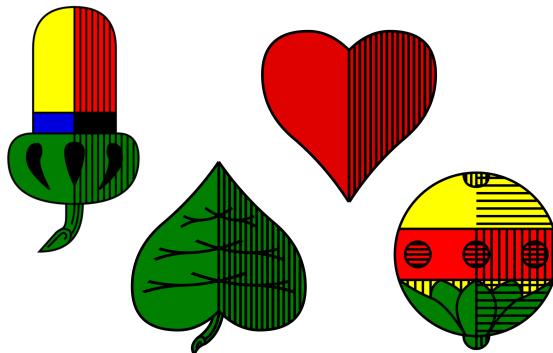


SCHAFKOPF FOR EXPATS

Calling Aces, Going Solo and Buttering Up Your Game

Brian Junker-Latocha



PDF Draft. September 30, 2023

© Brian Junker-Latocha.
Herm.-Steinhäuser-Str. 18
63065 Offenbach
All rights reserved.

Brian Junker-Latocha asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved in all media. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author and/or the publisher.

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 Offenbach⁶– 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

⁶Website: offenbachsocialclub.com/schafkopf



Figure 1: Our proud banner

We played 66⁷ 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 Dasein⁸, 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 trick⁹ stack.

⁷Two-player trick taker also known as Schnapsen.

⁸Existence.

⁹Set 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 hares¹⁰ looking to get back in shape and have some fun.

¹⁰"Alte Hasen" (experienced players)

There are great resources out there on Schafkopf strategy—if you can read German. However, sad as that may be, expats 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!

CONTENTS

Warum Schafkopf?	i
Warum Englisch?	ii
Nochmal, warum Englisch?	iv
o1 The Rules	1
o1.1 The Setup	1
o1.2 Object of the Game	2
o1.3 How to Choose the Game: Bidding	7
o1.4 Scoring	9
o1.5 End of Game	12
o1.6 Variants	13
o1.7 Recommended Apps	14
o2 The Partner Game	17
o2.1 Introduction	17
o2.2 Playing as the Ace Caller	17
o2.3 Playing as the Called Partner	26
o2.4 Defending a Partner Game	32
o3 Going Solo	41
o3.1 Playing a Suit Solo	41

CONTENTS

03.2 Defending a Suit Solo	51
03.3 Fifth Trick	56
03.4 Playing a Wenz or Geier	58
03.5 Defending a Wenz or Geier	59
04 Ramsch	61
04.1 Going Virgin	61
04.2 Durchmarsch	61
05 English Schafkopf Glossary	63
06 More Games with Bavarian Cards	73
06.1 66	73
06.2 Schnauz	79
06.3 Three-Player Schafkopf	82
06.4 Solitaire	85

O1

THE RULES

01.1 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 game is dealt and played clockwise.



Figure o1.1: The Bavarian deck

o1.2 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).

Tricks are made by playing the highest ranked card, and you must follow suit.

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)

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

²Equivalent to the jack. German "Unter".

- **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 which the player calls 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 is 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 out 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):

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 ten without also holding the respective ace—otherwise these high-scorers

may fall prey to opponents' aces.

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 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.

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 take 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 (if not already the maximum, solo) or to rescind their bid and let the higher bidder play. If everyone passes, a negative game called Ramsch (German for junk) is played³, 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

D: pass

A: I have a solo

Result: Player A plays a solo

³Some rounds also just redeal instead of playing Ramsch.

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: tout⁴.

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

01.4 Scoring

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

⁴French for "all".



Figure 01.3: Keeping it old-school

Partner Game, Wenz, Solo

Three-on-one 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 40.

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

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 +20 (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

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 trumps.

01.5 End of Game

Before starting, it is typically 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 beforehand).

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 :D

01.6 Variants

Farbwenz and Geier

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)

Laufende

Some rounds play that the value of the game is increased if one team has 3 or more "Laufende". Laufende are the highest trumps in sequential order. E.G: if one team has the over of acorns, over of leaves and over of hearts, that game costs 5 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 of 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 or token on the table 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.

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!

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.
- schafkopf-palast.de
 - Popular for online playing.
- sauspiel.de
 - There is an iPhone app and it runs in the browser with Android.

THE RULES

- 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 acorns,

¹"Wer so sagt ist noch lange nicht fertig!"

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 of the called suit you possess, 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.

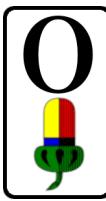


Figure 02.1: The over of acorns, the game's highest card.

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 hearts:

Second Trick

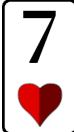
You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
K 	O 	U 	U

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—with trump. RightyRobert puts in the over of hearts (which you can't possibly beat) so you put in your lowest remaining trump:

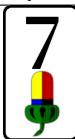
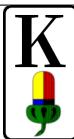
Third Trick

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 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 through³, congrats. No one was empty in acorns and your team secured itself an A, 10 and K. And now you officially know who your partner is: "Hello, LeftyLukas!".

³Everyone 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 the other overs). No, 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, so now he leads. He plays a king of leaves:

Sixth Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze


Her's your hand. What will you play?



We have to follow suit and play the leaf ace, of course. And lucky for us, this suit hasn't gone through yet, so chances are, everyone still has a leaf! And they do:

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

Now, how many trumps are left? 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 ade⁴!

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 with at least four trumps and a side ace.

⁴German 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 side⁵.
- **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.

⁵Like others, this is a rule of thumb.

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.

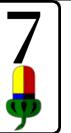
LeftyLukas also passes, leaving MiddleMatze to decide whether to play or relegate us all to Ramsch. He says with gusto: "I'm playing with the acorn!".

Lucky for us, we have the acorn ace, so we're the partner! Let's hope our hand is strong enough to support the caller 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.

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 through, and your ace survives:

First Trick

RightyRobert	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 top trump, though, so let's hold back the 10 of hearts for now and play the 7 of hearts:

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 bet it will go through, and play it instead of our 9:

Third Trick

RigghtyRobert	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
10 ♥	U ♠	O ♥	8 ♥

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
U ♣	O ♦

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 butter⁶ if he can. All we can do is damage control. Our hand:



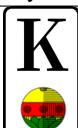
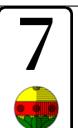
⁶Put high points in your partner's tricks, especially when you can't follow suit.

No trumps left, of course. The best move would be to get empty in some suit to make it easier to butter that 10 of bells 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? It could be snug!

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. Nonetheless, your team wins an ace and a king, and you start to smell the scent of victory...

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



MiddleMatze leads with a butter trump⁷ (ace of hearts). He knows I'm trumplless, I hope he knows what he's doing!

Seventh Trick

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
A 	U 	8 	10

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

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
9 	10 	9 	8

Dagnabb it! They had the last trump— that's even more points for them... But, lo and behold, it's not enough! Matze

⁷An ace or 10 of trump.

and you collected 70 points in the beginning and middle stages of the game! This duck wasn't fat in the butt⁸ – not fat enough for Robert and Lukas, anyway. A partner game is worth 20 points, doubled with Robert's contra makes 40 points owed to Matze and you. Congratulations.

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 trump⁹, 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 on the player side! Statistically speaking, you're likely to win most partner

⁸Original saying: "Hinten ist die Ente fett".

⁹An ace or 10 of trump

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. LeftLukas proclaims: "With the acorn!". So let's keep our eyes peeled for the 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
O	7	K	8

¹⁰ Mixed hand with all the suits.

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:

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 with 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. 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 your green 10:

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You

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

¹¹"Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt."

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):

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
7 	9 	10 	A

Ouch! Points for them!

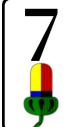
Sixth Trick

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

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas
A 	8 	K 	10

Seventh Trick

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

MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	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 again, and what worked once will work a second time... He plays the final acorn to secure the king and 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 nothing 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 to butter 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 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, and 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 the outstanding 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!

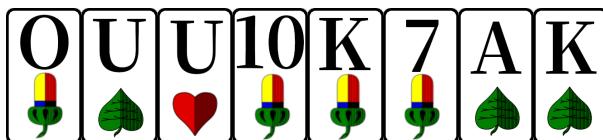
If someone before you already bid, it's likely to be with a partner game in mind, meaning they are thick in trumps and the distribution is uneven. An uneven distribution means you need more trumps to exhaust the defending team's trump storehouse. The same is true if someone doubled—they likely have a 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 – in which you have an ace! Plus you have the top over, always a bonus. Let's give it a go: "I'll play".

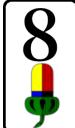
LeftyLukas passes, as do MiddleMatze and RightRobert. There's no going back now – especially because your blocked³ for a partner game – there's no ace you could call.

It's ok, 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!".

We have how many trumps? 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 we play from the top (this way we retain control, and follow this trump round with another):

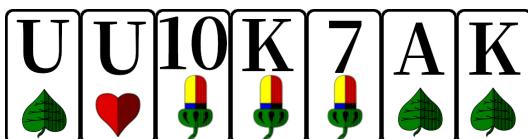
³You're blocked from playing a partner game when you don't have at least one side suit from which you could call an ace you don't have.

First Trick

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RigthyRobert
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 yields 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 this time, we prefer to burn the opponents high trumps:

⁴"Alles klar, Herr Kommissar?"

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.

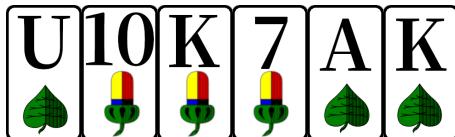
Matze secures the trick with the acorn under, and Robert, surprisingly, puts an even higher trump in. He probably wouldn't have wasted it (the trick was already theirs) if he had had a choice.

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

Third Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze


Great, a suit you don't have:

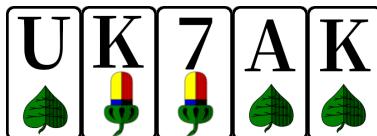


Plus, it's being played for the very first time, so the ace and 10 are still out there. Trump it! Just to be safe, we secure the ten points from our 10 of acorns (we're empty in hearts, so probably everyone has hearts and no one will overtrump⁵ us:

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
K 	10 	9 	10

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? Only 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
			

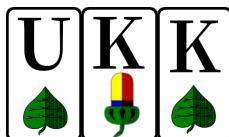
Not bad. Lukas had the over and trumpless Robert buttered in an ace. Could have been much worse— at least the trumps are all gone! And we still have two left. We smile deviously behind our poker face as we look at our hand and Lukas leads:



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, two shy of schneider. For that, each opponent owes you 40 points, for a total of plus 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:

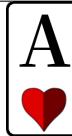
You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
			

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	RigghtyRobert
			

03.2 Defending a Suit Solo

Defending a suit solo is a team effort. It's three-on-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.
 - 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 may be able to overtrump when she trumps a suit trick⁸, but more importantly, you force the player into a trump-or-dump⁹ dilemma: if she trumps too low, she may

⁸Non-trump trick

⁹When you're empty in a suit, deciding between trumping and getting rid of low cards.

be overtrumped, if she dumps, opponents may butter themselves points—especially, 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.
 - Even more importantly, even if your ace goes through, what next? Now the player is situated comfortably in the back, ready 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 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:



¹⁰Ace of a non-trump suit

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
10 ♠	A ♥	8 ♠	7 ♠

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).

Second Trick

LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert	You
O ♠	O ♣	10 ♥	...

¹¹Close, but no cigar.

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



Partner Robert 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	RightyRobert	You
O 	O 	10 	7

Ten trumps before, minus these three, yields 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. It's too much risk from our perspective: these two bells on the table plus our two equals four or a total six bells in the game:



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

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:



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:



03.3 Fifth Trick

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

You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze	RightyRobert
9 	7 	10 	K

Ok, he dumped this time– but partner Robert took the trick, and Lukas is back in the middle. Robert tries it with the acorn ace (maybe Lukas had two acorns?)

Sixth Trick

RightyRobert	You	LeftyLukas	MiddleMatze
			

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



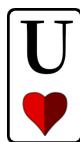
Remember, there are still three trumps out (and player Lukas only has two cards). Robert leads:

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 left in the final trick. Will our under of hearts be high?

Eighth Trick

Our under of hearts:



And the final 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!

03.4 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!"¹²

In a Wenz you play aces or shut your pie-hole! Because at best, half the cards in your hand can be trumgps, it is of utmost importance what suits you control on the side.

¹²Rhymes nicely in German

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 player can do a lot of damage with the top cards. Fun fact: the more freestanding 10s you have in a Wenz or Geier, the worse. Chances are, you'll lose them.

03.5 Defending a Wenz or Geier

O4

RAMSCH

o4.1 Going Virgin

o4.2 Durchmarsch

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 tens 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 it or bite it
 - "Schmieren oder stechen". Said of the decision between taking over a trick with trump, putting points in it for your partner, or dumping trash.
- Butter trumps
 - The ace and 10 of trump.
- 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.
 - 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 (played as the first card of the trick).
- 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 as the suit to follow.
- 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.
- Hinten ist die Ente fett
 - The duck is fat in the butt
 - Often the highest-point cards are retained until the end of the game.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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
- 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
 - A problematic situation in which one must decide whether to take over a trick with trump or give it away by dumping a card, but risking enemy butter.
- Virgin
 - In Ramsch, any player who collected zero tricks.
- With an under, you won't go under
 - Mit dem Unter geht man nicht unter

- Analogous 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 tens 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 perpendicularly. This is the trump suit.
- The game begins by the first player putting down 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/Queen	3
Under/Jack	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.

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 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 to end 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.). Each player is dealt three cards.



Figure 06.3: Lives are traditionally tracked with matchsticks.

- The dealer inspects her cards, 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.

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 in the bank 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.

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.

Scoring

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

- A won game can be valued 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.
 - But if you lose any trick, you lose.

06.4 Solitaire



Figure 06.4: Solitaire and coffee in Munich

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.

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This little book would not have been possible without the influence, inspiration and support of the following people and organizations:

- My wife, Eva
- Card Table Offenbach
- Schafkopfverein Royal Frankfurt e.V.
- Schafkopfrunde Alzenau
- Traditional Card Games Discord Server

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brian Junker-Latocha, born 1988 in Indiana, USA and in Germany since 2008, lives in Offenbach am Main with his wife, Eva, and cat, Willi. When he's not playing Schafkopf with his friends, you can find him brainstorming on whiteboards in the IT world or playing folk guitar with the Open Creek Stringband.