

Sticheln

3-6 players

52 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Medium

Score the most points by winning tricks wisely and avoiding cards in your pain suit.

SETUP

- 3-6 players; deck scaled to player count.
- Deal all cards evenly to all players.
- Each player secretly selects a pain suit by placing a card face-down.

SCORING

- Each non-pain-suit card won scores +1 point.
- Each pain-suit card won scores negative points equal to its face value.
- Net score is the sum of positive and negative points.

Tip: Choose a pain suit you hold few cards of to reduce your chance of winning those cards.

ON YOUR TURN

- Lead any card; other players may play any card (no follow-suit obligation).
- Highest card of a non-led suit wins, unless only led-suit cards were played.
- Collect all cards from tricks you win.

Sticheln is a German trick-taking card game with a twist: winning tricks in your chosen 'pain suit' costs you points, making every trick a potential liability.

Objective

Score the most points over multiple rounds by winning tricks wisely and avoiding cards in your declared pain suit.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 to 6 players.
2. **Deck:** A custom deck scaled to the number of players (approximately 8-10 cards per suit per player).
3. **Deal:** All cards are dealt evenly to all players.
4. **Pain suit:** Before play, each player secretly selects one suit as their pain suit by placing a card of that suit face-down.

Gameplay

1. **No trumps:** There is no trump suit. However, any card of a different suit than the one led can beat the led suit.
2. **Trick resolution:** The highest card of a non-led suit wins, unless only cards of the led suit were played, in which case the highest of that suit wins.
3. **Forced follow:** Players may play any card — there is no obligation to follow suit.
4. **Collecting tricks:** Players gather all the cards they win in tricks for scoring.

Scoring

- **Positive points:** Each card won in a non-pain suit scores +1 point.
- **Negative points:** Each card won in your pain suit scores negative points equal to its face value.
- **Net score:** Your round score is the sum of positive and negative points from all your won cards.

Variations

- **Open pain suit:** Some groups reveal pain suits before play to add a layer of deduction.
- **Fixed rounds:** Play a set number of rounds (such as 5) rather than to a target score.

Tips and Strategies

- Choose a pain suit you hold few cards of, so you are less likely to win tricks containing those cards.
- Dump high pain-suit cards on tricks that opponents are likely to win.

Tips & Strategy

Select a pain suit where you hold only low-value cards. Offload your high pain-suit cards onto opponents' tricks. Watch what suits opponents are avoiding — their pain suit is likely one they never lead and always try to offload.