

Mariáš

3 players

32 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Medium

Win the bid and fulfill your contract by capturing enough points through tricks and marriages.

SETUP

- Use a 32-card deck (7 through Ace) with 3 players.
- Deal 10 cards each; 2 cards form the talon.
- Players bid on contracts of increasing difficulty.

SCORING

- Aces: 11, Tens: 10, Kings: 4, Queens: 3, Jacks: 2.
- Higher contracts like 'through' (all tricks) or 'hundred' pay larger rewards.
- Two defenders cooperate to block the bidder from making their contract.

Tip: Choose a modest contract you can fulfill rather than an ambitious one that risks failure.

ON YOUR TURN

- The bid winner takes the talon, discards 2 cards, and sets trump.
- Declare king-queen marriages when leading for 20 points (40 in trump).
- Follow suit and head the trick if possible; otherwise trump.

Mariáš is the national card game of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a sophisticated trick-taking game with bidding and marriage declarations. It uses a 32-card deck and features a complex hierarchy of contracts that players can bid on each round.

Objective

Win the bidding and fulfill your chosen contract by capturing enough point cards through tricks and declaring marriages. Defenders try to prevent the bidder from succeeding.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 players.
2. **Deck:** 32-card German-suited deck (or adapted standard deck with 7 through Ace).
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 10 cards, with 2 cards placed face-down as the talon.
4. **Bidding:** Players bid on contracts of increasing difficulty, from basic game to seven (winning all tricks).

Gameplay

1. **Talon:** The bid winner picks up the talon, discards two cards, and may declare trump.
2. **Marriages:** A player holding a king and queen of the same suit may declare a marriage when leading with one of them, scoring 20 points (40 in trump).
3. **Following suit:** Players must follow suit and must head the trick if possible. If unable to follow suit, they must trump.
4. **Winning tricks:** The highest trump wins. Without trump, the highest card of the led suit wins.

Scoring

- **Aces:** 11 points each.
- **Tens:** 10 points each.
- **Kings:** 4 points each.
- **Queens:** 3 points each.
- **Jacks:** 2 points each.
- **Contract values:** Higher contracts like 'through' (winning all tricks) or 'hundred' (scoring 100+ points) pay out increasingly larger rewards.

Variations

- **Mariáš with killers:** Adds special contracts involving specific card combinations for extra drama.
- **Slovak Mariáš:** Features slightly different contract types and scoring conventions.

Tips and Strategies

- Assess your hand quickly during bidding to determine the highest contract you can reasonably attempt.
- As a defender, coordinate with the other defender through card play signals to maximize your collective tricks.
- Marriages in the trump suit are extremely valuable; plan your play around declaring them at the optimal moment.

Tips & Strategy

Choosing the right contract is often more important than how you play the tricks. A modest contract fulfilled is worth far more than an ambitious one that fails.

Defense is where expert Mariáš players distinguish themselves. The two defenders must implicitly coordinate their play to block the bidder, even without direct communication.