

Barbu

4 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Long

Score the fewest penalty points across all seven contracts.

SETUP

- Four players, deal all 52 cards (13 each).
- Dealer selects one of their unplayed contracts.
- Non-dealers may double the dealer before play.

SCORING

- Negative contracts penalize tricks, hearts, queens, King of Hearts, or last trick.
- Dominoes rewards going out first and penalizes finishing last.

Tip: Choose contracts that match your hand, and double the dealer when you see them struggling.

ON YOUR TURN

- Lead a card; others must follow suit if possible.
- Highest card of the led suit wins the trick.
- Score based on the active contract's rules.

Barbu is a French multi-contract card game where each player must play through seven different contracts during a full game. Each contract has unique objectives, ranging from avoiding tricks to collecting specific cards.

Objective

Score the fewest penalty points (or the most bonus points) across all seven contracts over the course of the game. Each player takes a turn as dealer and must choose and play all seven contracts.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Deal:** Deal all 13 cards to each player.
4. **Contracts:** Each dealer must play all seven contracts once during their turn as dealer. The seven contracts are: No Tricks, No Hearts, No Queens, No King of Hearts, No Last Trick, Barbu (all negative contracts combined), and Dominoes.

Gameplay

1. **Step 1:** The dealer selects one of their remaining unplayed contracts for the round.
2. **Step 2:** Before play begins, each non-dealer may double the dealer's score for this contract, and the dealer may redouble any individual player.
3. **Step 3:** Players play standard trick-taking, following suit if possible. The highest card of the led suit wins each trick unless a contract specifies otherwise.
4. **Step 4:** After all 13 tricks are played, points are tallied based on the chosen contract's rules.
5. **Step 5:** The deal rotates after all seven contracts have been played by the current dealer.

Scoring

- No Tricks: -2 points per trick taken.
- No Hearts: -2 points per heart card taken.
- No Queens: -6 points per queen taken.
- No King of Hearts: -20 points for taking the King of Hearts.
- No Last Trick: -20 points for winning the last trick.
- Barbu: All the above negative scoring combined in one hand.
- Dominoes: +5 for going out first, +2 for second, -2 for third, and -5 for last.

Variations

- **Trumps Contract:** Some groups add a positive contract where a trump suit is chosen and you score points for tricks taken.
- **Modified Scoring:** Point values can be adjusted for each contract to change the balance of the game.
- **Five Contracts:** A shorter version using only five contracts instead of seven.

Tips and Strategies

- Choose contracts strategically based on your hand. If you have few hearts, the No Hearts contract is a good pick.
- Use doubling wisely. If you believe the dealer will struggle with a contract, doubling can swing the score heavily.
- In No Tricks, try to void a suit early to allow discards on future leads.

Tips & Strategy

Match your contract selection to your hand strength. A hand full of low cards is perfect for No Tricks, while a heart-free hand makes No Hearts easy.

The doubling mechanism is the heart of Barbu strategy. Knowing when to double the dealer (and when not to) based on your own hand can generate massive point swings.