

Kratzen

3-6 players

32 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Medium

Win the majority of tricks to claim the pot, or fold to preserve your stake.

SETUP

- 3-6 players with a 32-card deck (Sevens through Aces).
- Deal 5 cards each; top stock card determines trumps.
- Each player antes into the central pot.

SCORING

- Player with 3+ tricks wins the entire pot.
- Players who stayed in but lost must add extra chips to the next pot.
- Folding loses only your ante for that round.
- Tied rounds carry the pot over with fresh antes added.

Tip: Count how many players stay in — fewer opponents means weaker hands are more viable.

ON YOUR TURN

- Decide to stay in or kratzen (fold) for the round.
- Remaining players play 5 tricks with follow-suit and trump obligations.
- Win at least 3 of 5 tricks to take the pot.

Kratzen is a lively Austrian gambling card game where players must decide each round whether to stay in and compete for the pot or 'scratch' (fold) to avoid losing chips.

Objective

Win the majority of tricks each round to claim the pot, or fold wisely to preserve your stake.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 to 6 players.
2. **Deck:** 32-card deck (Sevens through Aces in all four suits).
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 5 cards. The top card of the remaining stock determines the trump suit.
4. **Pot:** Each player antes a fixed amount into the central pot before the deal.

Gameplay

1. **Decision:** Starting from forehand, each player decides to stay in (play) or 'kratzen' (scratch/fold).
2. **Trick play:** Remaining players compete in five tricks. Standard trick-taking rules apply with mandatory follow-suit and trump obligations.
3. **Winning the round:** The player who wins the most tricks (at least 3 of 5) takes the pot.
4. **Ties:** If no one wins a clear majority, the pot carries over to the next round with fresh antes added.

Scoring

- **Pot winner:** The player with 3 or more tricks claims the entire pot.
- **Penalty:** Players who stayed in but failed to win enough tricks must add extra chips to the next pot.
- **Folding:** Players who scratched lose only their ante for that round.

Variations

- **Bettler:** A special contract where a player attempts to lose all five tricks instead of winning them.
- **Schnapser:** In some groups, a player with very strong cards can declare Schnapser to raise the stakes.

Tips and Strategies

- Fold early with weak hands to minimize losses — surviving is more important than gambling on marginal cards.
- Count how many players stay in; fewer opponents means weaker hands are more viable.

Tips & Strategy

Be selective about which hands you play. Folding with marginal cards saves chips over the long run.

When the pot is large from carryovers, even a slightly above-average hand becomes worth playing because the reward outweighs the risk.