

Stepping Stones

Players: 3 players / **Time:** 45-60 minutes / **Age:** 10+

(I am sure you can play this with someone younger, but I haven't tested that theory yet. Let me know if you do!)

Overview

Stepping Stones is meant to be a "my first compendium¹ game" for those familiar with trick taking games, but unfamiliar with compendium trick taking games.

1) Compendium: A game that has multiple objectives for players to compete against. In traditional compendium games, these objectives are commonly referred to as "contracts". Before the game can end, each player must complete every contract. Most importantly, once a player completes a specific contract they cannot attempt to complete that contract again. Additionally, contracts will change the rules of gameplay slightly (trump suit, card ranking, true objective of the hand, etc.). A very popular example that uses this compendium-style system would be Yahtzee. Of course, Yahtzee is a push your luck dice rolling game. So, replace the dice rolling with trick taking and you've got the general idea of Stepping Stones!

Components (v1.0.0 note: These are not the final components, just what you need to start playing on your own with a PnP/standard deck version) See appendix for PnP files.

- 36 Playing Cards; four suits, each suit is ranked 1-9
- 1 Suit Rank Reminder Card - 1 Trump Suit Reminder Card
- 1 Forehand/In The Puddle Card
- 3 Redo Tokens; see Redo Variant on page 6 for more information
- 2 Scoresheets (starter and advanced) and pen/pencil/dry erase marker

Compendium/Trick Taking Jargon Explained

Forehand: The player that starts the bidding during the bidding phase.

Declarer: The player that actually bids on, or "declares", a contract during the bidding phase.

Defenders: The players that are playing against the Declarer.

In the Puddle: When the Forehand is forced to be the Declarer. In traditional games, like Coiffeur Jass, you would say "in the barrel".

Trick: In clockwise order, each player plays a card from hand to the table face up.

Lead Player: The player who plays the first card to a trick.

Follow Player(s): The players who play a card to the trick after the Lead Player.

Led Suit: The suit (color) of the card played by the Lead Player.

Trump Suit: A suit that is stronger than the other three suits. It does not appear in every contract, but when it does, the suit is determined by the Declarer before the first trick.

Must Follow: The lead player may play any card from their hand. Each follow player must play a card that matches led suit, if possible.

Example: Carol leads with the 5 of Hearts. David must follow suit and play a Heart.

May Beat: Follow players may play a card that is higher or lower than the highest card in the trick.

Example: Carol leads with the 5 of Hearts. David must follow suit and play a Heart. David has the 3 and 7 of Hearts. The 3 is lower and the 7 is higher than the 5 of Hearts. Because Stepping Stones is May Beat, David can play either card. He decides to play the 3 of Hearts.

Playing Off Suit: If a follow player does not have a card in hand that matches the led suit, they may play any card from their hand.

Example: Carol leads with the 5 of Hearts. David follows and plays the 3 of Hearts. Scott must follow suit and play a Heart. However, Scott does not have any Hearts. Therefore, he may play any card in hand. Scott decides to play the 8 of Spades.

Game Setup

- Place the starter contract scoresheet within easy reach of all players
 - *It is recommended to play with the starter contract scoresheet for your first few games. Return the advanced contract scoresheet back to the box.*
- Write each player's name (or initials) under Player on the scoresheet.
- Place the playing cards, forehand card, reminder cards, and writing implement nearby.
- The last player to walk on a stepping stone goes first (or decide randomly). Give that player the forehand card.

Gameplay

Stepping Stones will be played over 12 hands. A hand will consist of 4 phases in the following order:

1) Dealing 2) Bidding 3) Trick Taking 4) End of Hand Scoring

1) Dealing

At the beginning of each hand, the forehand will shuffle the deck and deal 12 cards to each player, face down. Players take their 12 cards into hand, making sure to keep them hidden from the other players.

2) Bidding

Starting with the forehand and going clockwise, each player may bid on a contract or pass. **You cannot bid on a contract that you have already completed this game.** At the beginning of the game no contracts have been completed and any player may bid on any contract.

When bidding on a contract, you simply say the name of the contract you want to play along with any additional information that is required (see next page).

As soon as a player bids on a contract, they become the declarer, the bidding phase ends, and play proceeds to the trick taking phase.

Please refer to the Contract Appendix for each contract's objective.

Example: Scott is the forehand and bids on a contract by saying "Win Tricks, 9 is high, Spades are trump". Scott is the declarer. The bidding phase is now over and the trick taking phase begins.

Declarer's Additional Information:

When the declarer bids on a contract, they must provide additional information for it. That information is:

1) The card ranking

The declarer must announce if 9s will be the highest rank or if 1s will be highest.

When 9s are the highest rank, the card ranking is (High) 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 (Low)

When 1s are the highest rank, the card ranking is (High) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (Low)

2) A trump suit, if applicable

The declarer must announce one of the four suits. That suit will be the trump suit for the hand.

This is only required when playing the Win Tricks (Pick Trump) contract. The other three contracts are always No Trump.

Passing:

If the forehand passes, the next player in clockwise order may choose to bid or pass. If they pass, the final player in clockwise order may choose to bid or pass.

What if all players pass? The Forehand is pushed “into the puddle”!

It is possible that all three players pass in a row. In this situation, the forehand is pushed “into the puddle”. **This means they are forced into being the declarer and must bid on a contract, following the bidding rules as described above.** In other words, there will be a declarer every hand. Even if the forehand passed originally, they can be forced into being the declarer if the other two players pass!

4) Trick Taking

- This is a **must follow, may beat** trick taker (refer to ‘Compendium/Trick Taking Jargon Explained’ on pages 1-2 for a reminder of what all this means).

- The player who plays the highest trump card wins the trick. If there is no trump suit, the player who plays the highest card of the lead suit wins.

- The declarer will always be the lead player for the first trick. The winner of the current trick will be the lead player for the next trick.

- When a player wins a trick, they must collect all cards and place them in a facedown pile in front of themselves. If the declarer wins multiple tricks, make sure to keep the piles separate so all players can easily tell how many tricks the declarer has won throughout the hand. The defenders can stack their tricks into a single pile as their trick wins do not matter for scoring.

Trick example 1; 9 is high, no trump suit:

Carol leads with the 8 of Clubs. David follows with the 9 of Clubs. Scott does not have any Clubs and can play any card. He plays the 2 of Spades. David wins and leads the next trick.

Trick example 2; 9 is high, no trump suit:

Carol leads with the 7 of Spades. David follows with the 2 of Spades. Scott does not have any Spades and can play any card. He plays the 9 of Hearts. Carol wins and leads the next trick.

Trick example 3; 1 is high, Clubs is the trump suit:

David leads with the 9 of Diamonds. Scott follows with the 4 of Diamonds. Carol follows with the 3 of Diamonds. Carol wins and leads the next trick.

Trick example 4; 1 is high, Clubs is the trump suit:

Scott leads with the 7 of Hearts. Scott does not have Hearts and can play any card. He trumps with the 8 of Clubs. Carol can still follow the led suit (Hearts), so she plays the 5 of Hearts. Scott wins and leads the next trick.

After all 12 tricks have been played proceed to End of Hand Scoring.

5) End of Hand Scoring

Only the declarer's number of tricks won will be calculated for scoring! The other players are trying to win (or lose) tricks to have the declarer perform poorly during their contract, but ultimately, only the number of tricks the declarer wins will count for scoring in that hand.

| Player | C | D | S |
|--------------------------|--------|---|---|
| Win Tricks (No Trump) | Tricks | 8 | |
| | Score | | |

Example: Carol was the declarer for the Win Tricks (No Trump) contract. She won 8 tricks during the hand. So, she writes an ‘8’ in the section marked “Tricks” for that contract. The other two players, David and Scott, do not write anything down for this hand.

Game Points:

If an entire row is complete (meaning all players have completed the same contract at some point throughout the game) it is time to hand out game points. Game points are the actual score to the game. Based on how well you did against the other players determines your score for the contract.

First: +3 points Second: +1 point Last: -1 point

If there is a tie, the tied players split the points between the two ranks. The other player scores full points for the final ranking.

Tied for first = 2 points Tied for last = 0 points

| Player | C | D | S |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|---|
| Win Last 6 (No Trump) | Tricks | 1 3 5 | |
| | Score | -1 1 3 | |

Example: Carol won 1 trick, David won 3, and Scott won 5. Scott is first, David is second, and Carol is last. So, Scott gains 3 game points, David gains 1, and Carol loses 1.

| Player | C | D | S | |
|--------------------------|--------|---|---|----|
| Win Tricks (No Trump) | Tricks | 8 | 8 | 4 |
| | Score | 2 | 2 | -1 |

Example: Carol won 8 tricks, David won 8, and Scott won 4. David and Carol rank first while Scott is last. So, David and Carol split first (3pts) and second (1pt) getting 2 game points each while Scott loses 1 game point.

Starting A New Hand

If there are any contracts left, proceed to the next hand by performing the following steps in order:

- 1) Pass the forehand token clockwise until it reaches a player that has not completed all of their contracts.

Important: If the new forehand has already completed all of their contracts they **can no longer be forehand or declarer**. This means they cannot participate in the Bidding Phase and must permanently pass when it is their turn to bid. **However, they participate in every other phase of the game as normal.**

- 2) The new forehand should collect all playing cards and shuffle them together.
- 3) Repeat the 4 phases of the game--starts on page 2 with "1) Dealing".

If all contracts are completed (12 hands played), proceed to End of Game.

End of Game

After all contracts are completed, each player should add (or subtract) all of their game points across all contracts. It is possible to have a negative score. The player with the highest positive score wins. If there is a tie, the player who placed first in the most contracts wins! If still tied, players share the victory.

| Player | C | D | S | |
|----------------------------|--------|----|----|----|
| Win Tricks (Pick Trump) | Tricks | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| | Score | 1 | -1 | 3 |
| Win Tricks (No Trump) | Tricks | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| | Score | -1 | 3 | 1 |
| Win Last 6 (No Trump) | Tricks | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| | Score | 2 | 2 | -1 |
| Lose Tricks (No Trump) | Tricks | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| | Score | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Score | 5 | 4 | 3 | |

Carol wins the game!

Redo Variant

Background

Most compendium games, by nature, are all about timing. For each contract, you do not need to have a perfect score. You just need to have a better score than your friends! So knowing when it is the right time to bid and the right time to pass are very important decisions to make if you want to do well. Of course, there are times where you are forced to bid (pushed into the puddle) or you bid and things didn't go your way. Well, this variant is a way for players to have one chance to redo a contract that they might have done poorly in.

Please note, when playing with this variant it can cause the game to be up to 3 hands longer (15 hands instead of 12). So, while it is a friendlier variant, it can also make the game longer!

Rules

All rules to the game are the same except the following:

Setup:

- During setup, give each player one redo token.

Bidding:

- When bidding, a player may spend their redo token (return it back to the box) to redo any contract they have previously completed.
- A player can use their redo as long as the game is not over. Meaning, as long as there is one incomplete contract, from any player, a redo token may be spent.

Scoring:

- If a player does better than their original attempt they update their "Tricks" amount to the new amount.

Win Tricks (No Trump) Example: Carol won 2 tricks the first time she did the contract. She spent a redo token and won 8 tricks this time. So, she updates her scoresheet to say '8'.

- If a player does worse than their original attempt they keep their original "Tricks" amount.

Win Tricks (No Trump) Example: Carol won 5 tricks the first time she did the contract. She spent a redo token and won 3 tricks this time. So, she does not change the scoresheet.

Starting A New Hand:

- When passing the forehand token, do not skip a player that has completed all of their contracts **and still has their redo token!** If that player has already spent their redo token, then you must skip them as normal.

Credits

Designers: Ryan Campbell and Daniel Newman

(Rough Draft) Rulebook Writer: Ryan Campbell

Artist: Michelle Campbell

Playtesters: Andrew Sinsheimer, Ashley Miller, Carol LaGrow, Danielle Verba, David Spalinski, Derrick Smith, Eric McLaughlin, Jake Stanley, Jonathan Cox, Keith Cerroni, Mauricio Torselli, Melanie Campbell, Neil Campbell, Scott King, Srinivas Vasudevan, Shreesh Bhat

Starter Contract Appendix

Win Tricks (Pick Trump): The declarer wants to win as many tricks as possible. The declarer must pick one of the four suits to be the trump suit for the hand.

Win Tricks (No Trump): The declarer wants to win as many tricks as possible. There is no trump suit for this hand. The highest card of the lead suit will always win the trick.

Win Last 6 (No Trump): The declarer wants to win as many of the last 6 tricks of the hand as possible. During the first 6 tricks of the hand, if the declarer wins a trick they must discard the played cards as they will not count towards scoring. **Only the last 6 tricks of the hand count towards the declarer's score.**

There is no trump suit for this hand. The highest card of the lead suit will always win the trick.

Lose Tricks (No Trump): The declarer wants to lose as many tricks as possible. When comparing scores for this contract, the player who won the least number of tricks will be ranked first and the player who won the most number of tricks will be ranked last.

There is no trump suit for this hand. The highest card of the lead suit will always win the trick.

Quick Start Guide

A hand will consist of 4 phases in the following order:

1) Dealing 2) Bidding 3) Trick Taking 4) End of Hand Scoring

1) Dealing

Deal 12 cards per player.

2) Bidding

Starting with the forehand and going clockwise, bid on a contract or pass. Once a player bids on a contract they become the declarer and this phase ends. If all players pass, the forehand is forced to become the declarer.

3) Trick Taking

Declarer leads first trick. Winner of the current trick leads next trick. Trick play is must follow, may beat. The declarer is trying to win (or lose) tricks based on the contract they bid on. After all 12 tricks are played, proceed to phase 4.

4) End of Hand Scoring

Only the declarer's trick wins count towards scoring! The declarer records their trick wins on the scoresheet matching the contract they bid on.

Pass the forehand card clockwise, skipping any players that have completed all of their contracts. Repeat phases until all contracts are completed (12 hands).

The next page explains the four advanced contracts. Do not play with these contracts until after playing the starter contracts a few times first!

Advanced Contract Appendix

Win Tricks (Pick Trump): The declarer wants to win as many tricks as possible. The declarer must pick one of the four suits to be the trump suit for the hand.

Win Tricks (May Trump): The declarer wants to win as many tricks as possible. The declarer must pick one of the four suits to be the trump suit for the hand.

During trick play, a follow player may play a card of the trump suit, even if they have a card that matches led suit. If trump is led, players must follow as normal.

Example (9 High, Clubs Trump): Carol leads with the 9 of Spades. David has the 5 and 8 of Spades as well as the 2 of Clubs. He must follow suit and play either one of his Spade cards. However, David **may trump** by playing the 2 of Clubs, even though he has a Spade in hand. He decides to play the 2 of Clubs.

Win Tricks (No Trump, Slalom): The declarer wants to win as many of tricks as possible.

There is no trump for this hand. The highest card of the lead suit will always win the trick.

The card ranking will start 9 High or 1 High (declarer's choice). Then, the card ranking will switch after every trick.

Example: Scott is the declarer and chooses 9 High. So, the first trick 9 is high, second trick 1 is high, third trick 9 is high, forth trick 1 is high, and so on.

Lose Tricks (No Trump, Must Beat): The declarer wants to lose as many tricks as possible.

When comparing scores for this contract, the player who won the least number of tricks will be ranked first and the player who won the most number of tricks will be ranked last.

There is no trump suit for this hand. The highest card of the lead suit will always win the trick.

Trick play is now **must follow, must beat**. This means follow players must play a card that is stronger than the strongest card in the trick. If they cannot, they may play any card. **Note: All led suit cards are stronger than all off suit cards!**

Example 1 (9 High): Scott leads with the 5 of Hearts. Carol must follow suit and play a Heart. Additionally, Carol must play a 6 of Hearts or higher, if she has one. Carol has the 3 and 8 of Hearts. Therefore, she must play the 8 of Hearts.

David is next and must follow suit by playing a Heart. Additionally, David must play the 9 of Hearts, if he has it. David has the 1, 2, and 4 of Hearts. Since David cannot beat Carol's 8 of Hearts he can play any of his Hearts. David plays the 2 of Hearts.

Example 2 (1 High): Scott leads with the 5 of Clubs. Carol must follow suit and play a Club. Additionally, Carol must play a 4 of Clubs or higher, if she has one. Carol has the 3 and 7 of Clubs. Therefore, she must play the 3 of Clubs.

David is next and must follow suit by playing a Club. Additionally, David must play a 2 of Clubs or higher, if he has one. David has the 2, 3, and 6 of Spades as well as the 1, 5, 8, and 9 of Diamonds. Since David cannot follow suit (and by extension cannot beat the 3 of Clubs) he can play any of his cards. David plays the 1 of Diamonds.