

Pinochle

2-4 players

48 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Long

Score the most points through melds and winning tricks with valuable cards.

SETUP

- Use a 48-card Pinochle deck (two of each 9 through Ace).
- Deal 12 cards to each of 4 players in partnerships.
- Bid for the right to name the trump suit.

SCORING

- Aces: 11, Tens: 10, Kings: 4, Queens: 3, Jacks: 2.
- Trump run (A-10-K-Q-J): 150 points.
- Pinochle (J of Diamonds + Q of Spades): 40 points.
- Last trick: bonus 10 points.

Tip: Lead with Aces and strong trumps early to draw out opponents' trump cards.

ON YOUR TURN

- Declare melds (runs, marriages, rounds) for points.
- Lead a card to start each trick.
- Follow suit if possible; otherwise play trump if able.
- Highest trump or highest led-suit card wins the trick.

Pinochle is an American trick-taking game played with a specialized 48-card deck containing two copies of each card from 9 through Ace. Known for its unique melding phase and strategic bidding, it rewards both card memory and tactical play.

Objective

Score points by winning tricks containing valuable cards and by declaring specific card combinations (melds) during the melding phase. The first team or player to reach a target score wins.

Setup

1. **Players:** Typically 4 players in two partnerships, though 2-player and 3-player versions exist.
2. **Deck:** A 48-card Pinochle deck consisting of two copies each of 9, 10, J, Q, K, A in all four suits.
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 12 cards, dealt in batches of three or four.
4. **Bidding:** Starting left of the dealer, players bid on how many points their team will score. The highest bidder names the trump suit.

Melding Phase

1. **Runs:** A-10-K-Q-J of trump suit scores 150 points.
2. **Royal Marriage:** K-Q of trump suit scores 40 points.
3. **Common Marriage:** K-Q of a non-trump suit scores 20 points.
4. **Pinochle:** Jack of Diamonds and Queen of Spades together scores 40 points.
5. **Aces Around:** One Ace from each suit scores 100 points.
6. **Kings Around:** One King from each suit scores 80 points.
7. **Queens Around:** One Queen from each suit scores 60 points.
8. **Jacks Around:** One Jack from each suit scores 40 points.

Trick-Taking Phase

1. **Lead:** The bid winner leads the first trick.
2. **Following Suit:** Players must follow the suit led if possible. If unable, they must play a trump card if they have one.
3. **Winning Tricks:** The highest trump card wins the trick, or the highest card of the led suit if no trump is played.
4. **Counting Points:** Aces are worth 11, Tens are worth 10, Kings are worth 4, Queens are worth 3, Jacks are worth 2. Last trick is worth an additional 10 points.

Tips and Strategies

- Remember which cards have been played since there are duplicates of every card.
- Bid conservatively until you are comfortable evaluating meld potential.
- Lead with Aces and strong trump cards early to draw out opponents' trump.

Tips & Strategy

Pay close attention to which cards have appeared, especially duplicates. Coordinate with your partner through your leads and bids to maximize your combined score.

Meld evaluation during bidding is critical. A hand rich in melds but weak in trick-taking potential may still fall short of the bid contract.