

Commerce

3-10 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Medium

Avoid having the lowest-ranking hand by trading cards with the widow.

SETUP

- Each player starts with 3 tokens (lives).
- Deal 3 cards to each player and 3 cards face-up as the widow.

SCORING

- Hand rankings: Tricon > Sequence > Flush > Pair > Point (total value).
- Lose a token for having the worst hand each round.
- Last player with tokens remaining wins.

Tip: Prioritize forming a tricon (three of a kind) as it beats all other combinations.

ON YOUR TURN

- Starting left of dealer, trade up to 3 cards with the widow or pass.
- Trading rounds continue clockwise, one round per active player.
- After all rounds, players reveal their hands.
- Player with the lowest hand loses one token.

*Commerce is a classic French card game dating back to the 18th century (recorded as early as 1769). Its mechanics have influenced many modern games like *Thirty-One* and *Stop the Bus*. In *Commerce*, players aim to win rounds and accumulate tokens, with the player collecting the most tokens declared the victor.*

Setup

1. **Token Distribution:** Each player starts with three tokens placed in front of them, representing their stake in the game.
2. **Seating Arrangements:** Players determine seating arrangements and the first dealer by drawing cards. The player who draws the highest card becomes the dealer for the first round, gaining the advantage of choosing their seat first.
3. **Dealing:** The dealer shuffles the deck thoroughly and allows the player to their right to cut the deck. Each player is then dealt three cards, one at a time, in a clockwise manner. Additionally, three cards are revealed face up in the center of the table, forming the widow.

Gameplay

1. **Hand Evaluation:** Players examine their hands, strategizing to create the highest possible combination of cards.
2. **Trading Cards:** Beginning with the player to the left of the dealer, each player has the option to trade up to three of their cards with the cards from the widow or choose to pass. This process continues clockwise around the table.
3. **Round Completion:** The number of trading rounds equals the number of active players. At the end of each round, the dealer adds another card to the widow to provide additional options for players in subsequent rounds.
4. **Revealing Hands:** Once the designated trading rounds are complete, players reveal their hands. The player with the lowest-ranking hand loses one token (life). Tokens represent lives — losing all tokens means elimination from the game.

Hand Combinations

- **Tricon:** A set of three cards of the same rank, with higher ranks yielding stronger hands.
- **Sequence:** Three cards of the same suit in numerical order, with higher-ranking sequences outranking lower ones.
- **Flush:** Three cards of the same suit, with the highest-ranked suit winning in case of ties.
- **Pair:** Two cards of the same rank, with the highest pair prevailing.
- **Point:** The total value of three random cards, with a higher total resulting in a stronger hand.

End of Game

The game concludes when only one player remains with tokens — that player is the winner. Play continues until all other players have been eliminated by losing all their tokens (lives).

Variations

- **Pounce:** Pounce, or Pounce Commerce, is a popular variation where players can "pounce" on a fourth card of the same rank if they already have three matching cards. For example, if a player has three Nines and the fourth Nine is revealed in the pool, they can call "Pounce" and take it, forming a higher hand of four. Each pounce triggers the revelation of a new card from the deck, adding excitement and unpredictability to the game.
- **Trade and Barter:** In this variant, players trade cards without the use of a widow. Starting with the eldest player, each player can choose to "trade" or "barter" a card. When a player trades, they exchange one card with the dealer, paying a chip for the privilege. If they opt to barter, they exchange a card with their right-hand neighbor without payment. The game continues until a player knocks, and in case of ties, priority is given to the dealer or the player next in order after the dealer.
- **Trentuno:** Trentuno is played with a 40-card deck, and the goal is to have a hand totaling 31 points or the nearest below it. Three of a kind holds a special rank between 30 and 31 points. This variation introduces a unique hand-ranking system and alters the deck composition, providing players with new strategic challenges.
- **Extended Commerce:** Extended Commerce extends the game until all players are satisfied with their hands. Players continue trading until they are content with their cards, eliminating the rounds-based structure of traditional gameplay. While this variation offers more flexibility, it can prolong the game significantly. Additionally, the combinations of "pair" and "point" are not recognized in this variant, streamlining the hand-ranking process.

Strategy and Tips

- Pay attention to the cards in the widow to gauge potential trades.
- Prioritize forming strong combinations early in the game.
- Keep track of opponents' trades and hand movements to anticipate their strategies.

Tips & Strategy

Focus on forming strong combinations like tricons or sequences, but keep an eye on the widow for potential improvements. Manage your tokens wisely and adapt your strategy based on the cards you receive.

Effective strategy in Commerce involves balancing risk and reward when trading cards, anticipating opponents' moves, and adapting to changing game dynamics.