

Oklahoma Rummy

2 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Medium

Form melds and knock when deadwood is at or below the upcard's value.

SETUP

- Deal 10 cards each.
- Flip upcard to set knock value for the hand.

SCORING

- Knock win = deadwood difference; Gin = 25 + opponent's deadwood.
- Spade upcard doubles all points for the hand.

Tip: When the knock value is very low, aim for gin rather than trying to squeeze under the threshold.

ON YOUR TURN

- Draw from stock or discard pile.
- Form melds in hand; knock when deadwood meets the threshold.
- Discard to end turn.

Oklahoma Rummy is a variant of Gin Rummy where the first upcard from the stock pile determines the maximum deadwood count allowed to knock in that hand. This simple twist adds significant strategic depth because the knock value changes every hand, sometimes making it very easy and other times nearly impossible to knock. The game is typically played to 200 points.

Objective

Form melds of sets and runs to reduce your deadwood below the knock value set by the initial upcard, or achieve gin with zero deadwood.

Setup

1. **Players:** 2 (can be adapted for 3-4)
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck
3. **Deal:** 10 cards to each player. Place remaining cards face down as stock; turn the top card face up beside it as the upcard. The face value of this upcard sets the knock value for the hand.

Gameplay

1. **Knock value:** The upcard's face value is the maximum deadwood total to knock. Ace = 1 (gin only hand), 2-9 = face value, 10/J/Q/K = 10.
2. **Draw:** Draw from the stock pile or take the top card from the discard pile.
3. **Meld:** Arrange cards in your hand into sets (3-4 of the same rank) and runs (3+ consecutive cards of the same suit).
4. **Knock:** When your deadwood total is at or below the knock value, you may knock by discarding face down and revealing your hand.
5. **Lay off:** The non-knocking player may lay off unmatched cards onto the knocker's melds (unless the knocker has gin).
6. **Gin:** If you knock with zero deadwood, you have gin and the opponent cannot lay off.

Scoring

1. **Knock win:** Difference between opponent's deadwood and your deadwood.
2. **Gin bonus:** 25 points plus the opponent's total deadwood.
3. **Undercut:** If the opponent's deadwood is equal to or less than the knocker's after lay offs, the opponent scores 25 points plus the difference.
4. **Spade upcard:** If the initial upcard is a spade, all points for that hand are doubled.
5. **Game bonus:** First to 200 points wins, with a 100-point game bonus.

Variations

- **Oklahoma Gin:** Strictly requires gin when the upcard is an Ace, making those hands very challenging.
- **Double Oklahoma:** All spade hands are worth triple instead of double points.
- **Target score adjustment:** Play to 150 or 250 points instead of the standard 200.

Tips and Strategies

- When the knock value is low (2-3), focus on forming complete melds rather than trying to knock quickly.
- When the upcard is a spade, play more cautiously since points are doubled and an undercut is especially costly.
- Keep flexible cards that can fit into multiple potential melds.
- Track discards carefully to know which cards are safe to discard and which melds opponents might be building.

Tips & Strategy

Adapt your strategy based on the knock value each hand. Low knock values mean you need near-perfect melds; high values allow aggressive early knocking. Be extra cautious with spade upcards since points double.

The spade doubling rule makes risk management crucial. When a spade is the upcard, avoid knocking with marginal hands since an undercut will cost you dearly. Wait for gin or a very strong knock.