

Gin rummy

Gin Rummy, or simply **Gin**, is a two-player [card game](#) variant of [Rummy](#). It has enjoyed widespread popularity as both a social and a gambling game, especially during the mid twentieth century, and remains today one of the most widely played two-player card games.

History

Gin Rummy was created in 1909 by [Elwood T. Baker](#) and his son [C. Graham Baker](#).^{[1][2]} The game remained local to New York until 1941, when it was publicized throughout the United States after becoming a [Hollywood fad](#).^[3] In 1947, a survey by an association of U.S. playing card manufacturers concluded that the number of people who learned Gin Rummy during [World War II](#) was equal to the number that learned to play pinochle, cribbage, poker, and bridge combined.^[4]

Magician and writer [John Scarne](#) believed Gin Rummy to have evolved from 19th-century whiskey poker (a game similar to [Commerce](#), with players forming poker combinations^[5]) and to have been created with the intention of being faster than standard [Rummy](#) but less spontaneous than knock Rummy.^[6] Card game historian [David Parlett](#) finds Scarne's theory to be "highly implausible", and considers the game of [Conquian](#) to be Gin Rummy's forerunner.^[5]

Deck

Gin Rummy is played using a standard deck of 52 cards. The ranking from high to low is King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, Ace.

Objective

The objective in Gin Rummy is to be the first to reach an agreed-upon score, usually 100 points.

Gin Rummy



A *meld* of four cards

Origin	United States
Alternative names	gin, knock poker, poker gin, gin poker
Type	Matching
Players	2
Skills	Memory, tactics, strategy
Cards	52
Deck	French
Rank (high → low)	K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 A
Play	Clockwise
Playing time	15 min.
Chance	Low

Related games

[Conquian](#) • [Desmoche](#) • [Rummy](#) • [Viennese Rummy](#)

The basic game strategy is to improve one's hand by *melds* and eliminating *deadwood*. Gin has two types of meld: *Sets* of three or four cards sharing the same rank, e.g. 8♦ 8♦ 8♦; and *runs* or sequences of three or more cards in the same suit, such as 3♥ 4♥ 5♥ or more. Deadwood cards are those not in any meld. Aces are considered low—they can form a set with other aces but only the low end of runs (A♠ 2♠ 3♠ is a legal run but Q♠ K♠ A♠ is not). A player can form any combination of melds within their hand; all sets, all runs, or some sets and some runs.

Deal

Dealership alternates from round to round, with the first dealer chosen by any agreed upon method. The dealer deals ten cards to each player one at a time starting with their opponent, and then places the next card in the deck face up. This begins the *discard pile*. The face down pile is known as the *stock pile*.

Play

On the first turn of the round, the non-dealer has first option of taking the upcard on the discard pile or passing. If the non-dealer takes the upcard, they must then discard a different card to the discard pile. The player acting second can take the top card from the pile of their choice. However, if the non-dealer passes the upcard, the dealer is given the opportunity to take the upcard or pass. If the dealer also passes, the non-dealer must draw from the stock pile, then the next turn and after, players can draw from the pile of their choice.

On each subsequent turn, a player must draw either the (face-up) top card of the discard pile, or the (face-down) top card from the stock pile, and discard one card from their hand onto the discard pile. If a player chooses to draw face-up card (from the discard pile) the discarded card cannot be the just drawn card.

Players alternate taking turns until one player ends the round by declaring the hand over (*knocking*), or until only two cards remain in the stock pile, in which case the round ends in a draw and no points are awarded. The game ends when a player reaches 100 or more points (or another established amount). In tournament rules the game is played in best of five with 250 points per game.^[7]

Knocking

In standard Gin, a player with 10 or fewer points of deadwood may *knock*, immediately ending the hand without giving the opponent a chance to play. Knocking with no deadwood is known as *going Gin* or having a *Gin hand*, while knocking with deadwood points is known as *going down*.^[8]

When discarding to end a turn, a player who wishes to knock must clearly indicate their intent; this is generally shown by laying the discard face down, but can also be done through a verbal declaration or by tapping the playing surface. The player then lays out their hand, organized into melds and with any deadwood separated from them. The opponent, or "defending" player, shows their melds and is entitled to *lay off* any deadwood cards that fit into the knocking player's melds, provided that the knocking player does not go Gin.

The *deadwood count* is the sum of the point values of the deadwood cards. Aces are scored at one point, face cards at 10, and others according to their numerical values. Intersecting melds are not allowed; if a player has a three-card set *and* a three-card run sharing a common card, only one of the melds counts, and the other two cards count as deadwood. For example; within the five cards **7♣ 7♠ 7♦ 8♦ 9♦**, the seven of diamonds can be included in the set (**7♣ 7♠ 7♦**) or included in the run (**7♦ 8♦ 9♦**), but it cannot be included in both.



A Gin hand, with one set of four cards and two runs of three cards each.

For example, suppose that the knocking player has a meld of three Kings. If the defending player is holding the fourth King as deadwood, they may lay it off by adding it to the meld and thus reduce their deadwood count by 10.

The difference in the two players' deadwood counts determines the score for the hand as follows.

- If the knocking player has the lower count, they score points equal to the difference.
- The defending player can *undercut* the knocking player by having a lower or equal count. In this case, the defending player scores the difference plus a bonus (usually 25 points, sometimes 15 or 10). An undercut may occur either before or after the defending player has laid off any deadwood.

The knocking player can never lay off their deadwood into the defending player's melds.

A player who goes Gin (i.e. has no deadwood) gets a bonus (typically 25 points).

Big Gin

A player holding a Gin hand may also choose to continue the round instead of revealing it, in hopes of attaining an 11-card *Big Gin* hand as follows.

If a player draws or takes a card that can be used to form melds with the 10 cards already held, the player declares Big Gin and the hand ends. That player scores a Big Gin bonus (typically 31 points) plus the defending player's deadwood count; that player may not lay off any cards.

Scoring

Aces are scored at 1 point, face cards at 10, and all other cards are scored at their numerical values. The number of points awarded for bonuses may vary from region to region.

Knock points

After a player knocks, and the layoffs are made, the knocking player receives a score equal to the difference between the two hands. For example, if a player knocks with 8, and the defender has 10 deadwood points in their hand after laying off, the knocking player receives 2 points for the hand. If a player is able to knock before any cards are accepted, it is considered a misdeal.

Gin bonus

After going Gin, a player receives a bonus of 25 points plus the entire count of deadwood in the opponent's hand. There is no chance to lay off when a player goes Gin. In early

official rules, the Gin bonus was 20 points.^[9]

Undercut (or underknocking)

Occurs when the defending player has a deadwood count lower than or equal to that of the knocking player (this can occur either naturally or by laying off after a knock). In this case, the defender scores an undercut bonus of 25 points plus the difference in deadwood in the knocking player's hand. In other rule sets, the bonus is 20. In early official rules, the bonus was only 10 points, and was not awarded in case of a tie.^[9]

Game bonus

Once a player has acquired 100 points (200, 500 or some other agreed-upon number) the game is over, and that player receives a game bonus of 100 points.

Line bonus or box bonus

In some variations, this is added at the end of the game. For every hand a player won during the game, 25 points is added to their score.

Big Gin

Prior to knocking, if all 11 cards in a player's hand form a legal Gin, the player can retain the extra card as part of their hand, and is awarded 31 points plus entire count of deadwood in their opponent's hand. (In some rule sets players may be awarded 50 points or another established amount plus the entire count of deadwood in the opponent's hand)

Shutout bonus

If a game is completed with the winner having won every hand, the points for each hand are doubled before adding the line bonus.

In some variations, if a match ends with one player in the lead by exactly 50 points, that player automatically loses.

Variations

Straight Gin

In straight Gin, players are required to play until one of them can go Gin. Knocking is not allowed. Scoring and rules remain the same as standard Gin Rummy.

Mahjong Gin

Similar to straight Gin, knocking is not allowed. However, more than one card may be taken, in order, from the top of the discard pile. If more than one card is taken, the lowest position card taken must be used in a hand: e.g. <bottom> 8♠ 3♥ 5♥ <top of discard> 8♠ is the lowest position card and must be used in a hand; continue with one discard. Cards are shown to the table, with opponents being able to add on to straights of the same suit or finish a three of a kind with the fourth card for points. After a player has Gin, points are added, with cards on the table being added up and cards in hand being subtracted. The player who Gins receives 25 additional points, 2 through 9 = 5 points, 10 through K = 10 points, A = 15 points.

Oklahoma Gin

In this version of Gin Rummy, the value of the first upcard is used to determine the maximum count at which players can knock. If the upcard is a spade, the hand will count double. So if the first upcard was a 4, you can knock and go out with only 4 or fewer points in your hand; and if the card was 4♠, you would get double points that hand. In this variation it is possible to knock any of cards from the discard pile so as long as you put down a suit or pair.