

German Whist

2 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Medium

Win more than half of the 26 total tricks across both phases.

SETUP

- Use a standard 52-card deck.
- Deal 13 cards each; place remaining 26 as a stock with the top card face-up.
- The face-up card determines the trump suit for the entire game.

SCORING

- All 26 tricks (both phases) count toward the final total.
- Win 14+ tricks to win the game.

Tip: Sometimes lose a trick deliberately in Phase 1 to avoid taking a weak face-up card.

ON YOUR TURN

- Phase 1: Play tricks; winner takes the face-up stock card, loser takes the hidden card.
- A new stock card is turned face-up after each trick.
- Phase 2: Play remaining 13 cards as standard trick-taking after the stock is empty.

German Whist is a clever two-player adaptation of Whist that adds a strategic card acquisition phase before the main trick-taking competition. Players first compete for face-up stock cards to strengthen their hands, then play out the remaining tricks with their improved hands.

Objective

Win more than half of the 26 tricks played (at least 14) across both phases of the game.

Setup

1. **Players:** 2 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Deal:** 13 cards each. Place the remaining 26 cards as a stock pile with the top card turned face-up.
4. **Trump:** The face-up stock card determines the trump suit for the entire game.

Phase 1: Stock Phase

1. **Trick Play:** Play tricks normally — follow suit, highest trump or led-suit card wins.
2. **Reward:** The trick winner takes the face-up stock card into their hand; the loser takes the hidden card beneath it.
3. **New Face-Up:** The next stock card is turned face-up.
4. **Strategy:** Sometimes you want to lose a trick if the face-up card is weak — the hidden card might be better.
5. **Duration:** This phase lasts 13 tricks until the stock is empty.

Phase 2: Play Phase

1. **Pure Trick-Taking:** With the stock gone, players play out their remaining 13 cards in standard trick-taking fashion.
2. **Same Trump:** The trump suit established at the start remains in effect.
3. **Counting:** All 26 tricks (from both phases) count toward the final total.

Tips and Strategies

- In Phase 1, deliberately losing tricks to avoid taking weak face-up cards is a legitimate strategy.
- Track which cards you and your opponent have acquired from the stock to plan Phase 2.
- Strong trump cards are valuable in both phases — manage them carefully.

Tips & Strategy

The stock phase is where the game is really won. A player who acquires the right cards in Phase 1 will dominate Phase 2.

The visible stock card creates a unique information asymmetry. You know what you are competing for, but not what you get by losing. This makes intentional losing a complex decision.