

Toepen

3-8 players

32 cards

Difficulty: Easy

Duration: Short

Avoid winning the last trick; the loser forfeits lives equal to the current stake.

SETUP

- Use a 32-card deck (7 through Ace, 10 is highest) for 3-8 players.
- Deal 4 cards to each player.
- Each player starts with 10 or 15 lives.

SCORING

- Each round starts at 1 life stake.
- Each knock adds 1 life to the stake.
- Folding costs you the current stake immediately.
- Reaching 0 lives eliminates you from the game.

Tip: Knock aggressively with a weak hand to scare opponents into folding before the last trick.

ON YOUR TURN

- Follow suit if possible; highest card of led suit wins.
- Knock at any time to raise the stake by 1 life.
- Other players must fold or stay after a knock.
- The player who wins the 4th trick loses the round.

Toepen is a lively Dutch bluffing and trick-taking card game where players can knock on the table to raise the stakes at any time. The combination of simple trick-taking mechanics with bold bluffing opportunities makes it a beloved pub game throughout the Netherlands.

Objective

Avoid losing all your lives. Each round, the player who takes the last trick (or folds to a knock) loses one or more lives. The last player with lives remaining wins.

Setup

1. **Players:** 3 to 8 players.
2. **Deck:** 32-card deck (7 through Ace, with 10 as the highest rank).
3. **Deal:** Deal 4 cards to each player.
4. **Lives:** Each player starts with a set number of lives, commonly 10 or 15.

Gameplay

1. **Trick play:** The dealer leads the first trick. Players must follow suit if possible. The highest card of the led suit wins the trick.
2. **No trump:** There is no trump suit in Toepen. Only the led suit matters.
3. **Knocking (Toepen):** At any point during the round, a player may knock on the table to raise the stakes by one life. Other players must immediately decide to stay or fold.
4. **Folding:** A player who folds immediately loses the current stake value in lives but avoids further risk.
5. **Last trick:** The player who wins the fourth and final trick loses the round and forfeits the staked number of lives.

Scoring

- **Base stake:** Each round starts at 1 life.
- **Knocks:** Each knock increases the stake by 1 life.
- **Loser:** The player who takes the last trick loses lives equal to the final stake.
- **Elimination:** A player reduced to 0 lives is out of the game.

Variations

- **Dirty Toepen:** Players may bluff about their hand strength through exaggerated reactions, adding a psychological dimension.
- **Team Toepen:** Partners sit opposite each other and cooperate to force opponents into taking the final trick.

Tips and Strategies

- Knock aggressively when you have a weak hand to scare opponents into folding, even if you might lose the last trick.
- Track which high cards have been played to estimate whether you can avoid taking the final trick.
- Folding early is sometimes the smartest play, especially when multiple knocks have inflated the stake.

Tips & Strategy

Bluffing is everything in Toepen. A well-timed knock with a terrible hand can win you the round if opponents believe you are strong and fold.

The paradox of Toepen is that winning tricks early can be dangerous if it leaves you with cards likely to take the final trick. Sometimes deliberately losing early tricks is the best path to survival.