

Binokel

3-4 players

48 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Long

Score the most points from melds and captured trick cards combined.

SETUP

- Use a 48-card double deck (two of each 7 through Ace) with 3 or 4 players.
- Deal 12 cards each; remaining cards form a talon.
- Players bid on their expected total; the highest bidder takes the talon.

SCORING

- Aces: 11, Tens: 10, Kings: 4, Queens: 3, Jacks: 2. Last trick: 10 bonus.
- Melds: pairs 20 (40 in trump), Binokel 40, double Binokel 300.
- Failing the bid subtracts the bid amount from your score.

Tip: Bid based on guaranteed melds plus a realistic trick estimate rather than hoping for a lucky talon.

ON YOUR TURN

- Declare melds (pairs, families, four-of-a-kind, Binokel) for points before tricks.
- Follow suit; if unable, trump; must overtrump if possible.
- The highest trump or first-played highest card of the led suit wins.

Binokel is a Swabian card game from southern Germany that combines trick-taking with melding. Played with a distinctive 48-card double deck, it features an elaborate melding phase where players score points for specific card combinations before trick play begins.

Objective

Score the most points through a combination of melds declared before play and point cards captured during tricks. The player or team reaching the agreed point total first wins the overall game.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 or 4 players (4 in partnerships).
2. **Deck:** 48-card double deck with two copies each of 7 through Ace in all four suits.
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 12 cards (3-player) or 12 cards (4-player), dealt in batches. A talon of remaining cards is set aside.
4. **Bidding:** Players bid on the total points they expect to score from melds and tricks. The highest bidder picks up the talon.

Melding Phase

- **Pairs:** A king and queen of the same suit score 20 points (40 in trump).
- **Family:** King, queen, and jack of trump score 150 points.
- **Binokel:** Queen of spades and jack of diamonds together score 40 points. Double Binokel scores 300.
- **Four of a kind:** Four aces score 100, four kings 80, four queens 60, four jacks 40.

Gameplay

1. **Leading:** The bid winner leads the first trick after all melds are declared.
2. **Following suit:** Players must follow suit. If unable, they must trump. If they have neither, they may play any card.
3. **Overtrumping:** If trump has been played, subsequent players must play a higher trump if possible.
4. **Winning tricks:** The highest trump wins. Without trump, the highest card of the led suit wins. For identical cards, the first one played takes precedence.

Scoring

- **Aces:** 11 points each.
- **Tens:** 10 points each.
- **Kings:** 4 points each.
- **Queens:** 3 points each.
- **Jacks:** 2 points each.
- **Last trick:** Worth an additional 10 points.
- **Bid failure:** If the bidder fails to reach their bid total, the bid amount is subtracted from their score.

Tips and Strategies

- Bid based on guaranteed melds plus a realistic estimate of trick points rather than hoping for a lucky talon draw.
- The double Binokel combination is extremely rare but worth watching for, as its 300-point value can swing an entire game.
- Count points carefully during trick play to know whether you have met your bid before the round ends.

Tips & Strategy

Master the meld values so you can quickly assess your hand's potential during bidding. Overbidding is the most common cause of losing in Binokel.

The talon pickup is a pivotal moment. Experienced players assess how the talon cards complement their existing melds before deciding which cards to discard and what strategy to pursue in tricks.