** after a player has counted and pegged a hand, the opponent may call "**Muggins!**" and peg any points the player **overlooked** for themselves. Makes careful counting important.
- **Three players:** deal **5** cards each and **1** card straight into the crib. Each player discards **1** card to the crib, so everyone has 4 cards and the crib has 4. The player to the dealer's left starts the play and counts first in the show. When two players have said "Go", the third keeps playing alone. Deal passes to the left. Game to 121, everyone for themselves.
- **Four players (partners):** partners sit opposite each other; one of each team does the pegging for both. Deal **5** cards each; everyone discards **1** card into the dealer's crib. The player to the dealer's left starts the play and counts first.

When three players have said "Go", the fourth keeps playing alone. Team scores are added together; game to 121.

- **Five-card cribbage:** the older game. Deal **5** cards each, both discard 2 to the crib, so hands have 3 cards. At the start of the game the non-dealer pegs **3 points** (for "last"). The play only goes up to 31 **once** – there is no new count after a go, so some cards may stay unplayed. In the show, a flush is **3 points** (4 with the starter); a crib flush needs all 5 cards. Game to **61**.

♠ **Background & history**

FAMILY: Adding game (cards played to a running total, scoring for 15s, 31s, pairs and runs)

ORIGIN: England, early 17th century

ALSO KNOWN AS: Crib; Six-Card Cribbage (the older game is Five-Card Cribbage)

RELATED GAMES: Noddy, Costly Colours, Five-Card Cribbage, Cribbage Solitaire, Cribbage Square

Cribbage grew out of **Noddy**, an English game of the 16th century: the Oxford English Dictionary's earliest reference to it dates from 1589, when Thomas Nashe warned someone not to be caught "at noddy". According to the 17th-century writer John Aubrey, the poet and courtier **Sir John Suckling** (1609–1642) created cribbage from Noddy. His main addition was the **crib**, the extra hand for the dealer that gives the game its name. The earliest published rules appear in England in Cotgrave (1662), Willughby (1672) and Cotton (1674).

The original game used five cards per player and went to 61; the six-card game to 121 has almost entirely replaced it, though five-card cribbage is still played in parts of Britain. Cribbage has been called Britain's national card game, and Charles Dickens has his characters play it in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. It spread throughout the English-speaking world and is especially popular in North America. The distinctive **cribbage board** with its pegs is still used to keep score, and the American Cribbage Congress runs tournaments.

The game has a special place in the US submarine service. In 1943, aboard the submarine USS *Wahoo*, commander Dudley "Mush" Morton dealt his executive officer Richard O'Kane a perfect 29 hand; shortly afterwards *Wahoo* sank two Japanese freighters, and the board became a lucky charm. O'Kane's board went down with USS *Tang* in 1944, but he was later given a replacement. Since his death it has been kept in the wardroom of the oldest submarine in active service in the US Pacific Fleet and passed on whenever that boat is decommissioned.

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- Noddy – David Parlett
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- Richard O'Kane – Wikipedia
- Cribbage Tournament Rules – American Cribbage Congress
- The O'Kane Cribbage Board Is Passed Down – DVIDS

15
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QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** first to **121** points. Low cut deals; deal alternates.
- **Deal 6** each. Both discard **2** face down to the dealer's **crib**. Cut the **starter**; a Jack gives the dealer **2**.
- **Play:** non-dealer leads; alternate cards, announcing the total. Never over **31**. Score **15**, **31**, pairs, runs.
- Can't play? Say "**Go**"; opponent plays on, then last card pegs **1**. Restart from zero.
- **Show:** non-dealer's hand, dealer's hand, then crib – each with the starter.
- Reaching **121** wins at once.

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CHEAT SHEET

SCORING

COMBINATION	PLAY	SHOW
Fifteen	2	2 each
Pair / three / four of a kind	2 / 6 / 12	2 / 6 / 12
Run	1 per card	1 per card
31 / go or last card	2 / 1	–
Flush: 4 in hand / 5 with starter	–	4 / 5
His nobs (J of starter suit)	–	1
His heels (J turned as starter)	2 dealer	–

REMINDERS

- **A = 1, J Q K = 10**. Ace is low in runs.
- Crib flush only with all **5** cards.
- Skunk: loser under **91**. Short game: **61**.

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Big Two

Play singles, pairs and poker hands, beat every play with something higher and be the first to empty your hand – where the humble 2 is the mightiest card.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
4	30 min	10+	medium
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers			

♥ Overview

Big Two is a **climbing game** from southern China: each player in turn must beat the previous play with a higher card or combination – or pass. Besides single cards, pairs and triples you can also play **five-card poker hands** such as a straight or a full house. Whoever gets rid of all their cards first wins the hand; everyone else scores penalty points for the cards they are still holding. The game is named after its highest card: the **2**.

- **Players:** 4, each playing for themselves (rules for 3 and 2 players are under *Variants*).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck, no jokers, and paper and pencil for the score.

♥ Card order

Every card has a **rank** (its value). The **2 is the highest** rank, the **3 the lowest**:

2 (highest) – A – K – Q – J – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – **3** (lowest)

Unlike in many other games, the **suits** also have an order. It only matters when two cards have the same rank:

♠ **Spades** (highest) – ♥ **Hearts** – ♣ **Clubs** – ♦ **Diamonds** (lowest)

So the 2 ♠ is the best card in the game and the 3 ♦ the lowest. A 7 ♥ beats a 7 ♣, but any 8 beats any 7.

♥ Setup

1. **Deal:** pick a dealer at random. The dealer shuffles and deals out **all** the cards one at a time, face down, so each player gets **13 cards** (their **hand**). In Big Two, play traditionally goes **anticlockwise** (to the right), and the cards are dealt in that direction too.
2. **Sort your hand:** pick up your cards and sort them by rank. Keep them hidden from the others.
3. **Who starts:** the player holding the 3 ♦ begins. Their first play **must include** the 3 ♦ – alone or as part of a pair, triple or five-card hand.

♥ What you can play

A **play** is always one of these combinations:

COMBINATION	CARDS	EXAMPLE
Single	any one card	K ♥
Pair	two cards of the same rank	8 ♣ 8 ♠
Triple	three cards of the same rank	5 ♦ 5 ♥ 5 ♠
Five-card hand	see below	3 ♣ 4 ♦ 5 ♠ 6 ♥ 7 ♣

Comparing singles, pairs and triples: the higher rank wins. If the ranks are the same, the higher suit wins. For pairs, compare the higher-suited card of each pair: 9 ♠ 9 ♦ beats 9 ♥ 9 ♣, because the ♠ beats the ♥.

Five-card hands

There are five kinds, from weakest to strongest:

1. **Straight:** five cards in rank sequence, of mixed suits, e.g. 6-7-8-9-10. For straights only, the 2 counts **below the 3**, and the Ace may be at either end, but never in the middle. So the lowest straight is **A-2-3-4-5**, the highest **10-J-Q-K-A**; J-Q-K-A-2 is *not* a straight. The straight with the higher top card wins; if the top cards have the same rank, the suit of the top card decides.
2. **Flush:** five cards of the **same suit**, in any ranks. A flush in a higher suit beats any flush in a lower suit. Between two flushes of the same suit, the one with the higher top card wins.
3. **Full house:** three cards of one rank plus two of another, e.g. J J J 4 4. The one with the higher triple wins.
4. **Four of a kind:** four cards of one rank **plus any fifth card**, e.g. 7 7 7 7 Q. The higher four wins. Four cards on their own are *not* a valid play.
5. **Straight flush:** a straight in which all five cards have the same suit. The higher top card wins; if they are equal, the higher suit wins. The best hand of all is 10-J-Q-K-A in ♠.

Any five-card hand of a **stronger kind** beats any hand of a weaker kind – every flush beats every straight, every full house beats every flush, and so on.

Example (straights): Ben plays 5♥ 6♣ 7♦ 8♠ 9♥. Carla has 5♠ 6♦ 7♣ 8♥ 9♠. Both straights end in a 9, so the suit of the 9 decides: ♠ beats ♥, and Carla may play hers. Dan's 6♣ 7♦ 8♠ 9♥ 10♦ would beat both, because its top card is a 10.

Example (flushes): Anna plays a heart flush 3♥ 6♥ 9♥ Q♥ A♥. Ben's club flush with a King on top is not enough – clubs rank below hearts. But Carla's spade flush 2♠ 4♠ 5♠ 7♠ 8♠ wins, because spades are the highest suit, even though her cards are low.

♥ Playing

Play goes in **rounds** (series of plays onto a pile in the middle of the table).

1. **Lead:** the first player of a round – the **leader** – plays any valid combination face up in the middle.
2. **Beat or pass:** going round the table, each player either **beats** the last play or **passes** (says "pass"). - To beat it, play the **same number of cards**, and a **better** combination: a higher single on a single, a higher pair on a pair, a higher triple on a triple, a stronger five-card hand on a five-card hand. You can never beat a single with a pair, for example. - You may always pass, even if you could beat the play – often it is wise to save your good cards. Passing does not stop you from playing again when your turn comes round, as long as the round is still going.
3. **End of the round:** when all the other players have passed in a row after someone's play, the round is over. The cards in the middle are put aside face down. The player who made the last play **leads** the next round with any combination they like.

Example (a round of play): Anna holds the 3♦ and leads the pair 3♦ 3♠. Ben plays 6♣ 6♥. Carla passes. Dan plays 10♦ 10♣. Anna plays K♣ K♠. Ben passes. Carla now plays 2♦ 2♥ after all. Dan, Anna and Ben pass. Carla puts the pile aside and leads again – she chooses a single 4♣ to get rid of a low card.

♥ End of a hand

As soon as one player has played their **last card**, the hand is over. That player wins it. The others do not get a chance to beat that last play.

♥ Scoring

Everyone else scores **penalty points** for the cards left in their hand:

CARDS LEFT	PENALTY
1–9	1 point per card
10–12	2 points per card
13 (none played)	3 points per card = 39

The winner of the hand scores nothing. Write each player's penalty down and keep a running total.

Example: *Anna goes out. Ben has 3 cards left (3 points), Carla 10 cards ($10 \times 2 = 20$ points) and Dan never managed to play – 13 cards, 39 points.*

For the next hand, the deal passes to the next player in turn. Again, whoever holds the 3 ♦ starts and must play it.

♥ Winning the game

Agree beforehand how long to play – a number of hands, a time limit, or until someone has reached a set total such as **50 penalty points**. Then the player with the **fewest** penalty points wins. (Traditionally, players settle the differences between their scores with small stakes agreed beforehand.)

♥ Tips for beginners

- Count the 2s and Aces that have been played – knowing which high cards are still out tells you when your card is safe.
- Five-card hands are a great way to get rid of many cards at once. Build them early, and don't break them up for a single play.
- Winning a round is only useful if you have something good to lead afterwards. Sometimes it is better to pass.
- Keep a sure winner (like the 2 ♠) to regain the lead near the end.
- Watch players with few cards left – when someone has one card, lead pairs or five-card hands, not singles they could beat.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **Other suit orders:** in Taiwan and parts of Hong Kong, the bridge order is used: ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ (clubs lowest), so the lowest card is the 3♣. In the Philippines, where the game is called **Pusoy Dos**, the order is ♦ ♥ ♠ ♣ (diamonds highest), and whoever holds the 3♣ starts.
- **Clockwise:** many groups simply play clockwise.
- **Winner leads:** only in the first hand does the 3♦ start; afterwards the winner of the previous hand leads with any combination.
- **Passed is out:** once you have passed, you may not play again until the round is over (common in Indonesia).
- **Flushes by rank:** a flush is compared by its top card first, and the suit only decides a tie – the usual version in Hong Kong.
- **Other straights:** some count A-2-3-4-5 or 2-3-4-5-6 as the highest straight, or don't allow a 2 in straights at all.
- **Last card:** you must say "last card" when you are down to one card.
- **Harsher penalties:** double penalties for 8–9 cards left, triple for 10–12, quadruple for 13; some also double the penalty for every 2 left in hand.
- **Three players:** deal 17 cards each and place the last card face up. Whoever holds the 3♦ takes that card too, and starts.
- **Two players:** deal 13 or 17 cards each and leave the rest aside face down; whoever holds the lowest card starts.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Climbing game (climbing and shedding)

ORIGIN: probably coastal China (Cantonese-speaking south), around 1980

ALSO KNOWN AS: Choh Dai Di / Dai Di (Cantonese), Da Lao Er (Mandarin), Bu Bu Gao Sheng (Taiwan), Cap Sa (Hokkien, "thirteen"), Pusoy Dos (Philippines)

RELATED GAMES: Zheng Shangyou (China), Tiến Lên (Vietnam), Dai Hin Min / Daifugō (Japan), President, Dou Di Zhu

Big Two belongs to the **climbing games**, in which every play must beat the one before. According to pagat.com, climbing games are widespread in East Asia, especially China, and have become known in the West only in recent years. Big Two stands out because it borrows the five-card hands of poker – straights, flushes, full houses – as playable combinations.

Pagat.com says the game "probably originated in coastal China around 1980" and became very popular in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines and Singapore; Wikipedia describes it as a game "of Cantonese origin" from Hong Kong. Today it is played throughout East and Southeast Asia, including mainland China, Macau, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia, and according to pagat.com it has also spread to Australia and North America. Many regions have their own suit order: Taiwan uses the bridge order, and the Filipino **Pusoy Dos** makes diamonds the highest suit.

The Chinese game Zheng Shangyou ("struggling upstream") is, according to Wikipedia, the game from which Tiến Lên and similar games derive; Tiến Lên is a close Vietnamese relative of Big Two. The Western game **President**, also on this site, and its probable Japanese ancestor Dai Hin Min follow the same idea of beating the last play, but without poker hands – and in President all suits are equal.

SOURCES

- Big Two – pagat.com
- Climbing games – pagat.com
- Tien Len – pagat.com
- Big two – Wikipedia
- Zheng Shangyou – Wikipedia

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QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** be first to play all your cards.
- **Rank:** 2 high ... 3 low. Suits: ♠ > ♥ > ♣ > ♦.
- **Deal 13 each**, play to the right. 3 ♦ leads and must be played.
- **Plays:** single, pair, triple, **five-card hand**.
- **Beat** the last play: **same number** of cards, **higher** – or **pass** (you may play again later).
- All others pass: **last player leads** anything.
- Someone is out: hand ends. Others score **penalty points** for cards left.
- **Fewest points** wins.

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CHEAT SHEET

FIVE-CARD HANDS (LOW TO HIGH)

HAND	TIES BROKEN BY
Straight	top card, then its suit
Flush	suit, then top card
Full house	the triple
Four of a kind + 1	the four
Straight flush	top card, then suit

Straights: A-2-3-4-5 lowest ... 10-J-Q-K-A highest. Stronger kind beats weaker.

PENALTY PER CARD LEFT

1–9 cards: 1 each · 10–12: 2 each · 13: 3 each (39). Winner: 0.

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Oh Hell!

Say exactly how many tricks you'll take – no more, no fewer – and watch everyone else's plans go to hell.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
3–7	60 min	10+	medium
CARDS 52 cards, no jokers (4 jokers for the Wizard-style variant)			

♥ Overview

Oh Hell! is a **trick-taking** game with a twist: before each hand, every player **bids** – predicts – exactly how many tricks they will win. You score well only if you hit your bid **exactly**. Taking one trick too many hurts just as much as taking one too few. The game is played over many hands, and the number of cards dealt changes from hand to hand.

- **Players:** 3 to 7 (best with 4 to 6).
- **You need:** one standard 52-card deck without jokers, plus paper and pencil for the score sheet.

♥ The cards

In each suit the cards rank from high to low: **A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2**. The Ace is the highest card.

♥ Tricks and trumps

A **trick** is one round of play in which every player puts down one card. The first player **leads** (plays any card), and the others follow one after another, clockwise.

- **Follow suit:** you must play a card of the suit that was led if you have one.
- If you have none, you may play **any** card – including a trump.

In every hand one suit is **trump**. Trump cards beat all cards of the other suits. The trick is won by the **highest trump** in it – or, if no trump was played, by the **highest card of the suit led**. The winner takes the cards, places them face down in front of them as one bundle (so tricks are easy to count), and leads to the next trick.

♥ Setup

The number of cards per player changes from hand to hand. The first hand uses the most cards:

PLAYERS	CARDS IN THE FIRST HAND	HANDS IN THE GAME
3–5	10	19
6	8	15
7	7	13

Each following hand has **one card fewer**, down to **one card** each, then **one card more** each time, back up to the starting number. With 7 players you play 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 cards.

1. **First dealer:** everyone draws a card; the highest card deals first. After each hand the deal passes one player to the **left** (clockwise).
2. **Hand size:** check the table and the sequence above.
3. **Deal:** the dealer shuffles and deals the cards one at a time, face down, clockwise, starting with the player on their left.
4. **Trump:** the dealer turns the **next card** of the pack face up. Its suit is trump for this hand. The rest of the pack is not used in this hand.

♥ Bidding

Look at your cards. Then, starting with the player to the **dealer's left** and going clockwise, each player announces a **bid**: the number of tricks they expect to win. The **dealer bids last**.

- Any number from 0 up to the number of cards in your hand is allowed. Nobody may pass – a bid of **zero** ("I'll take no tricks") is fine.
- The scorekeeper writes down every bid. Anyone may ask to hear the bids again during play.

The dealer's restriction (the "hook"): the dealer may **not** bid the number that would make the total of all bids equal the number of tricks in the hand. So the bids never add up exactly – at least one player is bound to miss.

Example: 4 players, 5 cards each, so there are 5 tricks. Anna bids 1, Ben 2, Carla 0 – that is 3 so far. Dan, the dealer, may bid anything **except 2**, because $3 + 2 = 5$. He bids 3 (total 6: over-bid – someone will take fewer tricks than they want) or 1 (total 4: under-bid – someone will be forced to take an extra trick).

♥ Playing the hand

The player to the **dealer's left** leads to the first trick with any card, including a trump. Play the tricks as explained above until everyone's cards are used up. The winner of each trick leads to the next.

♥ Scoring

After the last trick everyone counts their tricks:

- **Exactly your bid:** 10 points bonus **plus 1 point per trick**. A bid of 0 made exactly scores 10; a bid of 3 made exactly scores 13.
- **More or fewer than your bid:** only **1 point per trick** you took – no bonus.

Example (continued): *Dan bid 3. The tricks are won: Anna 1, Ben 1, Carla 0, Dan 3. Anna scores 11 (bid 1, made it), Ben 1 (bid 2, took only 1), Carla 10 (bid 0, took none), Dan 13 (bid 3, made it).*

Keep a running total for each player on the score sheet.

♥ Winning the game

After the last hand, the player with the **highest total** wins. If there is a tie, you may play extra hands with the largest number of cards until someone is ahead.

♥ Tips for beginners

- **Count your sure winners.** Aces and high trumps usually win a trick; Kings are often only half a trick. Low cards in a long side suit almost never win when there is a trump suit.
- **Zero is a good bid** with a hand full of low cards – but beware of being forced to win a trick with your last card.
- **Listen to the bids.** If the total is over the number of tricks, everyone will fight for tricks; if it is under, someone will be stuck with an extra one – make sure it isn't you.
- **Get rid of danger early.** Once you have made your bid, throw away high cards when you can't follow suit.
- **As dealer, use your knowledge.** You bid last and know all the other bids – but the hook may force you into an uncomfortable number.

♥ Variants

All of these are optional – agree on them before the game.

- **No hook:** the dealer may bid any number, so everyone could make their bid.
- **Blackout (strict scoring):** exact bid scores **10 + the bid**; a missed bid scores **nothing**.

- **Penalty scoring:** exact bid scores 10 + 1 per trick; a missed bid **loses** 1 point for every trick you are over or under.
- **Other sequences:** play only upwards (1 card, then 2, 3 ...), only downwards, or a fixed number of cards every hand. If a hand uses all 52 cards, there is no card left to turn: play that hand **without trumps**.
- **Blind hand:** in one agreed hand (often the one-card hand), players bid **before** looking at their cards. Exact blind bids score double.
- **Simultaneous bidding:** everyone hides a fist and on "three" shows their bid with their fingers. There is no hook then.

Wizard-style variant

The commercial game **Wizard** (Ken Fisher) is based on Oh Hell. It uses a 60-card deck: the 52 normal cards plus **4 Wizards** and **4 Jesters**. You can get close with standard decks:

- **Cards:** add **4 jokers** from two decks. The two **coloured** (or large) jokers are **Wizards**, the two **black** (or small) jokers are **Jesters**. That is 56 cards.
- **Hands:** deal **1 card** in the first hand, 2 in the second, and so on, until all 56 cards would be dealt (3 players: 18 hands, 4: 14, 5: 11, 6: 9). There is no way back down.
- **Trump:** turn the next card. A number card sets trump. A **Jester**, or no card left, means **no trump**. A **Wizard** lets the dealer choose trump.
- **Wizards and Jesters** may be played at **any time**, even if you could follow suit.
- A **Wizard** always wins the trick; if there are several, the **first** Wizard wins. If a Wizard is led, everyone may play any card.
- A **Jester** always loses; only if every card in the trick is a Jester does the first one win. If a Jester is led, the **first number card** played sets the suit to follow.
- **Scoring (as in Wizard):** exact bid: **20 + 10 per trick**. Missed bid: **-10 per trick** you are over or under. The hook is optional.

Original Wizard has **4 Wizards and 4 Jesters** and plays up to 20 hands (3 players). This version with 2 of each is a little less wild but plays the same way.

♥ Background & history

FAMILY: Trick-taking game with exact bidding (Whist family)

ORIGIN: Britain and USA, around 1930

ALSO KNOWN AS: Oh Well, Oh Pshaw, Blob, Blackout, Contract Whist, Nomination Whist, Up and Down the River, Bust, Elevator, German Bridge, Boeren-bridge (Netherlands), Stiche-Raten (Germany)

RELATED GAMES: Whist, Knock-out Whist, Bid Whist, Spades, Bridge, Wizard, Skull King

Oh Hell belongs to the Whist family, but it turns the usual goal upside down: instead of taking as many tricks as possible, you must take exactly the number you predicted. According to Wikipedia, the rules were first described by B. C. Westall around 1930 under the name "Oh! Well", and they were reprinted by Hubert Phillips until at least 1976. The game reached the United States very quickly and is recorded in New York clubs in 1931; pagat.com likewise says it first appeared in London and New York in the 1930s.

In those early rules the number of cards per player was fixed, and a game went to 100 points. Over the decades players in Britain and America added the rising and falling hand sizes that most people play today. The mild "Oh Well" and "Oh Pshaw" and the stronger "Oh Hell" all describe the moment a carefully planned bid collapses. Wikipedia names "Oh Hell" as by far the most common of its many names.

In 1984 Ken Fisher of Toronto, Canada, created **Wizard**, a commercial version with 60 cards: the normal 52 plus 4 Wizards, which always win, and 4 Jesters, which always lose. It was first printed in 1986. In Germany Amigo brought out its own edition in 1996, and by 2022 more than 2.6 million copies had been sold there, making the bidding idea familiar to many German families. Later games such as Skull King build on the same principle.

SOURCES

- Oh Hell! – pagat.com

- Oh hell – Wikipedia
- Wizard (card game) – Wikipedia
- Wizard (Spiel) – Wikipedia (German)

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QUICK RULES

- **Goal:** win **exactly** as many tricks as you bid.
- **Cards:** 3–5 players 10, 6 players 8, 7 players 7 – then one fewer each hand down to **1**, and back up.
- **Trump:** turn the next card.
- **Bid** 0 or more, from dealer's left; **dealer last**. Hook: bids may **not add up** to the number of tricks.
- Dealer's left leads. **Follow suit**; if you can't, play anything. Highest trump, else highest card of the suit led, wins.
- **Exact:** 10 + tricks. **Missed:** tricks only.
- Highest total after the last hand wins.

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CHEAT SHEET

RESULT	POINTS
Exact bid	10 + 1 per trick
Bid 0, no trick	10
Missed bid	1 per trick
<i>Variant:</i> Blackout	exact 10 + bid, else 0
<i>Wizard-style:</i> exact	20 + 10 per trick
<i>Wizard-style:</i> missed	–10 per trick off

- **Hook:** dealer may not make total bids = tricks.
- **Wizard-style:** coloured jokers = **Wizards** (first one wins the trick), black = **Jesters** (always lose); both playable any time.

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Orbit

Win together or fail together – everyone has a tricky task, and nobody may say a word about their cards.

PLAYERS	TIME	AGE	DIFFICULTY
3–5	30 min	10+	medium

CARDS Two decks: A–9 of each suit plus the four Kings to play, the whole second deck (no jokers) for tasks

♠ Overview

Orbit is a **cooperative** card game: all players form one team and win or lose together. It is a **trick-taking** game – everybody plays one card, the highest card wins all of them, and those cards together are called a **trick**. At the start of each round the team takes on a few **tasks**, such as "I win exactly two tricks" or "I win the 9♥". Each task belongs to one player, and **every task must be fulfilled**. The catch: you may **not talk about your cards**. Apart from one small signal per round, you have to read your teammates from the cards they play.

The game is played as a series of **missions**. The higher the mission number, the more difficult the tasks you have to take on. Failed missions are simply played again.

- **Players:** 3 to 5; best with 4.
- **You need:** two standard 52-card decks (ideally with different backs), one coin or small token per player, and paper and pencil for the logbook.

Orbit is an original game written for this site, inspired by the cooperative card game *The Crew: Mission Deep Sea*. It uses its own rules and tasks.

♠ The cards

Play cards (deck 1). Take the **Ace to 9** of each suit – that is A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 – and the **four Kings: 40 cards**. Put the 10s, Jacks, Queens and jokers of this deck back in the box.

- In each suit the **Ace counts as 1** and is the **lowest** card; the **9 is the highest**.
- The four **Kings are trumps**. A trump beats every ordinary card. The Kings are ranked **K♣ (1) < K♦ (2) < K♥ (3) < K♠ (4)**. They do not belong to any suit – K♥ is *not* a heart.

Task cards (deck 2). The whole second deck without jokers – **52 cards** – is the task deck. The **rank** of a task card says what the task is, the **suit** tells you which suit it is about (only for tasks that mention "this suit"). The task table below lists all tasks.

♠ The task table

Each task has a **difficulty** (1 = easy, 3 = hard). "I" is the player who owns the task. "Cards" means the play cards in the tricks you win; Kings belong to no suit.

TASK CARD	TASK: I WIN ...	DIFFICULTY
A	exactly 1 trick	2
2	exactly 2 tricks	3
3	at least 3 cards of this suit	3
4	at least one card of all 4 suits	2
5	the trick with the 1 (Ace) of this suit	2
6	no card of this suit	2
7	no tricks at all	2
8	no King	2
9	the trick with the 9 of this suit	1
10	more tricks than the player on my left	2
J	the first trick	1
Q	the last trick	3
K	a trick with a 1 – an Ace is the winning card	3

Example: The task card 6♥ means "I win no hearts". The task card 9♣ means "I win the trick that contains the 9♣". The task card 7♠ means "I win no tricks" – for the 7, the suit doesn't matter.

♠ Setup

1. **Shuffle and deal** all 40 play cards, one at a time, face down: - **4 players:** 10 cards each. - **5 players:** 8 cards each. - **3 players:** 13 cards each. The last card is laid **face up** in the middle and is out of play for this round.
2. Everybody picks up their cards and sorts them. Don't show them to anyone.
3. Whoever holds the **K♠** is the **commander** for this round and says so. (With 3 players, if the K♠ is the face-up card, the player holding the K♥ is commander.)

4. The mission number gives the **target**: the total difficulty of the tasks you must take on (see "Missions" below).

♠ Choosing the tasks

1. The commander shuffles the task deck and turns up **6 task cards**, face up in the middle.
2. Starting with the commander and going **clockwise** (to the left), each player **takes one** of the face-up task cards and puts it in front of themselves. Keep a running total of the difficulties taken.
3. A card may only be taken if the total **does not go above the target**. If no face-up card fits, turn up more cards until one does.
4. Stop as soon as the total **equals the target**. Put the remaining task cards aside.

Some players may end up with several tasks, others with none. Choose by looking at your own hand – but in silence. Nobody may say "I can do that one" or "please don't give me that". With 3 players, a task naming the face-up card can't be taken; put it aside.

Example: Mission 7, so the target is 4. Anna is commander and turns up 9♣, 2♥, 7♠, Q♦, J♥ and 3♠. Anna holds the K♠ and lots of high cards, so she takes the 2♥ ("exactly 2 tricks", difficulty 3): total 3. Only a difficulty-1 card still fits. Ben holds the K♥ and no clubs, so he takes the 9♣ ("win the 9♣"): total 4 – done. Cleo and Dan have no tasks this time.

♠ Playing a trick

The commander **leads** (plays the first card of) the first trick. Then, clockwise, each player adds one card face up:

- **Follow suit:** if you have a card of the suit that was led, you **must** play one. If a King was led, you must play a King if you have one.

- If you **can't follow**, you may play **any** card – a King (to trump) or a card of another suit.

Who wins the trick? If any King was played, the **highest King** wins. Otherwise, the **highest card of the suit that was led** wins. Cards of other suits never win, however high they are.

The winner takes the trick, lays it face up in front of them (slightly overlapping the previous tricks, so everyone can count them and see which cards they hold) and **leads** the next trick.

Example: Ben has the task 9♣. Dan leads the 9♣. Anna follows with 2♣, Ben has no clubs and trumps with the K♥, Cleo follows with 5♣. The K♥ is the only King, so Ben wins the trick – and with it the 9♣. His task is fulfilled.

♠ End of the mission

Play until all cards have been played. Then check the tasks: if **every task is fulfilled**, the mission is a **success**. If even one task is not, the mission **fails**.

Often you notice earlier that a task can no longer be fulfilled – for example when the owner of "no tricks" wins a trick, or another player wins the card someone needed. Then the mission has failed and you can stop at once.

Some tasks are **impossible** from the start: whoever holds the K♠ always wins the trick they play it in, so they can't fulfil "no tricks" or "no King". Don't take such a task – nor two tasks that contradict each other.

♠ Talking and signals

During a mission you may **not** give any information about your cards: no hints, no "hmm", no pulling faces. You may talk about the rules, whose turn it is and the mission number. Between missions, talk as much as you like.

The only way to tell the team something is a **signal**. Each player may give **one signal per mission**:

1. You may signal only **between tricks** or before the first trick – never in the middle of a trick.
2. Take one card from your hand (**not a King**) and put it **face up** on the table in front of you.
3. Place your coin on it to say what it is: - coin on the **top edge**: this is my **highest** card of this suit, - coin in the **middle**: this is my **only** card of this suit, - coin on the **bottom edge**: this is my **lowest** card of this suit.
4. The statement must be **true** at that moment. If a card is none of these (for example the middle one of three), you can't signal it.

The card still belongs to your hand. It stays face up until you play it, and you play it normally whenever you like (following suit as usual). Once it has been played, turn your coin over: you have used your signal.

Example: Cleo holds 2♥ and 8♥. She lays the 8♥ face up with her coin on the top edge: "the 8♥ is my highest heart". Now everybody knows that Cleo does not have the 9♥ and that her other hearts are all lower. Later Dan lays his 4♣ face up with the coin in the middle: it is his only club. Once he has played it, everyone knows he can't follow clubs any more and may trump them with a King.

♠ A failed mission

Example: Cleo has the task "exactly 1 trick" and has already won one. Dan leads the 4♠. Anna plays the 6♠, Ben the 2♠. Cleo's only spade is the 9♠ – she has to follow suit with it and wins her second trick. The mission fails. Had Cleo signalled "9♠ – my only spade" earlier, Dan would have led spades only after she had got rid of it, or led a King instead.

♠ Missions

Play the missions in order, starting with mission 1. Each deal is one **attempt**. If you succeed, write down the attempts and go on to the next mission. If you fail, collect all cards, shuffle and try the same mission again – with a new deal, possibly a new commander and new tasks.

The **target** is half the mission number, rounded down, plus 1:

MISSION	TARGET
1	1
2–3	2
4–5	3
6–7	4
8–9	5
10–11	6
12–13	7
14–15	8
16–17	9
18–19	10
20	11

- **Radio silence:** missions **5, 10, 15 and 20** are played without any signals.
- **5 players:** with only 8 tricks each round, lower the target by 1 (but not below 1).
- After mission 20 you can go on with the same formula as long as you like.

♠ The logbook

Keep a sheet of paper with one line per mission: the mission number, the date and the **number of attempts** it took. After mission 20, add up all attempts – that is your team's score. Next time, try to beat it.

♠ Tips for beginners

- **Lead high to collect, lead low to give.** To win a card you need, lead the highest card of that suit. To hand a trick to a teammate, lead low.
- **Watch the face-up tricks.** All won tricks are visible – count which high cards and Kings are already gone, and how many tricks everyone has.
- **Take tasks your hand can control.** "The first trick" is easy with the K♠, "no tricks" is easy with many low cards and no Kings, "the 9 of a suit" is easy if you hold it.
- **Use your signal early** – especially to show a dangerous only card or a highest card.
- **Save your Kings.** Trump only when the trick holds something you need – a careless King can wreck a teammate's task.

♠ Variants

All optional – agree before you start.

- **Mayday:** once per mission, before the first trick, anyone may ask "Mayday?". If everyone agrees, each player passes one card face down to the left. The attempt counts double in the logbook.
- **Free choice:** turn up 8 task cards instead of 6.
- **Hard mode:** no signals at all in any mission.

♠ Background & history

FAMILY: Cooperative trick-taking game (task-based, limited communication)

ORIGIN: Original design for this site (2026), inspired by *The Crew: Mission Deep Sea* (Thomas Sing, Kosmos 2021)

ALSO KNOWN AS: –

RELATED GAMES: The Crew: The Quest for Planet Nine, The Crew: Mission Deep Sea, Hanabi, Whist, Bridge

Orbit is not a traditional game and not a published one: it was written for this site as a cooperative trick-taking game for two standard decks. Its idea – a team that must fulfil tasks through the tricks it wins, with almost no talking – comes from Thomas Sing's *The Crew*. The rules, task table and missions here are our own; if you enjoy Orbit, the published games are well worth a look.

The Crew: The Quest for Planet Nine (German: *Die Crew*) appeared at Kosmos in 2019 for 2–5 players. The team plays through 50 missions from a logbook, with a special trump suit of four "rocket" cards, and may communicate only by showing one card per round and marking it as their highest, lowest or only card of a suit. The game won the **Kenner Spiel des Jahres 2020** and the Deutscher Spielepreis. Its standalone successor *The Crew: Mission Deep Sea* (*Die Crew – Mission Tiefsee*, Kosmos 2021) replaced fixed card tasks with 96 task cards that carry difficulty ratings, spread over 32 missions; it won the Golden Geek awards for Medium Game of the Year and Cooperative Game of 2021. Orbit borrows exactly that idea: tasks with a difficulty value that add up to a mission target.

Cooperation under limited communication is older than *The Crew*. In Antoine Bauza's *Hanabi* (2010, Spiel des Jahres 2013) players build a firework display together while the kinds and amount of information they may give are strictly limited. And partners in trick-taking games have always "talked" through their cards: in Whist, conventions about which card to lead served to inform one's partner about the cards held, and in Bridge, signals such as attitude and count signals are made purely through the choice of card played.

SOURCES

- The Crew (card game) – Wikipedia
- The Crew – Quest for Planet 9 wins Kenner Spiel des Jahres 2020 – Thames & Kosmos
- Ark Nova, The Crew, and Cascadia win Golden Geeks – The Opinionated Gamers
- Hanabi (card game) – Wikipedia
- Whist – Wikipedia
- Signal (bridge) – Wikipedia

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QUICK RULES

- **Goal, together:** every player fulfils all their **tasks**.
- **Play cards:** A–9 of each suit (A = 1) + 4 **Kings** (trumps). 4 players 10 each, 5 players 8, 3 players 13 (last card face up, out).
- **K♠ = commander:** turns up 6 task cards (deck 2). In turn, take one until the difficulties add up to the **target:** mission ÷ 2 + 1.
- Commander leads. **Follow suit.** Highest King, else highest of suit led, wins and leads.
- **No talking about cards**, just one **signal** each.
- Any task failed → retry.

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CHEAT SHEET

CARD	I WIN ...	DIFF.
A · 2	exactly 1 · 2 tricks	2 · 3
3 · 4	3+ cards of this suit · all 4 suits	3 · 2
5 · 9	the 1 · the 9 of this suit	2 · 1
6 · 7	no card of this suit · no tricks	2 · 2
8 · 10	no King · more tricks than left player	2 · 2
J · Q · K	first · last trick · a trick with a 1	1 · 3 · 3

- **Trumps:** K♣ < K♦ < K♥ < K♠; Kings are no suit.
- **Signal** (between tricks, no King): card face up, coin **top** highest · **middle** only · **bottom** lowest of that suit.
- **Radio silence** (no signals): missions 5, 10, 15, 20. 5 players: target –1.

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