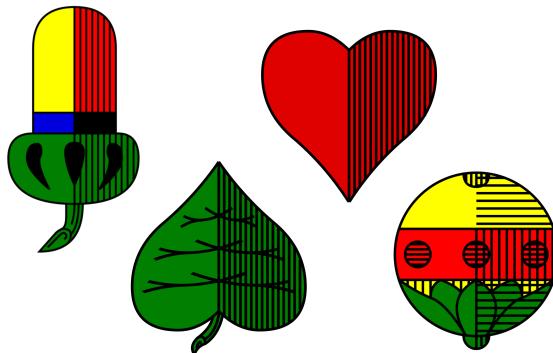


SCHAFKOPF FOR EXPATS

Calling Aces, Going Solo and Buttering Up Your Game

Brian Junker-Latocha



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WARUM SCHAFKOPF?

Why get involved in a regional game with a funny deck of cards? I don't live in Bavaria – heck, I don't have any substantial connection to the culture at all!

As an American Ex-Berliner Hessian¹, my profile is pretty far off the run-of-the-mill Schafkopf mark. But as curiosity and availability will have it, I got enamored of the Bayrisches Blatt deck to such a point that I, one slow morning in February 2023, took it upon myself to google "Schafkopf Frankfurt". What I discovered was a lively Schafkopfverein, just a short subway ride from my flat. Ever since, I've been spreading the Schafkopf gospel to friends and acquaintances from around the Rhine-Main Area² and the world.

¹Inhabitant of the federal state of Hesse.

²Region around Frankfurt, Wiesbaden and Mainz.

Warum Englisch?

The Schafkopfverein Royal Frankfurt³ is an active club of about 30 Schafkopfer and Schafkopferinnen. The Bavarian quota crests somewhere between 90 and 95%, many of whom are tried-and-true veterans who learned to count trumps before they learned to drink beer– and in Bavaria that’s saying something!

From the west at the Frankfurt Schafkopfverein, I soon wandered east. And after having gained my bearings and my confidence (and lost many rounds of shots), I knocked on the door of a small Schafkopf circle just beyond the Weißwurst Equator⁴... in Bavaria. Minus the occasional curse in the local dialect– and with the plus of having brought fresh money to their table– I was readily accepted among the Alzenau Schafkopfers, and I still try to visit that friendly group whenever I can.

But back to my hometown, Frankfurt’s hate-loved little brother with an unrivaled immigrant base: Offenbach am Main.

It started as a quest for cheap entertainment with some friends at my local Kneipe⁵, and led, in mid 2022, to the informal foundation of the Card Table Offenbach– a bona fide card society, complete with the frilly sort of standing table flag popular with German old men’s clubs.

³Website: svr-frankfurt.de

⁴A fictional border separating regions that eat white sausage.

⁵German pub.



Figure 1: Our proud banner

We played 66⁶ till the cows came home. We anointed an Offenbacher Meister and engraved his name on a tin plate. And as our traditional card players' community grew, so, too, did my eagerness to assemble a regular group of four in Offenbach and proselytize them on my newest reason for Dasein⁷, Schafkopf!

The Albanian, Indian and Polish friends I showed it first caught on quick (after all, they'd been primed with a six-month dose of 66). The four-person dynamic with the changing partner captured their attention, and, soon enough, they were cursing and rejoicing to the ebb and flow of the game and the height of their trick⁸ stack.

⁶Two-player trick taker also known as Schnapsen.

⁷Existence.

⁸Set of (four) cards won with a high card.

Fast-forward a few months, and we now have a solid Offenbach base of Indians, Albanians, Polish, a Mexican, an American, an Iranian, some Hessians, and even a few indigenous Bavarians!



Figure 2: Card Table Offenbach playing Schafkopf

Nochmal, warum Englisch?

So again the question, why English? Our modest card club has a good backbone of new players looking to learn – and of old hares⁹ looking to get back in shape and have some fun.

There are great resources out there on Schafkopf strategy – if you can read German. However, sad as that may be, ex-

⁹"Alte Hasen" (experienced players).

pats will be expats. In the words of card-playing expat Oscar Wilde, "Life's too short to learn German!".

For all the Oscar Wildes out there, let this book be your work-around:

Life's too short not to learn Schafkopf!

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O1

THE RULES

o1.1 The Setup

Schafkopf is played with a 36-card Bavarian or Franconian (Bayerisches Blatt/Fränkisches Blatt) deck, from which the 6s have been removed. 7s through aces remain for total of 32 cards in the game.

After shuffling, the player to the right of the dealer must cut the deck, after which eight cards are dealt to each player, either in two packs of four, or four packs of two.

The dealer rotates, and the game is dealt and played clockwise.



Figure 01.1: The Bavarian deck

01.2 Object of the Game

The aim of the game is, as a player, to take 61 points, or, as a defender, to take at least 60 points (of 120 total). Each card denomination (ace, 10, king, etc.) has a specific point value.

Taking Tricks

Each game consists of eight tricks, and the trick is taken by the player who plays the highest-ranked card of the led suit (or the highest trump). You must follow suit if possible (only when you don't have any of the led suit can you trump or discard).

Following Suit

Following suit means you must play a card of the led suit if possible (if not, you may play any card). If a trump is led, you must play trump if you can. Note that trump cards do not count as the suit printed on the card (but as trumps). In each new trick, the winner of the previous trick chooses the suit to be followed by playing the first card.

Choosing the Game

After dealing, players bid for the right to choose the game, starting with the player left of the dealer (the forehand).

Schafkopf has three game options:

- **Partner Game**

- 14 trumps (overs¹, unders² and all hearts)

- **Wenz**

- Four trumps (only the unders)

- **Suit Solo**

- 14 trumps (overs, unders and a suit of your choice)

Partner Game

The most frequent game in Schafkopf, and statistically the easiest, is the partner game. In this game, the player calls

¹Equivalent to the queen in regular cards. German "Ober".

²Equivalent to the jack. German "Unter".

an ace she doesn't hold, but in whose suit she holds at least one card.

The aces that can be called are the ace of acorns, ace of leaves or ace of bells. The ace of hearts can't be called, because in partner games it's one of the trump cards. There are 14 trumps.

In a partner game, the defender team will try to search for the called ace as soon as possible by playing a card of that suit. Knowing who has that ace will ensure you don't accidentally give away points to the wrong person. **If someone searches for the called ace, you are required to play it if you have it, even if it will be lost.** You also are not allowed to butter the called ace, meaning toss it into your partner's trick when you couldn't follow suit. You are always allowed to lead with the called ace.

Special rule "running away": if you have four cards of the suit of the called ace, you are allowed to "run away" by playing a different card of that suit *when you lead*. You can only do this when you lead (play the first card). If you ran away like this, you are then allowed play the ace like any other card (e.g. withhold it when its suit is played or butter it into a partner's trick).

Here is an overview of the cards in a partner game by rank (trumps in gray):

THE RULES

Cards by Trick Rank	Point Value
Over of Acorns	3
Over of Leaves	3
Over of Hearts	3
Over of Bells	3
Under of Acorns	2
Under of Leaves	2
Under of Hearts	2
Under of Bells	2
Ace of Hearts	11
Ten of Hearts	10
King of Hearts	4
Nine of Hearts	0
Eight of Hearts	0
Seven of Hearts	0
Ace of Other Suit	11 (x3)
Ten of Other Suit	10 (x3)
King of Other Suit	4 (x3)
Nine of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Eight of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Seven of Other Suit	0 (x3)
SUM	120

As the offense team (the players), you hopefully chose to play because you have a lot of trumps, so it's your aim to play these again and again to pull trumps from the opponents. Once the opponents are trumpless, it's much easier to make tricks, even with low cards (because you have to follow suit).

Wenz



Figure 01.2: The wenz of your dreams

Wenz is a game with only the four unders as trumps. It can be a good game to play if you have lots of aces, but few potential trumps and equally distributed suits. Wenz and solo are the two games you play alone, one against three—but you still need to take home 61 points!

In a Wenz, it's very important which unders you have and whose turn it is to be forehand, or the person to play the first card.

Even if you have only one or two unders, if you play the first card, you can sometimes pull all the opponents' unders in a single attempt. Whenever you don't play first, it's best you don't have any high scoring cards like a 10 without also holding the respective ace—otherwise these high-scorers may fall prey to opponents' aces. Note that in Wenz, the overs are ranked below the kings.

Card ranks in a Wenz:

Cards by Trick Rank	Point Value
Under of Acorns	2
Under of Leaves	2
Under of Hearts	2
Under of Bells	2
Ace	11 (x4)
Ten	10 (x4)
King	4 (x4)
Over	3 (x4)
Nine	0 (x4)
Eight	0 (x4)
Seven	0 (x4)
SUM	120

Suit Solo

A suit solo is a one-on-three game in which the bid winner gets to choose the trump suit. Suit solos have 14 trumps, just like partner games.

In a solo, it's particularly beneficial to have as few non-trump suits as possible, especially if you are not the first to play. If an opponent plays an ace of a non-trump you also have in your hand, you are not able to take it with a trump, because you have to follow suit. In this case your opponents may butter in high value cards for their team to take home.

Here are the cards by rank in a suit solo:

Cards by Trick Rank	Point Value
Over of Acorns	3
Over of Leaves	3
Over of Hearts	3
Over of Bells	3
Under of Acorns	2
Under of Leaves	2
Under of Hearts	2
Under of Bells	2
Ace of Trump	11
Ten of Trump	10
King of Trump	4
Nine of Trump	0
Eight of Trump	0
Seven of Trump	0
Ace of Other Suit	11 (x3)
Ten of Other Suit	10 (x3)
King of Other Suit	4 (x3)
Nine of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Eight of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Seven of Other Suit	0 (x3)
SUM	120

01.3 How to Choose the Game: Bidding

The forehand (player left of dealer) is the first person to bid, and she indicates her willingness to choose a game by saying "I would play" (regardless of the game she has in mind).

The next player then can either bid a higher game (partner game < Wenz < suit solo), or say "pass". If the next player

passes, the remaining players also have the chance to bid a game or pass. If a player wants to outbid, they must say what they would play (partner game/Wenz/solo), and then the original bidder has a chance to outbid, or to rescind their partner-game bid and let the higher bidder play³. If everyone passes, a negative game called Ramsch (German for junk) is played⁴, each man for himself trying to make the **least** number of points possible.

Bidding Examples

A: I would play

B: pass

C: pass

D: I would also play, a Wenz

A: ok, it's yours.

Result: Player D plays a Wenz

A: pass

B: I would play

C: pass

D: pass

Result: Player B plays whatever she chooses.

A: I would play

B: I would also play, a Wenz

C: pass

³Players who outbid may not rescind their bid.

⁴Some rounds also just redeal instead of playing Ramsch.

D: pass

A: I have a solo

Result: Player A plays a solo

A: pass

B: pass

C: pass

D: pass

Result: Everyone plays "Ramsch" for the least points possible.

Last Chance to Outbid

A suit solo is higher than a Wenz is higher than a partner game. If a player before you bids a higher game, there is, however, still one way to outbid: "tout"⁵.

A Wenz or suit solo announced as tout outranks any regular solo, and means you will take every single trick. If you don't, you lose the game.

Bid
Suit Solo Tout
Wenz Tout
Suit Solo
Wenz
Partner Game

⁵French for "all".

01.4 Scoring

The ways of scoring Schafkopf vary from round to round and group to group. Nonetheless, there are a few constant elements.



Figure 01.3: Keeping it old-school

Partner Game, Wenz, Solo

One-on-three games (Wenz and suit solo) are worth the same score, and partner games are worth a lesser score. A typical approach to scoring is to assign partner games the value 20 and Wenz and solo both 40⁶.

This means that if the solo/Wenz player wins, each other "pays" them 40 points:

⁶10 and 50, or 10 and 40 are also common scorings.

Brian	Hans	Christian	Jürgen
120	-40	-40	-40

If the solo/Wenz player loses, the opposite happens:

Brian	Hans	Christian	Jürgen
-120	40	40	40

In a partner game, both members of the offense win or lose together:

Brian	Hans	Christian	Jürgen
20	-20	20	-20

Ramsch

Ramsch can be scored with each winner earning +10 and each "virgin" earning +20⁷ (a virgin is a player with no points at the end of the round). The loser pays. In the below example, Jürgen had the most points and Hans had 0 points in his tricks:

Brian	Hans	Christian	Jürgen
10	20	10	-40

⁷Some rounds stipulate each virgin doubles the overall value of the round instead.

Winning Levels

Schneider

If the playing party scores 61 or the defending scores 60, they have won the game.

If they did a really good job, they may have won "schneider" meaning with a huge point majority. For this, the playing party must score 91 or the defending party 90.

Winning "schneider" makes the game worth another ten points (instead of 20 each):

Brian	Hans	Christian	Jürgen
30	-30	30	-30

Schwarz

If either party wins every single trick, it's called winning "schwarz" or black. This makes the game worth yet another 10 points. Thus, an partner game won schwarz would be scored, instead of 20, as such:

Brian	Hans	Christian	Jürgen
40	-40	40	-40

Contra

As a member of the defender team, at any time before you play your first card, you may say "contra" to double the value

of the game (whether won or lost). Only do this if you are very certain of yourself, i.e. you have a ton of trumps⁸.

Tout

When a tout is played, schneider and schwarz are disregarded and the value of the game is doubled.

01.5 End of Game

Before starting, it is often agreed to play a "list" of a given number of games which is a multiple of four (to give everyone an equal number of times as forehand).

At the end of the list, if you kept score right, the final sums will themselves add up to zero. The winner is the one with the most points, and the loser buys the next round :)

01.6 Variants

Geier and Farbwenz

In addition to Wenz and suit solo, some rounds also allow:

- Geier
 - Only the overs are trump (four trumps total)
- Farbwenz
 - Only the unders and a whole suit of your choice are trump (11 trumps total)

⁸Theoretically, an offense player can say "recontra" before playing her second card, again doubling the value.

Laufende

Many rounds play that the value of the game is increased if one team has three or more "Laufende"⁹. Laufende are the highest trumps in sequential order. E.G: if either team has the over of acorns, over of leaves and over of hearts, that game costs five more each, for a total of 15 more – whether lost or won.

In a Wenz or Geier, Laufende are counted from two or more.

Doubling

Some rounds allow doubling the game value. To play this way, you must deal the cards in packages of four – before looking at the second package, each player can put a chip on the table or knock to double the value of the round. But be careful! Your next four cards could be junk. And sometimes multiple players double. When someone doubles, take that as a signal that they have good cards.

Playing for Money

Instead of points, use coins. One point equals one cent.

Durchmarsch in Ramsch

Usually the highest score loses in Ramsch. But if you play with "Durchmarsch", accumulate 90 points and the tables turn: you win the Ramsch for the value of a solo!

⁹German for "runners".

Redealing

Instead of playing Ramsch, when everyone passes, new hands are dealt to all. Often, this is done in combination with a solo pot¹⁰, into which every player pays 10 cents as a penalty.

Playing with Five or Six

It's possible to play with more than four players, up to a max of six.

- If five are playing, the dealer doesn't play.
- If six are playing, the dealer and the cutter (to her right) both don't play.

01.7 Recommended Apps

- bayerisch-schafkopf.de
 - Nice for statistics.
 - Also has great introductory "training" lessons that are interactive (but in German).
- luduspecto.github.io
 - This one is great for practicing against the computer and is worth the modest price.
 - Unlike most other apps, you can double after four cards in this one.
 - Also it has a vertical orientation.

¹⁰The next solo additionally wins the pot, or must double it, if lost.

- schafkopf-palast.de
 - Popular for online playing.
- sauspiel.de
 - There is an iPhone app and it runs in the browser with Android.
 - The rules allow doubling and the format is quite nice for a few quick games with human opponents.

O2

THE PARTNER GAME

02.1 Introduction

The following chapters accompany you through the decisions of playing a partner game. They are just examples, but attempt to explain basic concepts and rules of thumb in an approachable way. We begin each example after the deal.

02.2 Playing as the Ace Caller

So¹, it's time to bid, and, lucky you, you're first in line. You look at your hand and see these are your cards: over of

¹“Wer so sagt ist noch lange nicht fertig!”

acorns, over of bells, under of hearts, king of hearts, ace of leaves, 10 of acorns, 8 of bells and 7 of bells:



Time to introduce the first golden rule of bidding: if you have four trumps and an ace on the side, go for it!

Being first to play, you're also first to announce, so let's think: the heart can't be called, and you have the leaf ace, so it's either the bell or the acorn ace. Is one better than the other? Yes, because with each additional card you have of the called suit, the higher the likelihood an opponent will be empty in that suit— and will stick your pig²!

After some deliberation, you're done thinking, and you say "I would play". No one wants to outbid you, so the game is yours, and you announce with confidence, "I'm playing with the acorn!".

You're up first, so what's your first move? **When you play, trump's the way!**

Having bid for and won the right to play, you believe you and your partner have the trump power to control the game and hopefully pull the opponents' trumps with more left to spare. When you play, trump's the way— so we'll lead with a trump.

²Trump the called ace.

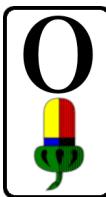


Figure 02.1: The over of acorns, the game's highest card.

If you have the top trumps in order, it's best to start from the top. That way we're guaranteed to remain in control and be able to initiate another trump round. We play the game's highest card, the over of acorns. Let's see what we take in:

First Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RghtyRobert

Good job, you pulled three trumps! Whoops— **were you counting?** We started with 14, we had four in our hand, that's 10, minus the three we just took home. That means seven trumps are still out there.

Let's try to get them— maybe we can even stay in control! Here's your hand:



You made the last trick, so you lead now. You don't know who has the next trumps from the top (over of leaves and of hearts), so you want to play it safe. Who knows, maybe your partner has them (whoever he or she may be).

You play your lowest trump (by trick rank), the king of hearts³:

Second Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
K Heart	O Spade	U Over	U Over

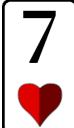
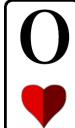
LeftyLukas takes it with the over of leaves (the number-two trump). How many trumps are left?

Seven were left before, now three more have turned up. That means only four trumps are left.

So what to do now? You still have no real signal who your partner may be, but let's wait and see. LeftyLukas leads the next trick – with trump. RightyRobert puts in the over of hearts (which you can't possibly beat) so you put in your lowest remaining trump:

³"Hoch und nieder, immer wieder."

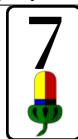
Third Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

The fact LeftyLukas led trump was a magic signal— offense players lead trump (“if you play, trump’s the way”). So Lukas is probably your partner. But how many trumps are still out? There were four left. Minus three: now there’s just one left.

We’re going take that magic signal at face value and assume LeftyLukas is our partner. RightyRobert made the last trick, so it’s his turn to lead. He plays an acorn— he’s searching for the called ace!

Fourth Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

It went through⁴, congrats. No one was empty in acorns and your team secured itself an A, 10 and K. Thus, you now officially know who your partner is: “Hello, LeftyLukas!”.

⁴Everyone had an acorn to play.

It's your partner's turn now, since the ace was his. Here's our hand:



And here's the situation:

Fifth Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			...

We don't have any acorns, so we could trump. But there's zero points on the table! And we're going to need that trump to pull the last remaining trump, which we know is below our over of bells (we already saw all the other overs). No need to waste a trump here, instead we dump some junk and get rid of a worthless low bell:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

RightyRobert took that cheap trick (0 points), so now he leads. He plays a king of leaves:

Sixth Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze


Here's your hand, and you're up. What will you play?



The leaf ace, of course (we have to follow suit). Lucky for us, this suit hasn't gone through yet, so chances are, the last two still have leaves – and they do:

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

Now, how many trumps were left? Still only one more, and we saw all the other overs hit the table. "If you play, trump's the way", so we'll play that last over and collect the final outstanding trump from the other players. It works like a charm:

Seventh Trick

Trump ade⁵!

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
O 	K 	9 	U 

We extracted the last trump from RightyRobert, and now have just one final card. Unfortunately, it's the 8 of bells, and not going to make us any more points:

Eighth Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
8 	K 	A 	10 

The last trick is theirs, but we win safely with 80 points, a bit shy of schneider (91). That's 20 points plus for the two players, and 20 minus for the defenders!

Lessons Learned

- Bid for a partner game when you have at least four trumps and a side ace.

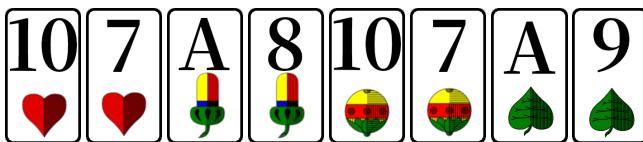
⁵German for adieu, pronounced "ah-day".

- Five trumps without a side ace is also acceptable if you have a couple overs.
- **Partner with the ace in which suit you have the fewest cards.**
 - This decreases the probability of an opponent being empty in that suit and "sticking your pig".
- **"If you play, trump's the way!"**
 - As soon as you lead, begin pulling trumps and don't stop—the majority should be on your team's side.
- **If you have the top trump—start with it.**
 - However, if you have a sequence of the top trumps, you can play them in a different order to confuse your opponents.
- **If you don't have the top trump, you can play a low trump and hope your partner takes it.**
 - Either way, you've pulled more trumps.
- **Count trumps, count trumps, count trumps.**
 - I prefer to count down from what's missing, but you can also count up to 14.

02.3 Playing as the Called Partner

Playing as the called partner is governed by largely the same strategy as for the caller – with the difference that you may or may not be thick in trumps.

Let's try another example. Here's your hand:



Ok, two trumps are in our hand and 12 remain out. This time, the player to our right is first. RightyRobert looks at his hand and, after some deliberation, says "I pass". It's your turn. Two trumps, all the suits and a couple aces. Not a player's hand, but with two callable aces we will probably be called as a partner. Let's wait and see. We pass.

LeftyLukas also passes, leaving MiddleMatze to decide whether to play or relegate us all to Ramsch. He says with gusto: "I'm playing with the acorn!".

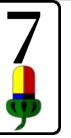
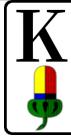
Lucky for us, we have the acorn ace, so we're the partner! Let's hope our hand is strong enough to support Matze with enough trumps and points. Could be tight.

This deal, it's RightyRobert's turn to start. He looks around the table, smiles, and blurts out "contra!" before he lays his first card, the 9 of acorns. He's feeling confident enough to double the game value, must have a lot of trumps.

Remember, when someone "searches", you have to play the called ace, so put it down, and hope for the best! You get

lucky— the acorns go through⁶, and your ace survives:

First Trick

RigghtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

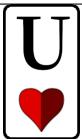
"Hello, Matze!" He's your new partner, welcome to the offense team. It's your turn now. Here's your hand:



"If you play, trump's the way!" This is just as valid for the partner as for the caller. Let's play trump and hope our partner will take the trick with a high one. It's a crap shoot who has the current top trump, though, so let's hold back the 10 of hearts for now and play the 7 of hearts:

⁶Survive untrumped.

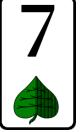
Second Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

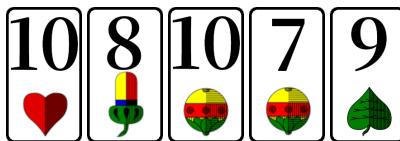
Ok, fairly cheap trick for the opponents – and the over of acorns is gone (good thing we kept the 10). How many trumps does that leave us with? We started with two, so 12 left, minus these three makes for nine trumps left in the game.

RightyRobert is up, and he plays the king of leaves. We have the ace (and only two leaves in total), so let's gamble it will go through, and play it instead of our 9:

Third Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	
				

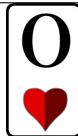
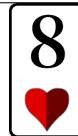
Ok, we're back in the lead: what to play? Our hand:



"If you play, trump's the way!" Our last trump is the 10. It's a risk to play it, because we don't know who has the top trump (currently the over of hearts). At the same time, we want to keep pulling trumps— and maybe our partner has that bad boy. So we take the risk and play the 10 of hearts.

Fourth Trick

And Matze takes it home with the over! More points for us!

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

How many trumps are left now? There were nine, minus three equals six trumps still out. Let's see what Matze is planning:

Fifth Trick

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
	

Ouch, that was the top trump, the over of bells— and Robert's partner, Lukas, comes last. It's their trick for sure,

and Lukas will butter⁷ if he can. We can't do much more than damage control. Our cards:



No trumps left, of course. The best move in this type of situation would be to get empty in some suit to make it easier to butter that 10 later. So we choose one of our singletons – the 9 of leaves:

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas

That one's theirs. And three more trumps means, instead of six, now only three are left in play. RightyRobert leads next with his king of bells. Who's got the ace? This could be snug!

⁷Put high points in your partner's tricks, especially when you can't follow suit.

Sixth Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

Phew! Your partner had the ace. You didn't know who had it, and bells hadn't gone through yet, so you decided to play low-risk with the 7 of bells. Well, low risk, low gain! You could have got more out of that one with your 10. Nonetheless, your team wins an ace and a king, and you start to smell the scent of victory...

Now, how many trumps are left? Still three—so who's got 'em?! Everyone has two cards left. Yours are:



Partner MiddleMatze leads with a butter trump⁸ (ace of hearts). He knows I'm trumpless, I hope he knows what he's doing!

⁸An ace or 10 of trump.

Seventh Trick

MiddleMatze	RghtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas

Ouch! Robert takes it with his under! Will we still make it? The last trump (there's one left now) is ours, surely?! Here's the final trick:

Eighth Trick

RghtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze

Dagnabb it! Robert leads the last trump– that's even more points for them... But, lo and behold, it's not enough! Matze and you collected 70 points in the beginning and middle stages of the game! This duck wasn't fat in the butt⁹– at least not fat enough for Robert and Lukas. A partner game is worth 20 points, doubled with Robert's contra makes 40 points owed to Matze and you. Congratulations.

⁹Original saying: "Hinten ist die Ente fett".

Lessons Learned

- **Let yourself be called.**
 - With a hand that's not quite good enough, it can be better to bet on being called—especially if you have one or more callable aces yourself.
- **Keep the trump pressure on.**
 - "If you play, trump's the way!"
 - Even if you have to risk a butter trump, if your partner comes after you, she may still take over the trick with a higher one.
 - Exploiting your trump majority to pull trumps is key as a player.

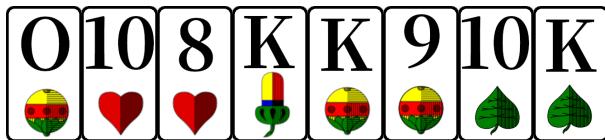
02.4 Defending a Partner Game

Congratulations

Congratulations, your team won two games as players! Statistically speaking, you're likely to win most partner games as a player. The bad news? You'll lose most you play on the defense.

Let's have a look at how a partner game as a defender can shape up. Depending on how lucky the caller gets with her choice of partner, a partner game on defense can often be a matter of making the best out of a bad situation.

How bad can it be? Here's your hand:



You're last to play, and LeftyLukas starts the bidding off saying, "I'll play!". The rest of the table passes. Looking at our three-trump, garden salad¹⁰ of a hand, we also pass. LeftyLukas proclaims: "With the acorn!". So let's keep our eyes peeled for that ace of acorns.

How many trumps are out there? 14 in a partner game, minus three in our hand equals 11 left.

First Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

LeftyLukas, the caller, leads with the top trump. MiddleMatze goes low, he couldn't take it if he wanted to. RightyRobert drops the king and you put in your lowest trump, always trying to save higher-ranked ones in case they make a trick later.

How many trumps left? 11 before, minus three equals eight trumps remaining!

Back to LeftyLukas:

¹⁰Evenly mixed hand with all the suits.

Second Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			...

Lukas leads with an under, and Matze takes over the trick with the current top trump, the over of leaves. RightyRobert puts in his presumably lowest trump, knowing he's losing the trick (and possibly knowing he's not Matze's partner).

Now, we don't know for sure who the partner is, and ideally we'd like to take over this trick and search for the called ace with an acorn. But we can't top the leaf over. Instead of wasting a potential trick-taker, we put in the 10 of hearts from this hand:



If we're lucky, MiddleMatze might even be our partner. Here's the completed trick:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

Now things get interesting. Will MiddleMatze play trump, or look for the acorn ace himself? Eight trumps were left previously, minus three from this trick equals five trumps left out.

Third Trick

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
			

Ok! Shame, it seems MiddleMatze is our opponent, he led a trump. That would mean Robert is our prospective partner. You give it your best with your over of bells, but Lukas' over of hearts takes it home from the back. Things are not looking good for us. Five trumps before, minus three equals two trumps left (and we're empty).

Here's our hand:



Fourth Trick

LeftyLukas leads again:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			...

Oh, nice! Player Lukas was betting his partner had that last trump, but we did, Robert did! The trick is ours, so butter in what you can, in this case, the green 10.

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

Great, our first points. Hope dies last¹¹... On to the next trick.

Fifth Trick

Here's your hand:



Partner Robert leads a bell. I guess he hopes we have the ace (bells haven't gone through yet):

¹¹“Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt.”

RigtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze

Ouch! Points for them!

Sixth Trick

MiddleMatze leads with the called ace – the trumps are all gone at this point, so he's safe. You have the king and have to follow:

MiddleMatze	RigtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas

Seventh Trick

MiddleMatze leads a low acorn, possibly hoping it's the last one and he can take the trick with it:

MiddleMatze	RigtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas

Oh, dear. That's exactly what he does, and his partner Lukas butters in the ace of leaves. There's not much we can do.

Eighth Trick

Matze leads yet again, and what worked once will work a second time... He plays the final acorn to secure the king and thereby the final four points of the game:

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
			

The game ends with a whopping 97 points for the offense, we lose schneider, and thus pay each of our opponents not 20 but 30 points. Lady fortuna was against us, there was not much more we could do.

Lessons Learned

- **Don't lead trump!**
 - As a defender, it almost never makes sense to lead trump. You're usually in the trump minority, and any trumps that don't get pulled you should save for taking tricks in suits you are empty or could become empty in.
 - "If you play, trump's the way."
 - * If you don't, **it's not.**

- Try to get empty in suits¹².
 - The faster you're empty in a suit, the easier you can trump and take control— or butter up your partner.
- Withhold high cards from opponents whenever possible.
 - Save them for buttering in later.
 - Sometimes it can make sense to sacrifice a high-point card instead of putting in a low-point, but high-ranked card that may take a whole trick later.
 - * For example, in the second trick, we gave away a 10 of hearts in the hopes of taking a later trump trick with our over of bells (it didn't work, but, hey, it could have).

¹²The word suits is usually used in contrast to trumps.

O3

GOING SOLO

Unlike with the partner game, there is no cut-and-dry rule for when you should attempt a solo. You are much more dependent on the distribution of the cards among the other players, making it much more important to focus on the fine print, like what position you're playing in, exactly which trumps and side cards you have, and whether someone already bid or doubled.

03.1 Playing a Suit Solo

In a suit solo, recall there are 14 trumps, just like in a partner game. In general, you'll need at least six of these to have a good chance at winning. But the devil's in the details! Here are the main factors that will influence your chances to win

a suit solo:

- **Your position at the table.**

- If you're first, it's usually easier, because you can start the game off with a trump trick.
- If you're fourth, it's not bad either, because you're in the back, in a position to react and or trump what your opponents played.
- If you're in the middle, i.e. second or third, it's a weaker position.

- **Your side cards.**

- Do you have more than one side suit? Suboptimal. Do you have more than one side suit and no ace? Even worse.
- If an opponent plays before you and leads one of these suits, you'll be losing big points (especially if you have a freestanding¹ 10).

- **Your trumps.**

- Do you have one or more of the butter trumps?
 - * This will make pulling trumps less dangerous, and is especially good if you plan lose some trump tricks (because you don't have the top trumps).
 - * Having the trump butter yourself ensures lost trump tricks won't be too fat.

¹As a singleton of that suit.

- If you don't have the butter trumps, it's more crucial to have some high rankers: overs and high unders.
 - * You'll need those guys to retain control and hopefully take some butter trumps home.

Beware of Heart Solo

Another factor in your choice to play a solo affects you most when you're considering a *heart* solo: the other players!

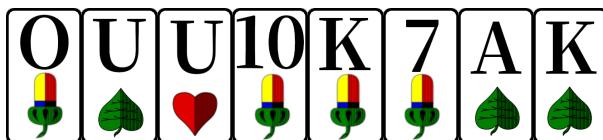
If someone before you already bid, it's likely to have been with a partner game in mind, meaning they are thick in trumps and the distribution is uneven. An uneven distribution is bad, and means you need more trumps to exhaust the defending team's trump supply. The same is true if someone doubled— they likely have a decent collection of trumps, usually *hearts*.

While this is less relevant if you play an acorn, leaf or bell solo, the point still applies to the distribution of the overs and unders, so be careful if you don't have the big boys² in your own hand.

A Doable Solo?

Let's give the game a try. You're sitting in first position, here's your hand:

²The top overs and unders.



You're first up. Ok, you have six trumps and only one side suit – and you have a side ace! Plus you have the top over, always a bonus. So let's give it a go: "I'll play".

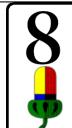
LeftyLukas passes, as do MiddleMatze and RightRobert. You're not blocked³ for a partner game, because you could call the acorn ace, but going alone should be a lot more fun.

We have a very strong... acorn solo! Having only one side suit, we'll be able to trump hearts and bells if an opponent leads them. But for now, we'll do as players do: "If you play, trump's the way!".

One over, two unders and three acorns. That's six trumps with us and – 14 minus six equals eight trumps with the opponents. We have the highest, and we lead, so let's play from the top (this way we retain control, and can follow this trump round with another):

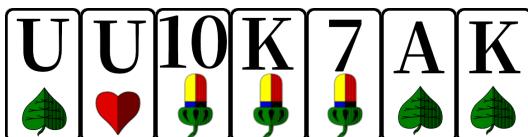
³You're blocked from playing a partner game when you don't have a least one side suit whose ace you could call (and don't possess yourself).

First Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RghtyRobert
O 	O 	8 	U 

Alles klar⁴, as expected, no one gifted you the ace of trump. Let's pull some more trumps, but first things first: there were eight trumps before, minus three makes five trumps left in circulation.

Here's our hand now:



We're missing several of the top trumps (leaf over, heart over, acorn under), so we're going to have to bet on losing a trump trick or two. Nonetheless, let's put one of our precious unders into the trick. Yes, we will likely lose this one. But it means the opponents will at least expend a high trump, and can't take a trick with the ace of trump, preserving their high trumps (very annoying).

We give the under of hearts a whirl. It could also have made sense to preserve the under and play our lowest trump, knowing it's going to be lost anyway. But the trump ace is

⁴"Alles klar, Herr Kommissar?"

still out, so we at least want them to pay high if they're going to get it:

Second Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

Ok: LeftyLukas realized we're weak on top trumps, and bargained wisely that his friends might have a high-enough one to beat our under of hearts (he risked the ace of trump).

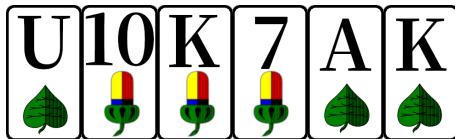
Matze secures the trick with the acorn under, and Robert, surprisingly, puts an even higher trump in. He probably wouldn't have wasted it (the trick was already theirs) if he had had a choice (the trick was already theirs).

Five trumps were left last, now three more have fallen, and just two remain out. The defenders lead, and Robert starts with a heart:

Third Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze


Great, a suit you don't have:

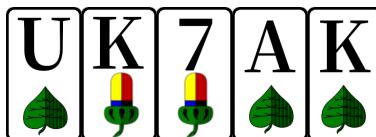


Plus, it's being played for the very first time, so the ace and 10 are still out there. Trump it! Just to be safe, we secure the ten points from our 10 of acorns (we're empty in hearts, so we hope everyone has hearts and no one will overtrump⁵ us:

RigghtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze

Not too shabby! Another 24 points. The ace of hearts is still out there, but we got the 10, and we're back in control. Trump status? Still two remain! And we've been keeping an eye on the overs, and noticed that the leaf over hasn't been played yet.

We will lose this trick, but it's still in our best interest to eliminate the enemy trumps, especially if we have more left: "If you play, trump's the way!". Our options:

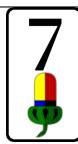


⁵Trump our trump with a higher one.

Now, we think the enemy over of leaves will take this trick, but we can't remember what else is missing. If we're lucky, the two outstanding trumps are distributed, and both will fall into this trick. If we're unlucky, they're clumped with one player, and the trumpless others will do their best to butter, butter, butter.

Here we go:

Fourth Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

Not bad. Lukas had the over and trumpless Robert buttered in an ace. Could have been much worse— at least the trumps are all gone! And we still have two left. We smile deviously behind our poker face as we look at our hand and Lukas leads:



Fifth Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

Oh⁶, how fortuitous! Lukas hoped his team might have the green ace and instead, he led the trick right into ours.

We're back in control, and here's our hand:



Well, well, well: the enemy trumps are all out, what do we do? If you recall correctly, the green 10 fell into the last trick, leaving our king of green high. A high card, no trumps on the opponents' side, and two in our hand?! The rest is ours! You can savor each final trick individually, or put your cards face-up on the table and claim what's yours. Well done!

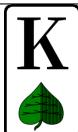
You win with 88 points, three shy of schneider (91). For that, each opponent owes you 40 points, for a total of +120 on the chart.

Here are the final three tricks, just for fun:

⁶"Ach du grüne Neune!"

Sixth Trick

You play the high king, but shoot blanks⁷:

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

Seventh Trick

The opponents try to save their butter in the hope against hopes that you will run out of trump:

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

Not gonna happen.

⁷Win a trick, but collect little to no points.

Eighth Trick

The butter hits the pan, and you finish strong:

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

Lessons Learned

- Six trumps with a high over and a single side suit with an ace is a solid basis for a suit solo.
 - Especially if you're playing first.
- Playing first makes a big difference.
 - Beginning the game with trump makes us less susceptible to giving away points in our side suit(s), and helps protect any side aces of ours from being trumped.
 - If you have the over of acorns, it's even better to be first, given you can start the game with at least two tricks of trump.
- Be careful with your trump butter.
 - Sometimes, it's best to secure it by putting it into the trick of a suit that hasn't run yet.

- Better yet if you can put it in last or second-to-last (chances of being overtrumped are reduced).
 - * You never know how the suit is distributed outside your hand or if an opponent behind you could be empty.
- **Remember what suit cards are high.**
 - Once the enemy trumps are gone, you may have more guaranteed trick takers in your hand.
- **Remember what butter is still out, and how many cards are left in suits.**
 - This will help you to evaluate a trump-or-dump situation⁸, especially in estimating the butter risk.

03.2 Defending a Suit Solo

Defending a suit solo is a team effort. It's three-against-one, and your opponent is empty in at least one suit—probably two—and has at least six trumps.

A couple of tips for defending a solo:

- **Put the player in the middle.**

⁸A prickly situation in which you've been brought into the middle and must decide to trump high, trump low, or dump a low-pointer (under risk of enemy butter).

- The more you can maneuver the player into the middle position, the better (in first position, she can pull trumps, in last position she can react with a trump).
 - By putting the player in second or third position, other players get a chance to overtrump when she trumps a suit trick⁹, but more importantly, you force the player into a trump-or-dump dilemma: if she trumps too low, she may be overtrumped, if she dumps, opponents may butter themselves points—especially, especially if that suit was already played and someone is empty!
- **Don't lead a suit ace¹⁰ on a player in fourth position.**
 - Obviously, there is a high risk in any suit trick that the solo player will be empty in that suit and will trump.
 - But even more importantly, even if your ace goes through, what next? Now the player is situated comfortably in the back, read to react to whatever your team does. Instead of leading a suit ace, try another suit—either a partner will take it, possibly putting the player in second or third position, or the player will take it, which would have happened soon anyway. If you're in the happy situation that the player is currently in

⁹Non-trump trick

¹⁰Ace of a non-trump suit

the middle, you may even force her into a trump-or-dump dilemma.

Let's dive right in and experience a suit solo as a defender. It's a heart solo, and you're first to play:



Three trumps in our hand means 11 trumps left in the game.

First Trick

One thought would be to play an ace. The player is right after us, so if someone is empty, we might even still overtrump a trumping. But it's early in the game and everyone still has all their cards. We have three leaves (of six total in the game) so this might be our only chance to take one home. We risk it with the 10:

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert

Darn, no dice¹¹. Now player Lukas is in the lead. What else: he plays trump (11 minus one equals ten trumps left in the game).

¹¹Close, but no cigar.

Second Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RigthyRobert	You
O 	O 	10 	...

But it's not the top trump, and partner Matze produces the big boy, the acorn over. Your cards:



Partner Robert already played some tasty trump butter, and what do we put in? Best go with our lowest trump (in absence of any real butter):

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RigthyRobert	You
O 	O 	10 	7

10 trumps before, minus these three, makes seven trumps left in the game!

Third Trick

Partner Matze is up and plays a low bell. Robert smells an opportunity, perhaps, and puts in his 10. But it's too much

risk from our perspective: these two bells on the table plus our two equals four, of a total six bells in the deck:



Let's put in our king instead of the ace to hedge the bet¹².

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
9 	10 	K 	8

That was the right choice. Six trumps left.

Fourth Trick

Player Lukas leads, initiating another trump trick:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
O 	K 	U 	...

Our hand:

¹²Play it safe.



The choice is clear, we take it while we can with the over of hearts:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
O 	K 	U 	O

That's three more trumps gone, meaning six minus three, equals three trumps left. It's our turn to lead, with the following hand:



Fifth Trick

Idea: Lukas has no leaves, and we have the last high-point leaf on-hand (the ace, and we played the 10 earlier). Let's do a "trump-or-dump" on him and see what happens.

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
9 	7 	10 	K

Ok, he dumped this time– but Matze buttered, and Robert took the trick!

Lukas is back in the middle, and Robert tries the acorn ace (maybe Lukas had two acorns?)¹³:

Sixth Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
A 	A 	8 	K

Woohoo! It went through, and so did our butter¹⁴! Robert's up yet again, Lukas still in the middle. Here's your hand:

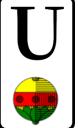


Remember, there are still three trumps out (and player Lukas only has two cards). Robert leads in the seventh trick:

¹³The player is third, not fourth.

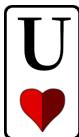
¹⁴That was risky butter, but in our defense, the acorns hadn't run yet, and Matze was in back.

Seventh Trick

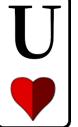
RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

A bell! We have the ace of bells, but we know who's empty in bells... Lukas trumps it, leaving two trumps in the final trick. Will our final card, the under of hearts, be high in the eighth trick?

Our hand:



Eighth Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

We lose it to the under of leaves. But that cheap trick is not enough to turn the tide for player Lukas. The defense wins with 68 points! Good job!

Lessons Learned

- If the player leads with a lower over than the top one, she often has a gap.
 - Exploit the gap by buttering in anything you can: your teammate can likely take it with the missing trump.
- Hold back high cards if you have a lot of their suit.
 - You may be the only defender who knows it's unlikely to go through.
 - Hedge your bets¹⁵ accordingly.
- Put the player in a sandwich.
 - If you can maneuver the player into second or third position, you can bring her into trouble by leading a suit that already ran.
 - * Remember the "trump-or-dump dilemma"!
 - If the ace and 10 of that suit are out of the question (in your hand or already played), the player has no points to gain by trumping (because if she does, the defenders will dump junk).
 - * However, if she doesn't trump, and instead dumps a card, she opens the door to the defenders behind her buttering for all they're worth!

¹⁵Withhold your butter if you can see a suit is unlikely to go through.

- If the ace or 10 are still out in the led suit, the player will need to trump high if she wants the points, eliminating a high trick-taker from the game (and possibly granting the defenders another trump trick in return).
 - * If she makes the mistake of trumping low, the defenders behind her have a good chance of overtrumping, depending how many trumps have already been pulled at this point, and also whether she's second or third.

03.3 Playing a Wenz or Geier

In Wenz and Geier, only four of the 32 cards are trump, either the unders or the overs. This makes it even more important where you sit and how the trumps are distributed—especially if you don't have all four. The rowdy rule-of-thumb for playing a Wenz applies equally to Geier:

"Beim Wenz spielt man Ässe oder hält die Fresse!¹⁶"

In a Wenz you play aces or shut your pie-hole! Because at best, half the cards in your hand can be trumps, it is of utmost importance what suits you control on the side. Controlling a suit can mean being empty and having enough trumps to trump that suit, or having the ace of that suit (or better yet a sequence from the ace down). Once the trumps are gone, the high cards control the game, and the leading

¹⁶Rhymes nicely in German

player can do a lot of damage with the top cards. And note that in Wenz or Geier, there are not six, but seven cards in each suit¹⁷! Also, the more freestanding 10s you have, the worse. Chances are, you'll lose them.

But let's get right into it! The deal is done, and you're sitting pretty in fourth position with the following hand:



Not half bad. You have the top under and three in total, plus you control leaves with the ace and 10, and you're empty in hearts. Your playmates, Lukas, Matze and Robert have all passed. You're a bit weak for a partner game with three trumps, but you might just manage a Wenz¹⁸! There's only one trump out there. If we can just pull it and avoid losing too many points on those low bells, it should work out. LeftyLukas is first— here's the first trick:

First Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
O	K	A	8

¹⁷Overs (unders in Geier) are underneath the king by trick rank.

¹⁸“Wenns geht...”

Oh, they chose the right suit from their perspective—but didn't dare butter in all their points in front of a player in fourth position (position has its perks). This is wise in theory, but today we had a bell. RightyRobert is now first again, and you're in the middle.

Second Trick

Well, he didn't put in another bell, but we're still going to have to trump to block the butter here— we're right after Robert in the worst position:

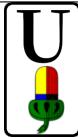
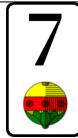
RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
O 	U 	8 	7

Ok, they stayed away and let you shoot blanks with your valuable under. Good thing is, we have two left, including the top! Our hand:



"If you play, trump's the way!" This sentence should be enjoyed with caution in a Wenz, given there are only four trumps total. But in this case, we have the highest one, and can extract the leaf under by playing our under of acorns as soon as we take the lead. And out he comes:

Third Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

We got him, but not much else. We're still in control, and all the trumps are out, so let's inspect our hand in detail:



The 9 of bells is a liability, and we're going to lose points on that one, especially because the suit was already played in the first trick (five bells were played, plus our 9 makes the sixth of seven cards, and the 10 is still out).

Looking at our other cards, the ace and 10 of leaves are in sequence, they will both win. The 7 of leaves should also be the final leaf after those two tricks, which will bring home even more points.

But that pesky 9 of bells! If the suit hadn't already run, and we wouldn't expect a full serving of butter, we would play it now, retaking control later with the final under. This way we could have limited the buttering, because players would have had to follow suit. Well, them's the breaks¹⁹!

¹⁹C'est la vie.

With the 10 of bells outstanding, and little butter seen thus far in the game, we can safely assume a lot of points will fall into that bell trick— the question is whether we can afford it.

We look in our hand, and decide to forsake that one trick, while retaining the overall victory:



Our under and the leaves all look like high cards, i.e. trick-takers, so we decide to play top-down and leave the "loser" for the end.

Fourth Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert

As expected, we're shooting blanks (the duck is fat in the butt²⁰).

Fifth Trick

We play our next high card:

²⁰Big points will fall in the final trick.

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
A 	7 	9 	O 

We win some chump change²¹ and continue down the sequence:

Sixth Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
10 	K 	O 	K 

Moving on, if you remember correctly, two leaves were dumped early on, and four more went into the last two tricks. That leaves but one final leaf (our 7):

Seventh Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
7 	10 	10 	K 

²¹Peanuts.

Nice, some butter in the pan! But, alas, there is still a whole stick of butter in the game, and our 9 of bells just won't cut it!

Eighth Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RigthyRobert
9 	A 	10 	A

That sure is a fat one. But it's ok! We won the game in the seventh trick, collecting 70 points in total!

We're in the clear, and each defender (schneider-free²²) owes us 40 points. That's +120 for the scorecard. A job well done.

Lessons Learned

- **Remember what cards are high.**
 - Once the unders are gone, you need to know what cards are guaranteed trick takers, and which are bound to lose.
 - There are seven suit cards in a Wenz or Geier. If you play it right, and know your card is last, you can turn a loser into a winner.
- **Seating is very important.**

²²We did not win schneider (with 91 points).

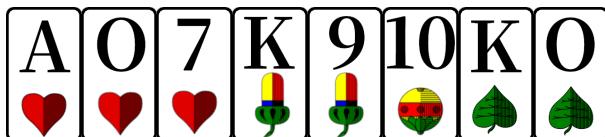
- Sitting fourth is not as good as first, which we noticed when the leader started with our low side suit.
- **A side suit without an ace is a liability.**
 - As we saw in this game, 50 points fell into those two bell tricks alone!
 - One trick less, and we could have been in a tight spot.
- **Keeping control²³ is key in Wenz and Geier.**
 - We had a lot of unders and a sequence of leaves. But if we had lost control after our trumps ran out, our leaf strength would have become a leaf liability:
 - * The opponents would only need to lead another suit to make all our leaves worthless.
 - * Without trumps, we would have no way to wrench back control, and no influence over the suit led.

03.4 Defending a Wenz or Geier

Whether playing or defending, Wenz and Geier are about controlling the suits and dictating the course of the game. This time, you're sitting first, and everyone but LeftyLukas has passed. Lukas announces the unders are trump, so for

²³Leading the trick is the difference between acting and reacting.

you, Matze and Robert, the name of the game now is: Wenz defense! Here's your hand:



We certainly don't have any unders, let's hope Lukas doesn't have them all. Also, we assume our opponent is empty in at least one suit, probably two. We only have one bell, so let's play it to get empty in bells, and maybe even find a partner's ace:

First Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
10 	U 	7 	8

Player Lukas trumps with the lowest under, but our partners are able to stay away and let him shoot blanks (besides the 10).

Second Trick

Lukas leads, and his first move is to pull trump:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

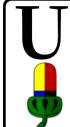

Interesting, he's not starting from the top. Either he has a sequence from the top, and is messing with us, or he really doesn't have it. Wenz defense is a betting game— it could be advantageous for Matze to butter in the hopes that our team will produce the acorn under: and we do!

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			...

Our hand has some butter, so we gladly schmier:

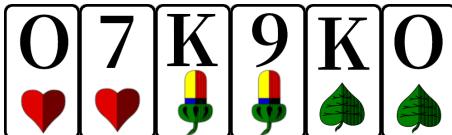


With our ace, Team Wenz Defense takes home 19 points:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

Third Trick

Partner Robert leads and gives it a try with the bell ace (after all, the player is wedged in the middle). Our hand:



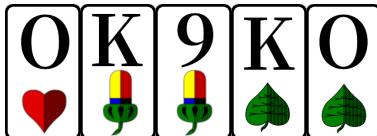
Thinking it may be trumped, we hold back putting in points and put in a low heart. But player Lukas dumps an acorn, gifting us the trick. Matze must be out of butter...

RigghtyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
A 	7 	7 	O

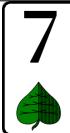
Trump-or-dump situations are always unpleasant for the player.

Fourth Trick

Robert leads again, this time with a 7 of leaves. We're a bit afraid the ace is with the player, so we play the lower of our two leaves, the over. Our hand:

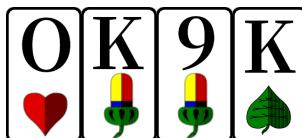


Our hunch proves right, and player Lukas takes it with the ace:

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

Fifth Trick

Lukas' next card is the new top leaf, the 10. I wonder if he has that last under, and that's why he's so confidently leading his 10. In line with this hunch, the 10 takes it, but the defense largely stays away²⁴! Our hand:



And the trick:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

²⁴Atta way, Wenz defense!

Sixth Trick

Lukas is succeeding at retaining the control with high cards. If we can't stop him soon, this could go very sour. We have three more cards (remember, one of the four unders is still in the game):



Lukas leads yet another high card:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

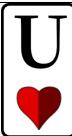
That other under must be with Lukas, everything's going through. Only two tricks are left— what's his other card (and our final hope)?

Seventh Trick

Left in our hand are:

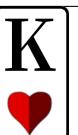
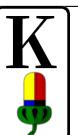


Player Lukas again leads, and it's that last under that hits the table:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

Eighth Trick

Our last card is the king of acorns. Will it do us any good? The final cards drop, Lukas first:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

The king beats the 8, and we take home the final points of the game! Nonetheless, this late victory is not enough to turn the tables overall. We lose schneider-free with 51, but we put up a good fight.

Lessons Learned

- **Save your butter and wait for an opportunity.**
 - Sometimes there's a hole in the player's strategy. Depending on the distribution and whether de-

fenders are empty, you can make her pay dearly for it, and win the solo in a few fat tricks.

- **Sometimes you have to gamble with your butter.**

- To make a tough game winnable, or even just to get out of schneider, risk can be a necessary element.
- Betting on a missing trump can be dangerous, but sometimes a leap of faith is your only window of opportunity, and you have to hope your team has that high card.

- **Keep an eye on who's trumpless.**

- Identifying early on whether any trumps are on your side can help you judge whether to butter or stay away.
- If high-point suits are won repeatedly by the player, this can be another sign she has the rest of the trumps and, thus, nothing to worry about.

O4

RAMSCH

Ramsch is a game you don't want to play with a strong hand. So the first rule of Ramsch is: don't let it come to a Ramsch if you could have played!

The second rule of Ramsch is: don't get too worked up about it. It's usually a cheap game where you can't do much damage. So if you have questionable cards, do, by all means, pass, and hope the rest do, too. You'll probably win some chump change.

Counting Trumps

Counting the 14 trumps¹ is beneficial in a Ramsch, but not as necessary as in a regular game.

¹Ramsch uses the same trumps as a partner game.

If, however, you have a lot of trumps– or high trumps– it's important to know which are left, and when you can rest assured your high trump or trump butter will be overtrumped.

Getting Empty

Being able to butter off your high cards to an ungrateful opponent is very important in Ramsch. The sooner you're empty in a suit, the sooner you can butter your ace or ten away on a card of that suit– regardless how high or low.

Low on trump, low on aces and empty in at least one suit– that's a great way to start a Ramsch.

Getting high trumps out cheaply

A hand with high trumps is dangerous in Ramsch. But while, generally, you want to avoid tricks at all cost, if you have a guaranteed trick taker like the over of acorns, you need to get him out cheaply. Don't wait until trump is led, it's your final trump, and you go home with a bucket of butter...

Instead, take a trick with the over when you're in fourth position. You'll know exactly how many points you're getting, and sometimes you can get rid of that trump more cheaply than you would have by waiting.

Another tip for getting rid of high trumps is, as soon as a higher trump hits the table, to put in that high trump, thus eliminating it from the game at no cost to you.

Durchmarsch

If all else fails, and you already see a thick stack of tricks in front of you, a method of last resort can be the Durchmarsch: collect 90 points, and you win the Ramsch for the value of a solo!

This will require either a very strong hand (with which you probably shouldn't have Ramsched in the first place) or the element of surprise! Durchmarsch is particularly difficult if you're missing the top overs, and the others get wind of your strategy. They'll quickly take one for the team² rather than see you reach your 90 points.

Virgins

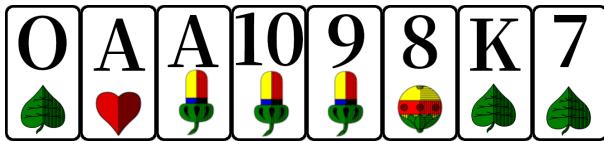
In Ramsch, anyone trickless at the end of the game is called a virgin, and for each virgin, the value of that player's winnings (alternatively, the value of the whole round) is doubled. This is your goal. If you succeed, you're entitled to throw all humility to the wind, and wave your empty hands and fingers in the air³ in triumph.

A Ramsch Run-Through

You know the basics, let's give it a try. You're second, and the whole table has passed. It's Ramsch time, here's your hand:

²Sacrifice themselves.

³Think jazz hands.



First Trick

RightlyRobert leads first, and starts low with the bottom bell.

RightlyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
7	8	K	10

Matze takes it, looks like he couldn't stay away.

Second Trick

Matze leads with a low leaf. Our hand:



We decide to play it safe and put in the 7 of leaves. You never know when even a king can take the trick and expose you to butter!

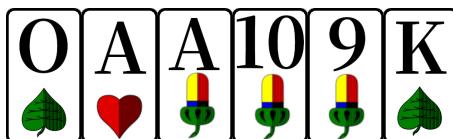
MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas

Third Trick

Now you're last, and Lukas leads with the bottom acorn:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			...

Oh, dear. Our hand:



We play the lowest and cheapest acorn we have, but it's still too high. Regrettably, we collect some butter from empty Robert:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

Fourth Trick

We look at our cards, and think about which suits still have their trick takers out:



Darn it, we're in a bit of a pickle⁴. Leaves are a no-go, given the ace and the 10 are gone, and our king is high. That could be a butter magnet, too, since leaves already was played.

It would also be no good to lead again after winning, it would just put us into the same situation all over again with our high acorns. So shall we take a risk?

We play our ace of trump, and hope someone is forced to put at least an under on top:

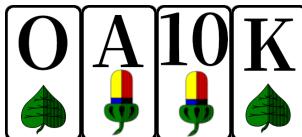
You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
A 	10 	9 	O

Phew! We're safe, and Robert leads in the fifth trick.

Fifth Trick

Here's our hand:

⁴Not a sweet situation.



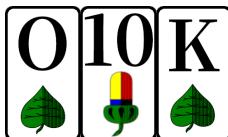
Robert leads one of the last bells, the 9 (we're all out of jingles⁵):

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
9	A	U	K

We butter it up, and Lukas takes it away with an under. He must have a lot of trump left. Matze seemingly has run out of butter.

Sixth Trick

As Lukas leads, we check out our cards:



Lukas playes the lowest trump, the 7.

We have no choice, given our single remaining trump, the over of leaves. But it's a cheap-enough trick at seven points:

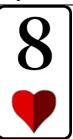
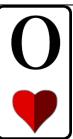
⁵"Jingle bells..."

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
			

Seventh Trick

The 10 of acorns and the king of leaves are both the top of their suits, but— we counted the trumps all along, of course, and know there are exactly five trumps left among the opponents. With two cards in each hand, trump has to fall in each of the last two tricks!

That's great news, and means we can play either of our cards without worry. We put in the 10 of acorns:

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

Eighth Trick

It's Matze's trick, and he leads with the over of bells. Ouch for him, that's the top of the top:

Matze's over takes the last trick and bags two kings and an ace, to boot. Everyone counts his score, and Matze ends "on top" with 51 points! Lukas 27, Robert 24, and you're best with 18. That makes +10 points each for the winners, all paid by generous Matze (-30).

MiddleMatze	RigthyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
			

Lessons Learned

- **Leading a trump ace is a gamble.**
 - It was a big risk, but with the alternative of an all-but-guaranteed buttery trick thanks to our high card.
 - Dangerous uncertainty is preferable to certain danger...
- **Ramsch is all about butter.**
 - The faster you're empty in suits, the faster your liabilities⁶ become your assets.
- **Claiming a cheap trick with a high trump can save you a whole trick later.**
 - If you can get rid of a high trump cheaply, or if you can waste that trump when you'd have to take the trick anyway, you may avoid winning more trump tricks later.

⁶High suit cards.

05

ENGLISH SCHAFKOPF GLOSSARY

- Ace game
 - A partner game.
- Acorns
 - The highest-ranked suit among overs and unders. Equivalent to clubs.
- Beim Wenz spielt man Ässe oder hält die Fresse
 - In a Wenz you play aces, or you shut your pie-hole. Refers to the fact you need to control the suits to some degree to play a Wenz.

- Bells
 - The lowest-ranked suit among overs and unders.
Equivalent to diamonds.
- Blocked
 - Not able to call a partner, because you either have all the aces, or are empty in the suit of the ace to be called.
- Butter
 - High-value cards (usually 10s or aces) you put into your team's tricks when you expect or know your team will take it with another card.
- Butter in
 - To put high-value cards in your partner's trick.
- Butter-or-bite situation
 - Put in butter or take the trick.
 - Situation in which the opponent(s) currently own the trick, and you should choose one of two approaches: 1) taking it over with trump and 2) buttering in points in the hopes a partner will take it. Taking the third option and dumping a low-pointer can be a game breaker in these cases.
- Butter trumps

- The ace and 10 of trump.
- Butterless suit
 - A suit in which the ace and 10 are gone, often led by solo defenders sandwiching a player in the middle, in order to induce a trump-or-dump dilemma.
- Caller
 - The player who called the ace.
- Champion's trick
 - A trick with 40 or more points.
- Contra
 - Announcement doubling the game value that can be called by the defense until that player's first card has been played.
- Der Dumme sucht
 - The dumb one searches. Said of an ace caller who searches for the called ace himself instead of leading trump.
- Double trouble
 - A comical rhyming phrase said for fun when doubling.
- Duck

- To intentionally not take a trick, putting in a card below the highest.
- The duck is fat in the butt
 - Hinten ist die Ente fett
 - Often the highest-point cards are retained until the end of the game.
- Dump (trash)
 - To strategically get rid of cards.
- Dump empties
 - To strategically get rid of 0-point cards
- Durchmarsch
 - In Ramsch, turning the tables to win by reaching 90 points.
- Empties
 - 7s, 8s, 9s; cards worth no points.
- Empty
 - Having no cards in a given suit (and thus being able to trump).
- Expensive trick
 - A trick with lots of points that went to the opponent(s).

- Extract trumps
 - To force opponents to play trumps (best when you have the trump majority on your side).
- Fat trick
 - A trick with 20 or more points.
- First
 - The player left of the dealer who bids first or plays the first card.
- Follow suit
 - To play a card of the suit that was led (required when possible).
- Forehand
 - The person left of the dealer, who bids and plays first.
- Free
 - Having no cards in a given suit (and thus being able to trump).
- Freestanding
 - Said of a card that is the only representative of its respective suit; a singleton.
- Garden salad

- A hand with all the suits, especially when they are well mixed.
- Gone through
 - Referring to a suit that has already been led in a trick.
- Grass
 - Another word for the suit leaves.
- Grass ass
 - A funny way to refer to the leaf ace.
- Green
 - Another word for the suit leaves.
- Guarantee a trick
 - To put the top trump into a trick.
- Heartless
 - A player without any hearts.
- High card
 - The highest remaining card of a given suit.
- Hundsgefickte
 - Risqué description of the ace of bells, which depicts a pig with a dog atop its back.

- In the hole
 - Schneider (win level reached when defenders are under 30 points, players under 31).
- Last
 - The final person to bid or play a card.
- Lead
 - To play the first card of the trick or game.
- Leaves
 - The second-highest ranked suit among overs and unders. Equivalent to spades.
- Middlehand
 - Person in second or third position.
- Oma hand
 - A hand so good even your granny would win it.
- Out of the hole
 - Schneider-free
- Outbid
 - To bid a higher-value game than the original bidder.
- Own a trick

- To have played the current high card of the unfinished trick on the table.
- Pig
 - English translation of Sau, the Bavarian term for ace.
- Pull trumps
 - To force opponents to play trumps (best when you have the trump majority on your side).
- Re(contra)
 - Reaction of the player team to the announcement of contra, doubling game value once again.
- Rearhand
 - Person last to play.
- Red
 - Another name for the hearts.
- Run away
 - To lead with another card of the called suit (when you have four of the called suit as the partner).
- Sandwich
 - An unpleasant position for a solo player, having a defender on either side (player is second or third).

- Useful for forcing a trump-or-dump dilemma on the solo player.
- Schmier
 - Another word for butter (high point-value cards)
- Schneider
 - Win level reached when defenders are under 30 points, players under 31.
- Schneider-free
 - The state of the given team being better than schneider.
- Schwarz
 - Win level reached by one side having made zero tricks (not points, tricks).
- Search
 - To look for the called ace by playing any card of its suit. Typically done by a defender.
- Secure a trick
 - To put the top trump into a trick.
- Shoot blanks
 - To take a trick, but win little to no points.
- Singleton

- Your sole card of a given suit. Often good for dumping so as to become empty in that suit.
- Solo game
 - A suit solo, Wenz or Geier
- Solo pot
 - A jackpot paid into when everyone passes and hands are redealt (instead of Ramsch). The next solo player wins the pot, or must double it, if lost (regular payouts still apply on top).
- Stick the pig
 - As a defender, to trump the called ace when it is searched for.
- Take out trumps
 - To force opponents to play trumps (best when you have the trump majority on your side).
- Top card
 - The highest remaining card of a given suit.
- Top trump
 - Over of acorns or whatever the highest remaining trump may be.
- Trump butter
 - The ace and 10 of trump.

- Trump-or-dump dilemma
 - A unpleasant situation for a solo player in the middle, in which she must decide whether to take over a trick with trump or give it away by dumping a card, risking enemy butter (especially when opponents are empty).
 - One way to do this is to lead a butterless suit as a defender in front of a sandwiched player.
- Virgin
 - In Ramsch, any player who collected zero tricks.
- With an under, you won't go under
 - Mit dem Unter gehst du nicht unter
 - Similar to the argument "when in doubt, play an under". The recommendation highlights the fact the under is still above the butter trumps and can force high trumps into play.

06

MORE GAMES WITH BAVARIAN CARDS

06.1 66

This zesty two-player is a great way to spend time with a friend in your local bar or living room.

66 can be played with a 20-card deck, using only the 10s through aces. This version of the game is also known as "Schnapsen", and is very popular in Austria. You can play with a German deck, but an ordinary pack of cards will work just as well.



Figure 06.1: A hand of 66

Setup

- At the start of the game, each player is dealt five cards.
- An additional card is uncovered and placed under the deck face-up perpendicularly. This is the trump suit.
- The game begins by the player who didn't deal playing a card.

Gameplay

The aim of 66 is to make tricks and marriages to accumulate 66 points before your opponent. You have to remember your points, but can always look at your most recent trick.

Making tricks

To make a trick, the opponent must play a higher card of the same suit or a trump card.

- You are not required to follow suit or to make a trick
 - You have the option to play a card of the wrong suit or trump.
- The player who makes the trick plays the next card.
- After each trick, each player draws another card (until the deck runs out). The trick-taker draws first, up to and including the final, face-up card.
- **Once the deck runs out, you must follow suit and must make the trick if possible.**

Card by Trick Rank	Points
Ace	11
10	10
King	4
Over	3
Under	2

Marriages

Marriages consist of an king and over (or king and queen, go figure) of the same suit. You can only announce a marriage if it's your turn to begin the trick, and you are required to play one of the two cards after announcing and showing them both.

Marriages are worth the following points:

- 40 points for a marriage in trump
- 20 points for each non-trump marriage

Closing the deck

You can pressure your opponent by closing the deck (on your turn). As soon as the deck is closed or runs out, players are required to make a trick or follow suit if possible.

If the deck was closed, the closing player must win (by reaching 66)! If they don't, the opponent wins at least two match points.

Once the deck has been closed, the defending player does not get points for any tricks or marriages they may make from that time until the end of the round.

Stealing the trump

If you have the lowest trump card (under of trump), you can exchange it for the trump under the deck when it's your turn. This can be very beneficial if that's a good card (eventually, that card will be drawn otherwise).

End of Game

If you think you have reached 66 points, just say "66" when it's your turn, ending the round. But watch out – if you don't actually have 66, you lose!

- Even if both players actually have 66, the first one to call it wins.

- Otherwise the game ends when all the cards have been played.
 - If no one has called 66 or closed by this point, the last trick wins!

Scoring

Situation	Points
Called 66 or closed deck and opponent has 33 or more	1
Called 66 or closed deck and opponent has less than 33	2
Called 66 or closed deck and opponent made no tricks	3
Erroneously called 66 or lost after closing and opponent had 33 or more	2
Erroneously called 66 or lost after closing and opponent had no tricks	3
Neither player called 66 or closed deck (winner of final trick wins)	1

Seven match points wins! Remember that once the deck is closed, the defender's card points are frozen, regardless of what future tricks or marriages she may make.

Variants

Viewing your tricks

Some circles reduce the memory aspect by allowing you to view your own tricks at any time, as well as the last of the

opponent's tricks.

Playing with the 9s

You can also play 66 with 24 cards (including the 9s). In this case, the 9s are worth 0 points, and each player is initially dealt six cards instead of five. All else remains the same.



Figure 06.2: Offenbacher 66 Meister, Edvin (right)

Recommended Apps

- schnopsen.com
 - The most popular Schnapsen/66 app. This one lets you switch between various card faces and usually works very well (with ads).

- Great for playing online.
- Schnapsen Offline (Android)
 - Nice offline implementation with pretty German-suited cards.
 - Also nice is that you can opt to hide or show your points.
- 66 Offline (Android)
 - Nice implementation of 66 with the 9s and six-card hands.
 - You can choose to show your points or not.
 - Only French-suited (JQK) cards are possible.

06.2 Schnauz

Win by not losing! In this dynamic party game, keep your lives to stay afloat.

Schnauz is played with a 32-card deck, using only the 7s through aces.

- The game is played best with 3-7 players.
- It's also known as 31, Schwimmen, Blitz, Scat, Knock-Knock...

Setup

At the start of the game, each player is given three lives (matchsticks, coins, etc.), and each player is dealt three cards.



Figure 06.3: Lives are traditionally tracked with matchsticks.

- The dealer inspects her cards first, and has the option to keep them or put them in the center and take three new cards.
 - If the dealer keeps her cards, three additional cards from the deck are placed in the center face-up.

The player to the left of the dealer is first to play.

Gameplay

The aim of Schnauz is to gather three cards of the same suit for the highest score.

- Aces are worth 11, face cards 10, and all other cards are worth their number value.
- Each turn, players may exchange **one or all cards, but not two.**

- The round ends in one of three ways:
 - A player reaches 31 points ("Schnauz!")
 - A player has three aces ("fire!")
 - A player closes the round
 - * Closing is denoted by knocking and is only possible after the first round.
 - * If you choose to close, you may not exchange cards, and the game ends after every other player has one more chance to play.

End of Game

The player(s) with the lowest score loses one life. Once all a player's lives are gone, she is "swimming" on one final life, after which she loses, and is out.

Additional Important Rules

- If a player gets three aces, the game is immediately over, and every other player loses one life: "fire!"
- Three-of-a-kind is worth exactly 30.5 points. You'll never lose with this hand.
- You can always pass instead of exchanging cards or closing.
- If everyone passes on a set of cards, three new cards are dealt from the deck. This is most relevant when only two or three players are left.

Strategy Tips

- The earlier you can get a high score, the earlier you can "knock" to jump the gun on opponents that haven't had time to collect points.
- Make sure you don't accidentally create a good hand on the table by exchanging cards.
 - Remember, the next player can take all three cards!

App Recommendation

There is a great Android/iOS app that lets you play with different types of cards (German suits, regular suits):

- 31 App from Donkeycat

06.3 Three-Player Schafkopf

It is possible to play a version of Schafkopf with three players with ten cards each and a blind of two cards.

- Deal each player three, two to the middle, each player four, then each player three.
- Partner games are not possible: only Geier, Wenz or Solo.
- The winner of the bid gets to exchange two cards from her hand with the two in the middle.
- The trumps are the same as in four-person Schafkopf.

Bidding with Three

The forehand (player left of the dealer) begins bidding by saying: "I would play".

- Geier, Wenz and Solo are all equally ranked.
- To outbid the person before you, you must offer to win with more points (in increments of five):
 - Example:
 - * Forehand: I would play!
 - * Middlehand: would you play 65?
 - * Forehand: yes, I would play 65.
 - * Middlehand: how about 70?
 - * Forehand: no, I pass.
 - * Rearhand: I pass.
 - The bidwinner must make at least this number to win. In this case, the middlehand wins it for 70 points (if she gets 69, she loses).
 - Another, less likely, example:
 - * Forehand: I would play!
 - * Middlehand: would you play 65?
 - * Forehand: yes, I would play 65.
 - * Middlehand: how about 70?
 - * Forehand: no, I pass.
 - * Rearhand: can you do 75?
 - * Middlehand: no, I pass.

- In this case, the forehand was outbid by the middlehand, who again was outbid by the rearhand, who now must score 75 points to win.

If everyone passes, a Ramsch can be played, leaving the blind untouched on the table. Alternatively, the cards can be redealt, each player paying a small amount into the jackpot for the next winner to rake in.

Exchanging

The bidwinner has the option to exchange cards from the blind before declaring the game she will play.

- The exchanged cards are not revealed to the others, and they count toward her tricks.
 - This gives a chance to become empty in one or more suits, or to already rack up points!
- "Hand": if you win the bid and believe you don't need to exchange to win, play Hand!
 - Hand games are worth double.
 - The cards from the blind still count as your points.

Scoring

As in regular Schafkopf, defenders are schneider-free with 30 points, and schwarz with zero tricks.

- A won game can be scored at 40 points, with each loser paying this price to the winner, or the single loser to the two winners.

- Schneider gives you 10 points more, schwarz yet another ten, just as in the four-person game.
- "Hand" (without exchanging) doubles the value of the game.
- Tout (announcing you'll take all the tricks) doubles the value of the game, as in regular Schafkopf.
 - If you lose any trick, you lose.

06.4 Lake Constance Jass

Win the bid to choose the trump, make tricks, but don't fall in the sack! This two-player bidding game from the Lake Constance region of Germany, Austria and Switzerland is also known as "Bodenseejass".



Figure 06.4: Lake Constance Jass with a Salzburger deck

Setup

With a 36 card deck (6-A), shuffle and deal each player three cards face down twice, so that each player has a row of six face-down cards in front of them. Then deal cards face-up on top of them, again 2x3. These are your table cards. Deal another 2x3 cards per player for your hands.

Object of the Game

The aim of the game is to bid wisely and either reach your bid, or keep your opponent from reaching hers. Win five tallies and you are the victor.

Bidding

The game starts by players inspecting their hands and estimating how many points they will be able to make. There are 157 total points in the game, so it makes sense to start bidding around 70. You must bid in increments of five. The non-dealer begins the bidding and the winner of the bid gets to choose the trump and play first.

This can be very decisive because the high bidder will attempt to choose the trump in which she has a "Bur" or "Nell" (see scoring below).

Possible Games

Usually, the bid winner chooses a suit to become trump (trump game), and all nine cards of that suit become the trumps for the game.

However, if you don't have lots of one suit, but have lots of high cards or low cards, you can consider playing without trumps! In "Bock" or "Gais", there are no trumps, and the eights are worth eight points to compensate the missing Bur and Nell. Bock is top-down: the usual ranking of cards applies, and aces are high. But in Gais, it's an upside-down game, and the sixes have the highest rank with the aces at the bottom. Watch out though, the point values per card remain the same!

Cards by Trick Rank	Point Value
Under of Trump ("Bur")	20
Nine of Trump ("Nell")	14
Ace of Trump	11
King of Trump	4
Over of Trump	3
Ten of Trump	10
Eight of Trump	0
Seven of Trump	0
Six of Trump	0
Ace of Other Suit	11 (x3)
King of Other Suit	4 (x3)
Over of Other Suit	3 (x3)
Under of Other Suit	2 (x3)
Ten of Other Suit	10 (x3)
Nine of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Eight of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Seven of Other Suit	0 (x3)
Six of Other Suit	0 (x3)
<i>Making the last trick</i>	5
SUM	157

Bock (Top-Down)

Cards by Trick Rank	Point Value
Ace	11 (x4)
King	4 (x4)
Over	3 (x4)
Under	2 (x4)
Ten	10 (x4)
Nine	0 (x4)
Eight	8 (x4)
Seven	0 (x4)
Six	0 (x4)
<i>Making the last trick</i>	5
SUM	157

Gais (Bottom-Up)

Cards by Trick Rank	Point Value
Six	0 (x4)
Seven	0 (x4)
Eight	8 (x4)
Nine	0 (x4)
Ten	10 (x4)
Under	2 (x4)
Over	3 (x4)
King	4 (x4)
Ace	11 (x4)
<i>Making the last trick</i>	5
SUM	157

Making Tricks

In Jass, you win a trick by playing the highest-ranked card of the led suit. If you win the trick, you get to start the next trick. As in other games, any trump card can beat even the best card of the led suit.

In Lake Constance Jass, you can always choose to play a card from your hand or from the table. Once the trick is won, turn over any freshly revealed table cards.

Following Suit

Following suit is a bit unusual in Jass: when an opponent starts the trick and you have a card of that suit (whether in your hand or on the table) you must play a card of that suit or a trump. If you don't have a card of the led suit, you may play any card (and you are not required to trump). A led trump must always be followed with trump.

One exception: **you don't have to follow suit with the Bur** (but you do with the Nell).

You are not required to make a trick, and can intentionally lose a trick, as long as you follow suit as specified above.

Scorekeeping

If the winner of the bid reaches the score bid, she writes one tally. If she misses it, the opponent writes one tally. If either player makes less than 21 points, they are "in the sack". This means the winner writes a tally as usual, but the loser writes a "o", which is equivalent to a negative tally. To get "out of

the sack”, the player has to win another round, crossing through the o with a line:



Figure 06.5: Jim needs to get out of the sack before he can make another tally.

End of Game

The round is over when one player has made five tallies.

06.5 Solitaire

It's also possible to play a version of solitaire with Bavarian cards. You can play with all 36 cards (6-A). To start, take the four aces out of the deck, and place them in the middle of the table.

The rest of the deck is the draw pile, and the aim of the game is to stack the cards on the aces in ascending order. After the ace comes the 6, comes the 7, etc. The card order is “normal”: after the 9 comes the 10, comes the under, comes the over, comes the king.



Figure 06.6: Solitaire and coffee in Munich

If you can't put a card on an ace stack, you have to put it in one of the four corners. You can play cards from those four corners at any time, but only the top card of the stack (the rest are blocked).

Once you've gone through the deck once, you have one more chance: combine the four corner stacks without shuffling, and turn them over to use as a new draw pile. Let's hope this time it works!

You win the game if you end up with four complete stacks of ace through king.

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