

Tarabish

4 players

36 cards

Difficulty: Hard

Duration: Long

With your partner, reach 500 points by bidding, melding, and winning tricks.

SETUP

- 4 players in partnerships with a 36-card deck (6s through Aces).
- Deal 3 cards each, bid for trump, then deal the remaining 6 cards.

SCORING

- Trump J=20, 9=14, A=11, 10=10, K=4, Q=3.
- Non-trump A=11, 10=10, K=4, Q=3, J=2.
- Last trick bonus: 10 points. Fail bid: lose bid amount.

Tip: Bid confidently with the Jack and 9 of your trump suit in hand.

ON YOUR TURN

- Declare melds at the start of trick play.
- Follow suit; must play trump if void; must overtrump if possible.
- Trump rank: J, 9, A, 10, K, Q, 8, 7, 6.
- Announce Bella when playing the second of K-Q of trump.

Tarabish is a partnership trick-taking card game from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Played with a 36-card deck stripped from a standard deck, it combines trump bidding, melding of card combinations, and strategic trick play. Teams of two compete to reach 500 points first.

Objective

Working with your partner, bid for trump, meld card combinations, and win tricks containing valuable cards to be the first team to reach 500 points.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 players in two partnerships, seated across from each other.
2. **Deck:** 36 cards from a standard deck (remove 2s through 5s from all four suits, keeping 6 through Ace).
3. **Deal:** Deal 9 cards to each player in batches of 3. After the first batch of 3, the bidding round occurs before the remaining 6 cards are dealt.

Bidding

1. **First round:** After receiving 3 cards, players bid starting left of the dealer. Bids start at 20 and increase by 10. Players may pass.
2. **Trump selection:** The winning bidder declares the trump suit based on their hand.
3. **Remaining deal:** After trump is set, the remaining 6 cards are dealt to each player (3 at a time).
4. **Minimum bid:** The bidding team must score at least their bid amount or they lose that many points.

Melding

1. **Bella:** Holding both the King and Queen of trump is worth 20 points. Announced when the second card is played.
2. **Runs:** A sequence of 3 cards in the same suit (tierce) is worth 20 points. Four cards (quart) = 50, five or more (quint+) = 100.
3. **Four of a kind:** Four Jacks = 200, four 9s = 150, four Aces/10s/Kings/Queens = 100.
4. **Declaration:** Melds are declared at the start of trick play. Only the team with the highest meld scores their melds.

Gameplay

1. **Lead:** The player left of the dealer leads the first trick.
2. **Follow suit:** Players must follow the led suit. If unable, they must play trump if they have any. If a trump is already winning the trick, they must overtrump if possible.
3. **Trump rank:** In the trump suit, the Jack is the highest card, followed by the 9, then Ace, 10, King, Queen, 8, 7, 6.
4. **Non-trump rank:** In non-trump suits, the ranking is Ace, 10, King, Queen, Jack, 9, 8, 7, 6.
5. **Last trick bonus:** The team that wins the last trick earns 10 bonus points.

Scoring

1. **Card values (trump):** Jack = 20, 9 = 14, Ace = 11, 10 = 10, King = 4, Queen = 3.
2. **Card values (non-trump):** Ace = 11, 10 = 10, King = 4, Queen = 3, Jack = 2.
3. **Total available:** 162 card points plus 10 for last trick = 172 total per round.
4. **Bid failure:** If the bidding team fails to meet their bid, they lose that bid amount from their score.

Tips and Strategies

- Bid aggressively when you hold the Jack and 9 of a strong trump suit, as these are the two most powerful cards.
- Communicate with your partner through your plays: leading a suit signals strength in that area.
- Count card points throughout the hand to know when your team has secured enough to meet the bid.

Tips & Strategy

The Jack and 9 of trump are the most valuable cards in the game. Bid confidently when you hold them and play defensively when you do not.

Leading trump early to flush out opponents' trump cards is a strong strategy when your team has bid. Count points carefully to know exactly when you have met your bid.