

Pilotta

4 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Long

Score 151 points first by winning tricks and declaring combinations.

SETUP

- Form two partnerships of two players each.
- Use 32 cards (7 through Ace of each suit).
- Deal 8 cards to each player.

SCORING

- Trump Jack = 20, Trump Nine = 14, Ace = 11, Ten = 10.
- Last trick bonus is worth 10 points.

Tip: Hold onto your trump Jack and Nine as long as possible to control the late game.

ON YOUR TURN

- Bid for trump or pass.
- Declare valid card combinations before the first trick.
- Play tricks, following suit or trumping as required.

Pilotta is a popular Cypriot trick-taking card game played in partnerships of two. It is closely related to the French game Belote and features bidding, trumps, and bonus declarations.

Objective

The objective is to score points by winning tricks containing valuable cards and by declaring valid card combinations. The first partnership to reach 151 points wins the game.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 players in two partnerships, seated across from each other.
2. **Deck:** Standard 52-card deck, using only 32 cards (7s through Aces). Remove cards 2 through 6.
3. **Deal:** Deal 8 cards to each player in batches of 3, 2, and 3.

Gameplay

1. **Bidding:** Starting from the player to the dealer's left, each player may bid or pass. Bids start at 80 and increase in increments of 10. The highest bidder names the trump suit.
2. **Declarations:** Before the first trick, players may declare valid combinations such as sequences of three or more cards in a suit, or four of a kind. Only the team with the highest declaration scores their declarations.
3. **Trick Play:** The player to the dealer's left leads the first trick. Players must follow suit if possible. If unable, they must play a trump if they have one. The highest trump or highest card of the led suit wins the trick.
4. **Pilotta Bonus:** If a player holds both the King and Queen of trumps, they may declare 'Pilotta' when playing the second of the two cards, earning 20 bonus points.

Scoring

- Card values in non-trump suits: Ace = 11, Ten = 10, King = 4, Queen = 3, Jack = 2. Other cards score zero.
- Card values in trump suit: Jack = 20, Nine = 14, Ace = 11, Ten = 10, King = 4, Queen = 3.
- The last trick is worth 10 bonus points.
- If the bidding team meets or exceeds their bid, both teams keep their points. If they fail, they score zero and the opposing team scores 162 plus any declarations.

Variations

- **No-Trump Bid:** Some groups allow a no-trump bid where no suit is trump and card values follow the non-trump ranking.
- **All-Trump Bid:** An all-trump option where every suit uses the trump card rankings.

Tips and Strategies

- Communicate with your partner through your card play, signaling strong suits early.
- Bid aggressively when holding the Jack and Nine of a potential trump suit, as these are the most powerful cards.
- Keep track of which high cards have been played to optimize your trick-winning potential in late rounds.

Tips & Strategy

Focus on securing the Jack and Nine of trumps, as they are the highest-value cards. Coordinate with your partner through consistent signaling play.

Counting points already taken by each team is essential for deciding whether to play aggressively or conservatively in late tricks. Leading trump early can strip opponents of their trump cards.