

Auction Forty-Fives

2-6 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Medium

Win the auction and take enough tricks (5 points each) to meet your team's bid.

SETUP

- Use a standard 52-card deck.
- Deal 5 cards to each of 2-6 players in partnerships.
- Teams bid in multiples of 5 (starting at 15); winner declares trump.

SCORING

- Each trick is worth 5 points.
- Bidding team scores trick points if they meet the bid; otherwise lose the bid amount.
- Non-bidding team always scores their trick points.
- First team to 120 points wins.

Tip: Use the discard-and-draw phase aggressively to strengthen your trump holdings.

ON YOUR TURN

- After trump is set, discard unwanted cards and draw replacements.
- Follow suit if able; 5 of trumps, jack of trumps, and ace of hearts are always top 3 trumps.
- Highest-ranked card wins each trick.

Auction Forty-Fives is an Irish and Canadian trick-taking card game with a unique and complex trump ranking system. It features partnership bidding, strategic discarding, and a rich tradition in Atlantic Canadian and Irish communities where it is played competitively.

Objective

Win the auction and take enough tricks to meet your team's bid. Each trick is worth 5 points, and the first team to reach 120 points (or another target) wins the game. The unique card rankings make trump management especially intricate.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 or 6 players in two partnerships (or 2-3 individually).
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 5 cards, dealt in batches of 3 then 2 (or 2 then 3).
4. **Bidding:** Teams bid in multiples of 5, starting from 15. The winning team declares the trump suit.

Gameplay

1. **Discard and draw:** After trump is declared, players may discard unwanted cards and draw replacements from the deck to strengthen their hands.
2. **Lead the first trick:** The player to the dealer's left leads.
3. **Following rules:** Players must follow suit if able, with special exceptions for certain trump cards. If unable to follow, players may play any card.
4. **Trump ranking:** The five of trumps is always the highest trump, followed by the jack of trumps, then the ace of hearts (always the third-best trump regardless of the actual trump suit).
5. **Win tricks:** The highest-ranked card wins the trick.

Scoring

- **Trick value:** Each trick won is worth 5 points.
- **Bid met:** The bidding team scores their total trick points if they meet or exceed their bid.
- **Bid failed:** If the bidding team falls short, they lose points equal to their bid.
- **Defending team:** The non-bidding team always scores their trick points.
- **Game target:** First team to 120 points wins.

Variations

- **Twenty-Fives:** The non-auction predecessor with simpler individual play and no bidding phase.
- **Auction Forty-Fives with 6 players:** Three teams of two compete, adding an extra dimension of alliance management.

Tips and Strategies

- Learn the complex trump hierarchy thoroughly before playing. The five, jack, and ace of hearts being the top trumps regardless of suit is the game's defining feature.
- Use the discard-and-draw phase to improve your trump holdings aggressively.
- Bid based on your trump strength and the likelihood of improving your hand through the draw.

Tips & Strategy

Mastering the unusual trump rankings is the biggest hurdle. Once you internalize that the 5, Jack, and Ace of Hearts are always the top three trumps, the rest of the game becomes much more manageable.

The discard-and-draw phase is where hands are won or lost. Aggressively pursuing trump cards during the draw dramatically increases your trick-taking power.