

Olsen

3-5 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Medium

Avoid taking tricks containing hearts and the Queen of Spades.

SETUP

- Use a standard 52-card deck for 3-5 players.
- Deal cards evenly; set aside any extras face-down.
- The player holding the 2 of clubs leads first.

SCORING

- Each heart: 1 penalty point.
- Queen of Spades: 13 penalty points.
- Shooting the moon (all hearts + Queen): 0 for you, 26 to each opponent.

Tip: Create voids in side suits early so you can offload penalty cards when those suits are led.

ON YOUR TURN

- Follow the led suit if possible; otherwise play any card.
- No trump suit; highest card of the led suit wins.
- Dump penalty cards when you cannot follow suit.

Olsen is a Danish card game focused on avoiding penalty cards while trying to force opponents into taking them. It combines elements of trick avoidance with strategic card play, making each round a tense exercise in timing and misdirection.

Objective

Avoid taking tricks that contain penalty cards. The player with the fewest penalty points after a set number of rounds wins the game.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 to 5 players.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck.
3. **Deal:** Deal cards evenly to all players. Set aside any remaining cards face-down; they are not used in the round.

Gameplay

1. **Leading:** The player holding the 2 of clubs leads the first trick.
2. **Following suit:** Players must follow the led suit if able. If unable, they may play any card.
3. **Winning tricks:** The highest card of the led suit takes the trick. There is no trump suit.
4. **Dumping penalties:** When you cannot follow suit, this is your opportunity to offload penalty cards onto the current trick.

Scoring

- **Hearts:** Each heart card is worth 1 penalty point.
- **Queen of Spades:** Worth 13 penalty points.
- **Shooting the moon:** If one player captures all hearts and the Queen of Spades, they score 0 and all opponents receive 26 penalty points instead.

Tips and Strategies

- Create voids in side suits early so you can dump penalty cards when those suits are led.
- Track the Queen of Spades carefully and avoid winning tricks when it might be played.
- If you notice a player collecting many hearts, consider whether they might be attempting to shoot the moon, and take a heart to block them.

Tips & Strategy

Void a short suit early by leading it, then use that void to discard penalty cards. Always be aware of where the Queen of Spades might be lurking.

The most dangerous moment is when you hold high cards in a suit that is running low. Other players will lead that suit to force you into taking the trick along with any dumped penalties.