

# Gleek

3 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Long

## Score the most points through melds and trick-taking.

### SETUP

- Exactly 3 players with a 44-card deck (remove 2s and 3s).
- Deal 12 cards each. Turn up one stock card for potential trumps.
- Bid for the right to choose the ruff (trump) suit.

### SCORING

- Melds scored before play. Mournivals outscore gleeks.
- Trick points from captured cards.
- Last trick earns a bonus.

*Tip: Bid for ruff when you hold strong trump length — controlling trumps dominates the game.*

### ON YOUR TURN

- Declare melds: gleeks (3 of a kind) and mournivals (4 of a kind).
- Play 12 tricks following suit; highest trump or highest led-suit card wins.
- Collect point-value cards from won tricks (A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1).

*Gleek is a Tudor-era English card game for exactly three players, combining bidding, melding, and trick-taking in an elegant and strategic package. Popular from the 16th through 18th centuries, it was played with a 44-card deck and featured ruff (trump) bidding, bonus points for melds of three or four of a kind (called gleeks and mournival), and a rich trick-taking phase. It was considered the premier intellectual card game of Elizabethan England.*

## Objective

Score the most points through a combination of melds (gleeks and mournivals), winning tricks, and collecting valuable cards during the trick-taking phase.

## Setup

1. **Players:** Exactly 3 players.
2. **Deck:** 44-card deck (standard 52-card deck with 2s and 3s removed).
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 12 cards. The remaining 8 cards form the stock (tiddy). The top card of the stock is turned up to indicate a potential trump suit.
4. **Ruff bidding:** Players bid for the right to choose the trump (ruff) suit. The highest bidder pays their bid into the pot and names trumps (or accepts the turned-up suit).

## Melds

1. **Gleek:** Three cards of the same rank. Each gleek scores bonus points depending on the rank (Aces = highest value, then Kings, Queens, Jacks).
2. **Mournival:** Four cards of the same rank. A mournival scores significantly more than a gleek and is a rare, powerful hand.
3. **Tib, Tom, Tid, Tub:** Special names for the Aces in various suits, reflecting the game's Tudor-era vocabulary.
4. **Declaration:** After the ruff is determined, players declare and score their melds before trick play begins.

## Gameplay

1. **Leading:** The player to the dealer's left leads to the first trick.
2. **Following suit:** Players must follow suit if able. If unable, they may play any card including a trump.
3. **Winning tricks:** The highest trump wins, or the highest card of the led suit if no trumps are played.
4. **Trick points:** Certain cards carry point values: Aces = 4, Kings = 3, Queens = 2, Jacks = 1. Additionally, the last trick is worth extra points.

## Scoring

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1. **Melds:** Gleeke and mournivals are scored before trick play. A mournival of Aces is the highest-scoring meld.
2. **Trick points:** Points from card values captured in tricks are tallied after all 12 tricks.
3. **Last trick bonus:** The winner of the final trick scores additional bonus points.
4. **Ruff bid:** The cost of the ruff bid is deducted from the bidder's score (or paid from the pot). Winning the bid is only worthwhile if the trump advantage compensates.

## Variations

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- **Post and Pair:** A related Tudor game focusing more on melds and betting than trick-taking.
- **Simple Gleek:** A shortened version where melds are omitted and only trick points count.
- **Gleek for stakes:** Each point difference at the end of a hand is settled in coins or chips.

## Tips and Strategies

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- Bid for ruff aggressively when you hold long suits with high cards; controlling trumps is worth the investment.
- Mournivals are rare but game-changing; if you hold three of a rank, consider the odds of the fourth being in the stock.
- Manage your trumps carefully during trick play; leading trumps early can strip opponents of their ruffing ability.

### Tips & Strategy

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Bid for ruff when you hold strong trump length and high cards. Declare melds accurately; overlooking a gleek costs valuable points. Lead trumps early to control the hand if you have depth in the ruff suit.

The interplay between the bidding, melding, and trick-taking phases makes Gleek deeply strategic. Overbidding for ruff can be costly, but controlling trumps with a strong hand can dominate both the trick phase and the meld bonus.