

Basra

2-4 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Medium

Score the most points by capturing table cards and earning basra sweep bonuses.

SETUP

- Use a standard 52-card deck with 2 to 4 players.
- Deal 4 cards to each player and place 4 cards face-up on the table.
- Redeal 4 cards each when hands are empty until the deck is exhausted.

SCORING

- Most cards: 3 points. Ten of diamonds: 3. Two of clubs: 2. Each ace: 1.
- Each basra (sweeping all table cards with a non-jack): 10 points.
- Jack of clubs: 1 point. Seven of diamonds: 1 point.

Tip: Save jacks for when the table is loaded with high-value cards to maximize your capture.

ON YOUR TURN

- Match a table card's value to capture it, or sum multiple cards to your card's value.
- A jack captures all cards on the table regardless of value.
- If you cannot capture, trail your card onto the table.

Basra is a Middle Eastern fishing card game popular in Egypt, Lebanon, and across the Arab world. Players capture cards from the table by matching values, with jacks serving as powerful wild cards that can sweep the entire table.

Objective

Accumulate the most points over several rounds by capturing table cards, scoring bonus points for specific cards, and executing basra sweeps with jacks or exact matches.

Setup

1. **Players:** 2 to 4 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 4 cards. Four cards are placed face-up on the table.
4. **Redealing:** New hands of 4 cards are dealt to each player when all hands are empty, continuing until the deck is exhausted.

Gameplay

1. **Matching:** Play a card that matches the value of a single table card to capture it.
2. **Summing:** Capture multiple table cards whose values add up to your played card's value.
3. **Jack power:** A jack captures all cards currently on the table, regardless of their values.
4. **Basra sweep:** Capturing all table cards with a single non-jack card earns a basra bonus. A jack sweep when only one card is on the table also earns a basra.
5. **Trailing:** If you cannot or choose not to capture, place your card on the table.

Scoring

- **Most cards captured:** 3 points.
- **Jack of clubs:** 1 point.
- **Seven of diamonds:** 1 point.
- **Two of clubs:** 2 points.
- **Ten of diamonds:** 3 points.
- **Each basra:** 10 points (or sometimes 5, depending on local rules).
- **Each ace captured:** 1 point.

Variations

- **Egyptian Basra:** The seven of diamonds can capture all cards valued 7 or below from the table simultaneously.
- **Lebanese Basra:** Uses a stricter definition of basra where only exact single-card matches count.

Tips and Strategies

- Save your jacks for moments when the table is loaded with high-value cards to maximize your capture.
- Avoid leaving a single low-value card on the table, as your opponent can easily earn a basra with a matching card.
- Keep track of how many jacks have been played to know when the remaining table sweeps are possible.

Tips & Strategy

Jack management is the core skill. Playing a jack when the table holds many valuable cards is satisfying, but saving it to deny your opponent a capture can be equally powerful.

Experienced players manipulate the table state by trailing cards strategically, creating combinations that only they can capture on subsequent turns while denying opponents easy basra opportunities.