

Court Whist Rules

The game of whist may not be as popular a game as it used to be, Bridge really managed to take its place, but still, this delightful game is simple to understand and generally a fun way to pass some time with friends. Whist continues to be played in widely Britain, often in local tournaments called "whist drives".

Whist is a game of strategy and can be rather amusing. Whist is a plain trick game, where 4 players, paired off in partners, try to win as many tricks as they can. Similar to Bridge, but there is no bidding.

Basic Rules:

It is a 4 player game, where there are two fixed partners. Your partner should sit facing you and the game is played clockwise. A standard deck of playing cards, 52, are used in this game. The cards are ranked from highest to lowest: A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Dealing:

The shuffle is done by the player to the dealer's left and cut by the person on the right of the dealer. The dealer deals all the cards out, one at a time, until all the players have 13 cards. The last card which belongs to the dealer is turned face up and subsequently the suit on that card is called the trump suit for that hand. That card remains turned up until it's the dealer's turn to play the first hand or trick of the game.

Traditionally you have two decks of playing cards during whist, one deck is for the next hand and it is shuffled by the dealer's partner and kept to the dealer's right. Once the first hand is over the deck is just passed to the next person for the deal. This is not necessary for the play of Whist, it just speeds the process of dealing.

How to Play

The person to the dealer's left plays the first trick. Any card may be played at this time. The rest of the players, in a clockwise direction, plays a card to the trick. Now the players must play the same suit as the card that was led in the trick, if they can. If you can't play the same suit, you may use any card. Now if a trump suit card is thrown in, then the highest trump would win, but if no trump card (the card determined for that hand of whist by the dealer's last card) then the high card of the suit wins the trick. The winner of a trick leads to the next.

Scoring:

When all 13 tricks have been played, the side which won more tricks scores 1 point for each trick they won in excess of 6. The partnership which first reaches 5 points wins the game. This will normally take several deals.

Variations of Whist

Honors

This is where a partnership receives extra points for having the four top trumps, Ace, King, Queen and Jack. They claim this at the end and get an additional 4 point. If the partnership was holding three of the four honors, then they can claim 2 points. A team which at the start of the game already has 4 points towards the 5 required for game cannot score honors on that deal. Now if the game is going to be determined, say both teams have 4 points and they need the 5th to win, the tricks are counted before the honors are, so the side scoring from the tricks would win and not the honors points. This rule isn't really used much today, and I find it to make the game to much of a luck game than a skill game. So, I recommend not playing with honors.

Determination of Trumps:

Another way of determining the trump suit for a hand is as follows: Instead of using the suit of the card that the dealer turns over, you would fix a trump suit in advance, and then work your way through the suits each subsequent hand. Like, Hearts as the first trump, Diamonds second, Spades, and clubs. You can also make it that after you've gone through the 4 suits you can then play a hand with no trump.

Scoring

The points to win a game varies. American's tend to use a target of 7, while the British uses a 5 points up, but played in a rubber where three games were played and the team that won two out of the three wins. You can also play a long game where the total is 9 points. In tournament play it would be difficult to use a point method, so instead it is done by the number of deals and the person score is tabulated with the odd tricks, the tricks above 6.

