

Zwicken

4-6 players

33 cards

Difficulty: Medium

Duration: Short

Win the pot by having the best combination or the most trick points.

SETUP

- Use a 33-card deck (7 through Ace plus one joker) with 4 to 6 players.
- Deal 5 cards to each player.
- All players contribute an equal ante to the pot.

SCORING

- Aces: 11, Tens: 10, Kings: 4, Queens: 3, Jacks: 2.
- A successful Zwicken doubles the pot reward.
- A failed Zwicken means paying double into the pot.

Tip: Fold early with weak hands rather than losing more in trick play.

ON YOUR TURN

- Choose to fold (losing your ante) or stay in for trick play.
- Declare special combinations like three of a kind or a flush for bonus points.
- Declare Zwicken if you believe you can win every trick to double the stakes.

Zwicken is an Austrian card game combining trick-taking with a unique bluffing element where players can choose to fold or challenge. It uses a shortened deck and features a hierarchy of card combinations that can end a hand before trick play even begins.

Objective

Win the pot by either having the best card combination at the showdown or by winning the most points through trick play. Players who lack confidence in their hand may fold before committing.

Setup

1. **Players:** 4 to 6 players.
2. **Deck:** 33-card deck consisting of cards 7 through Ace plus one joker.
3. **Deal:** Each player receives 5 cards.
4. **Ante:** All players contribute an equal ante to the pot before cards are dealt.

Gameplay

1. **Folding phase:** Starting from the dealer's left, each player may fold (losing their ante) or stay in for trick play.
2. **Declarations:** Before tricks begin, players with special combinations (three of a kind, flush) may declare them for bonus points.
3. **Trick play:** Remaining players take tricks following suit. The highest card of the led suit wins unless trumped.
4. **Zwicken call:** A player who believes they will win every trick may declare 'Zwicken' to double the stakes.

Scoring

- **Trick points:** Aces are worth 11, tens are 10, kings 4, queens 3, jacks 2.
- **Zwicken bonus:** Successfully winning all tricks after declaring Zwicken doubles the pot reward.
- **Zwicken failure:** Failing a Zwicken declaration means paying double into the pot.

Variations

- **Styrian Zwicken:** Uses a 36-card deck and slightly different combination rankings.
- **No-fold Zwicken:** All players must participate in trick play, eliminating the bluffing phase.

Tips and Strategies

- Fold early with weak hands rather than losing more points in trick play.
- Declaring Zwicken is high-risk but can be devastating when you hold strong trumps and aces.
- Read opponents during the folding phase to gauge the remaining competition.

Tips & Strategy

The folding phase is where games are won and lost. Learning when to cut your losses separates consistent winners from chronic overcommitters.

When most players fold, the remaining competition is likely strong. Be cautious about staying in when folding is heavy, as it signals that confident hands are still active.