

STICH-MEISTER

by Friedemann Frieze

Components

- 60 Playing cards
(4 suits – Fans, Coins, Koi and Gates – with values 1 to 15)
- 60 Rules cards
(21 Trump Rule, 19 Basic Rule, 20 Scoring Rule – numbered 1 to 60)

Idea of the Game

Using their Rules cards, the players determine new rules at the beginning of each round. Trumps are set and scoring rules determine the value of a trick. Even the basic rules are altered by the Rules cards. Once the rules are fixed, as many tricks as players have hand cards are played out. At the end of the round, all tricks are scored. The player who collects the most points after several rounds wins.

The Rules Cards

Each of the individual rules cards changes the rules in one particular. Trump is defined and the value of taken tricks altered. Even the basic rules of the game can be influenced.

- *Trump Rule cards* – determine the trump suit and thereby the trump cards (see 2. Determine Trumps).
- *Basic Rule cards* – supplements or replaces the corresponding basic rule for the entire round. If there are multiple Basic Rule cards active in a round, they are treated in order by number (lowest number first).
- *Scoring Rule cards* – In the absence of any Scoring Rule card, each trick is worth 1 point at the end of the round. Scoring Rule cards change the value of a trick or earn additional positive or negative points for individual cards.

Setting Up the Game

A player is chosen to deal the first round. This duty moves clockwise in subsequent rounds. The Rule and Playing cards are separated and each shuffled. Each player is dealt 3 Rule cards face down; the rest are placed in a pile nearby. The dealer distributes all of the Playing cards evenly to the players.

With 3 players: Before the game, cards having values 1, 10 and 13 (Samurai), are removed. They are not used in the three-player game.

Course of a Round

There are as many rounds as there are participating players. Each round takes place in four phases:

1. Select the Rule Cards
2. Determine Trumps
3. Trick-taking Game
4. Scoring the Tricks

① Select the Rule Cards

After the players have seen their Playing cards, each one must choose one of his Rule cards and place it face down in the middle of the table. The selected Rule cards are shuffled, exposed and read out. Control cards not selected are held for the next round.

With 3 players: The top card of the Rule cards deck is shuffled with the selected cards and also exposed and read out.

With 5 players: The player left of the dealer does not choose a Rule card.

Sort the revealed cards by number. The selected control cards are valid for the entire round, including scoring.

② Determine Trumps

Trump cards are determined by the Trump Rule cards. These can be suits and ranks. When no Trump Rule cards are played, there is no trump in the current round. Trump cards win against all other types of cards. All trump cards make up the trump suit.

When multiple Trump Rule cards are played in the same round, precedence is as follows:

1. Trump cards which are so designated by more Trump Rules are higher.
2. Trump cards designated by Trump Rule cards showing a lower number on the bottom edge are higher than those trumps designated by higher Trump Rule cards.

③ Trick-taking Game

If no Basic Rule cards were played, the following rules apply for the trick-taking game. If Basic Rule cards were played, they alter these rules accordingly.

- ➔ The player left of the dealer leads the first trick. In clockwise order, each player plays a card to the trick. First the card must follow suit if possible.
- ➔ A led trump card may be followed with any trump card. A player who cannot follow suit plays any card, including a trump card.

Who Wins the Trick?

- ➔ A trick containing at least one trump card is won by the highest trump card; a trick with no trump cards is won by the highest card of the first-played color.

If according to the rules two or more cards are of equal power, the last played is considered higher.

- ➔ The player who wins the trick keeps it face down nearby. Taken tricks must be stored separately so that is always clear how many tricks a player already has.
- ➔ The winner of the last trick plays the first card for the next trick. When all tricks have been played and distributed, proceed to Scoring.

④ Scoring the Tricks

- x If no Scoring Rules cards were played for the round, each trick counts 1 point.
- x If Scoring Rules cards were played for the round, they are applied in numerical order (lowest first).
- x The number of points earned by each player are noted.

The Next Round

The rule cards used in this round are removed from the game. Each player refills his hand of Rules cards to 3. The next player to the left of the current dealer becomes the new dealer. The new round begins with shuffling and dealing the playing cards.

End of the Game

Play as many rounds as there are participating players. The player with the most points wins.