

Malilla

4 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Medium

Capture the most card points as a partnership to reach the target score.

SETUP

- Remove 8s and 10s to create a 40-card deck.
- Deal all 10 cards to each of 4 players.
- The dealer's last card is shown to set the trump suit.

SCORING

- Ace = 12, Malilla (9) = 11, King = 4, Queen = 3, Jack = 2.
- Last trick bonus is 2 points, for 130 total.

Tip: Never underestimate the 9. It beats every card except the Ace and can swing the outcome of a hand.

ON YOUR TURN

- Follow the led suit if possible.
- Play any card (including trumps) if you cannot follow suit.
- Highest card of the led suit or highest trump wins.

Malilla is a trick-taking card game popular in Spain and Mexico, played in partnerships of two using a 40-card deck. The game features a distinctive card ranking where the 9 (the Malilla) is the second-highest card after the Ace.

Objective

The objective is for your partnership to capture tricks containing valuable cards and reach the target score before the opposing team. The first team to accumulate the agreed-upon number of points wins.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 players in two partnerships, seated across from each other.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck with 8s, 10s, and Jokers removed, leaving 40 cards. The 9 is kept and is a key card.
3. **Deal:** Deal 10 cards to each player so the entire deck is distributed. The last card dealt to the dealer is shown face up to determine the trump suit.

Gameplay

1. **Card Ranking:** From highest to lowest: Ace, 9 (Malilla), King, Queen, Jack, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2.
2. **Leading:** The player to the dealer's right leads the first trick.
3. **Following Suit:** Players must follow the led suit if possible. If unable, they may play any card including a trump.
4. **Winning Tricks:** The highest card of the led suit wins, unless a trump was played, in which case the highest trump wins.
5. **Signaling:** Partners may use agreed-upon signals to communicate about their hands, which is a traditional and accepted part of the game.

Scoring

- Ace = 12 points, 9 (Malilla) = 11 points, King = 4 points, Queen = 3 points, Jack = 2 points.
- All other cards (7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2) score zero points.
- The total card points in play are 128, plus 2 bonus points for the last trick, making 130.
- Games are typically played to a set number of hands or to a cumulative point target.

Variations

- **Mexican Malilla:** Uses slightly different rules for signaling and may include a bidding phase to determine trump.
- **Malilla with Forced Trump:** Some versions require players to trump when they cannot follow suit, rather than allowing any card.

Tips and Strategies

- The 9 (Malilla) is nearly as powerful as the Ace, so treat it with the same respect in your strategy.
- Use signaling effectively with your partner to coordinate which suits to lead and which to avoid.
- Try to count the Aces and Malillas that have been played to know when your lower high cards are safe to lead.

Tips & Strategy

Always be aware of the Malilla (9), as it ranks just below the Ace. Coordinate with your partner using signals, and count the high cards to know when your hand is commanding.

Since all 40 cards are dealt, there is no hidden information beyond what opponents hold. Counting played cards is essential, and controlling which suit is led gives your partnership a major advantage.