

Euchre (and its variations) is the reason why modern card decks were first packaged with jokers, a card originally designed to act as the right and left "bowers" (high trumps). Although later eclipsed by Bridge (as with so many other games of this type), Euchre is still well known in America and is an excellent social game.

The game is best for four participants, playing two against two as partners. Therefore, the rules for the four-hand version are given first.

THE PACK

Special Euchre decks are available, or the standard 52-card pack can be stripped to make a deck of 32 cards (A, K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7 of each suit), 28 cards (7s omitted), or 24 cards (7s and 8s omitted). In some games, a joker is added.

OBJECT OF THE GAME

The goal is to win at least three tricks. If the side that fixed the trump fails to get three tricks, it is said to be "euchred." Winning all five tricks is called a "march."

RANK OF CARDS

The highest trump is the jack of the trump suit, called the "right bower." The second-highest trump is the jack of the other suit of the same color called the "left bower." (Example: If diamonds are trumps, the right bower is J♦ and left bower is J♥.) The remaining trumps, and also the plain suits, rank as follows: A (high), K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7. If a joker has been added to the pack, it acts as the highest trump.

CARD VALUES/SCORING

The following shows all scoring situations:

Partnership making trump wins 3 or 4 tricks – 1 point

Partnership making trump wins 5 tricks – 2 points

Lone hand wins 3 or 4 tricks – 1 point

Lone hand wins 5 tricks – 4 points

Partnership or lone hand is euchred, opponents score 2 points

The first player or partnership to score 5, 7 or 10 points, as agreed beforehand, wins the game. In the 5-point game, a side is said to be "at the bridge" when it has scored 4 and the opponents have scored 2 or less.

Keeping Score with Low Card Markers

An elegant and widespread method of keeping score is with cards lower than those used in play. When game is 5 points, each side uses a three-spot and a four-spot as markers. To indicate a score of 1, the four is placed face down on the three, with one pip left exposed. For a score of 2, the three is placed face down on the four, with two pips left exposed. For a score of 3, the three is placed face up on the four. For a score of 4, the four is placed face up on the three.

RUBBERS

Many Euchre games are scored by rubber points, as in Whist. The first side to win two games wins the rubber. Each game counts for the side winning; 3 rubber points if the losers' score in that game was 0 or fewer, 2 rubber points if the losers' score was 1 or 2, and 1 rubber point if the losers scored 3 or more. The winners' margin in the rubber is 2 points bonus, plus the winners' rubber points, minus the losers' rubber points.

THE DRAW

From the shuffled pack spread face down, the players draw cards for partners and first deal. The two players with the two lowest cards play against the two players with the two highest cards. The player with the lowest card deals first. For drawing, the cards rank: K (high), Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, A. Players drawing equal cards must draw again.

Partners sit opposite each other.

THE SHUFFLE AND CUT

The dealer has the right to shuffle last. The pack is cut by the player to the dealer's right. The cut must not leave less than four cards in each packet.

THE DEAL

The cards are dealt clockwise, to the left, beginning with the player to the left of the dealer. Each player receives five cards. The dealer may give a round of three at a time,

then a round of two at a time, or may give two, then three; but the dealer must adhere to whichever distribution plan he begins with. After the first deal, the deal passes to the player on the dealer's left.

On completing the deal, the dealer places the rest of the pack in the center of the table and turns the top card face up. Should the card turned up be accepted as trump by any player, the dealer has the right to exchange the turned up card for another card in their hand. In practice, the dealer does not take the turned up card into their hand, but leaves it on the pack until it is played; the dealer signifies this exchange by placing their discard face down underneath the pack.

MAKING THE TRUMP

Beginning with the player to the left of the dealer, each player passes or accepts the turn-up as trump. An opponent of the dealer accepts by saying "I order it up." The partner of the dealer accepts by saying, "I assist." The dealer accepts by making their discard, called "taking it up."

The dealer signifies refusal of the turn-up by removing the card from the top and placing it (face up) partially underneath the pack; this is called "turning it down."

If all four players pass in the first round, each player in turn, starting with the player to the dealer's left, has the option of passing again or of naming the trump suit. The rejected suit may not be named. Declaring the other suit of the same color as the reject is called "making it next"; declaring a suit of opposite color is called "crossing it."

If all four players pass in the second round, the cards are gathered and shuffled, and the next dealer deals. Once the trump is fixed, either by acceptance of the turn-up or by the naming of another suit, the turn-up is rejected, the bidding ends and play begins.

PLAYING ALONE

If the player who fixes the trump suit believes it will be to their side's advantage to play without the help of their partner's cards, the player exercises this option by declaring "alone" distinctly at the time of making the trump. This player's partner then turns their cards face down and does not participate in the play.

THE PLAY

The opening lead is made by the player to the dealer's left, or if this player's partner is playing alone, it is made by the player across from the dealer. If possible, each player must follow suit to a lead. If unable to follow suit, the player may trump or discard any card. A trick is won by the highest card of the suit led, or, if it contains trumps, by the highest trump. The winner of a trick leads next.