

# Preferans

3-4 players

32 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Long

Win the auction, set trump, and fulfill your trick contract while defenders try to stop you.

## SETUP

- Use a 32-card deck (7 through Ace).
- Deal 10 cards to each of 3 players; 2 cards go to the widow (talon).
- Players bid in ascending order for the right to declare trump.

## SCORING

- Declarer scores positive points if the contract is met.
- Falling short results in penalty points increasing with the shortfall.
- Defenders score based on tricks captured.

*Tip: Bid conservatively until you gauge your hand's potential with the widow's help.*

## ON YOUR TURN

- Declarer picks up the widow, discards two, and confirms trump.
- Players must follow suit, trump if unable, and win if possible.
- Play continues until all 10 tricks are resolved.

*Preferans is a sophisticated trick-taking card game originating in Russia, now played widely across Eastern Europe. It features a competitive bidding system where one player declares a contract while the other two may cooperate to defeat it.*

## Objective

Win the auction to set a trump suit and fulfill your contracted number of tricks, or as a defender, work to prevent the declarer from succeeding. Points are tracked on a complex scoring sheet over many deals.

## Setup

1. **Players:** 3 players (with a 4-player variant where the dealer sits out each hand).
2. **Deck:** A 32-card deck (7 through Ace in each suit).
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 10 cards, and 2 cards go to a face-down widow (talon).
4. **Auction:** Players bid in ascending order to declare how many tricks they will take and in which trump suit.

## Gameplay

1. **Declarer takes the widow:** The auction winner picks up the two widow cards, discards two, and confirms the trump suit.
2. **Defender options:** Each defender independently chooses to play against the declarer or pass. If both pass, the declarer wins automatically.
3. **Trick play:** The player to the dealer's left leads. Players must follow suit, trump if unable, and win the trick if possible.
4. **Complete all tricks:** Play continues until all 10 tricks are resolved.

## Scoring

- **Declarer success:** If the declarer meets the contract, they score positive points based on the bid level.
- **Declarer failure:** Falling short of the contract results in penalty points that increase with the shortfall.
- **Defender scoring:** Defenders who participate score based on tricks they capture, with penalties if they take too few.
- **Bullet and pool:** Preferans uses a multi-zone scoring sheet with a pool, bullet, and dump columns for tracking running scores.

## Variations

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- **Leningrad Preferans:** A variant with modified scoring rules and additional contract types.
- **Sochi Preferans:** Features slightly relaxed bidding and scoring conventions popular in southern Russia.
- **Rostov rules:** Adds specific misere contracts and adjusted penalty calculations.

## Tips and Strategies

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- Bid conservatively until you have a strong sense of your hand's trick-taking potential with the widow's help.
- As a defender, cooperate by signaling your strong suits to your temporary ally.
- Learn the scoring sheet thoroughly, as understanding the point implications of each bid level is key to long-term success.

## Tips & Strategy

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Evaluate your hand carefully before bidding, considering what the widow might contain. As a defender, coordinating with the other defender through your card play is essential to stopping the declarer.

The widow adds significant uncertainty, so top players learn to estimate probabilities of finding useful cards there based on what they hold and what has been bid.