WAS STICHT?

(What Trumps? or What Stings?)

Contents:
- 36 Playing Cards (#1-9 in Blue, Green, Red & Yellow).
- 5 Trump Suit Cards (Blue, Green, Red, Yellow & "X" [no color])
- 10 Trump Number Cards (#1-9 & "X" [no number])
- 24 Cardboard Task Chips
- 1 Wooden Place Marker
- 1 Rule Sheet

Game Summary: Was Sticht? is a trick taking card game for 3 - 4 players. Each players attempts to win tricks in similar fashion as bridge, but they can use both trump suits (colors) and trump numbers (1-9). The game can be won without taking a single trick, or by making exactly one trick, or by not winning any trick with a blue card in it. This all depends on which task you set for yourself each round. For an added twist, you get to choose your own cards before each round. The first player to complete all 5 chosen tasks is the winner.

Setup:
- Place all 24 task chips face up on the table. These chips determine what tasks a player must carry out in a round. Each chip contains a red number; this value relates to the difficulty of the specific task. The higher the number, the harder the task. Numbers are also used to break ties if several players go out in the same round.
- Choose a starting dealer, that player chooses the first task chip and places it face down in front of them.
- Each player then chooses a chip (in a clockwise direction), until all players has 5 chips.
- Place the remaining chips in the box.

Game Play: The game consists of multiple rounds, and each round consists of the following actions:
- ***Shuffle the Decks:*** The dealer shuffles the 36 cards, the 5 trump color cards, & the 10 trump number cards.
- ***Layout the Cards:*** The dealer lays out all 36 cards in four rows containing 9 cards each (see illustration).
- ***Determine Trump:*** The dealer secretly looks at the bottom of the other 2 decks to identify the round's trump.
- ***Drawing Cards:*** The player on the dealer's left takes the wooden place marker and chooses on of the four cards from the first column. Each player in turn then chooses a card from that same column. Once the cards from the first column have been taken, the dealer considers those 4 cards as a "trick". The dealer then verbally gives a clue as to what might be the trump(s) by indicating which player would have won this "trick". Naturally, the dealer takes into consideration which cards (if any) in the trick are trumps. Example: "If player A had led that trick, then Player C would have taken the trick". The dealer should avoid comments like, "Player C won because they had the trump number". Players should use these clues to deduce what the trumps are for this round. But, the longer they are kept in the dark (with minimal information) about the trump suit and trump number...the better it is for the dealer. The wooden place marker is then passed to the next player in clockwise order, and players begin to choose a card from the second column, repeating all the above actions until all 36 cards have been taken from all 9 columns.
- ***Revealing Trump:*** the dealer turns over the other 2 decks to reveal which suit and number cards are trump.
- ***Determining Tasks:*** After evaluating their hands against the trump(s), each player determines which task they are most likely to fulfill in this round. Each player (except the dealer) chooses one of their face down chips and places it in front of them. Once all players have chosen, the chips are revealed simultaneously. While the dealer doesn't choose a chip, they instead must attempt to duplicate one of the tasks chosen by the other three players. If they manage this then they may discard any one chip in their tableau...but only if the other player failed to accomplish that same task. If both the player and dealer succeeds, only the other player may discard their task chip. Therefore, the dealer secretly decides which task they want to duplicate, and they may change this objective during the course of the round.
- ***Playing Tricks:*** Similar to most trick taking games, the exact rules are as follows:
  - The player to Dealer's left leads to the first trick.
  - Each player plays a card in turn, in clockwise order.
  - Players must follow the suit lead where possible.
  - The first card played in a trick can only be beaten by a higher card of the same suit, or by a trump card.
    - If a trump is led, the other players must follow where possible. This must be adhered to for both the trump suit and for the trump number. Example, if the two trumps are red and 3, a lead of a red card means that the following players must (if possible), play a red card or a 3 card. If a 3 is lead in another suit, it's still a trump card, and the following players must (if possible) play either a red card or a 3 card.

- If a player cannot follow suit they can play an off-suit (they don't have to play a trump card).
- The player who wins the trick then leads a card for the next trick.
- Important: trump includes cards of the trump suit and the number trumps. Number trumps outrank suit trumps. The highest number trump is the number trump of the trump suit (color), and is called the super-trump. This card outranks all other 35 cards. The other number trumps are all of equal value so if two or more numbered trump are played in one trick, the first numbered trump played will win the trick.
- Example- Trump for this round is the red suit and the number 5 - so the hierarchy would be:
  - Red #5 (supertrump card)
  - Blue/Green/Yellow/ #5 (the first played in a suit will win)
  - Red 9, Red 8, Red 7… and so on, down to Red #1 (the lowest trump)
  Note: If there's only one trump, i.e. the number 5 (no suit/color), then the four number 5 cards would be the only trump available for that round, likewise, if the red suit was the only trump...then the red cards from 9 on down to 1 would only be available.

- End of Round: Once all the cards have been played, the round ends. Any successfully completed task chips are discarded to one side, but should still remain visible to the other players. The next player in a clockwise direction becomes the dealer for the next round.

Game End: The game ends when one player has completed all their tasks by discarding their last chip. If two or more players discard their last chip in the same round, the player with the highest value (red numbers) in discarded chips is the winner. Although rare, it's possible that the winner (with 5 tasks completed) has less points than another player (with 4 completed tasks) however the chip values are only compared during ties when multiple players discard all 5 chips at the same time. If playing multiple games, finishing positions can be determined and recorded by these values as well- BUT 5 tasks still outrank 4 tasks (even w/a higher total).

Special Rules for the 3 Player Game:

The rules for the 3 player game is largely similar to the 4 player game, only during the "drawing cards" action do they differ slightly. The 3 players each choose a card from the first column as usual but the fourth card is laid to one side. Repeat for each column until all the cards have been taken. The 9 cards that have been laid aside are removed from the game for this round. Note: the given point values for each task are not quite accurate in the 3 player game, some tasks are:
- Easier: take exactly 3 tricks, take exactly 4 tricks, take the fewest tricks, take the most tricks
- Harder: take exactly 1 trick, take no tricks, take no red/green/yellow/blue tricks
- Same: take exactly 2 tricks, take the last trick
  Suggestion: Subtract 1 point for "easier" tasks; add 1 point for "harder" tasks (for tie-break valuation in a 3 player game).

Clarifications:

Trumps: Simply stated, the trump suit (color) and the trump number are effectively "combined" and treated as their own individual or distinct suit (ignore the apparent color of the cards). If green 8 was the trump, it would "lose" it's original green color and could not be used to follow suit in a trick unless no other green cards were available for play (it's not a green 8 anymore...it's an 8 trump card).
Likewise, if a green card or an 8 was led, you must play a green card or any 8 card to following suit (playing trump-suit on a trump-suit lead). Color only applies when fulfilling tasks, such as: no green cards in this round.

Variants:

Short Game: Some criticism exists in that the game drags on too long. The simple fix is to reduce the 5 tasks down to only four during the "Determining Tasks" action.

Task Chip Clarifications:

Kein Stich - The player may not win a single trick in this round.
Keine "X" Karten - The player must not take any tricks with this specific colored card ("X") in this round. There are Red, Green, Yellow & Blue colored tasks available). Players must win at least one trick to be successful.
Genau "X" Stich - The player must take exactly that amount of trick(s) in this round...any more or any less is considered a failed task (there are 1, 2, 3 & 4 exact trick tasks available).
Den letzten Stich - The player must take the last trick in the round, all other tricks are irrelevant for this task.
Die meisten Stiche - The player must have the most tricks. A tie with another player is considered a failure.
Die wenigsten Stiche - The player must have the fewest tricks. A tie is also considered a failure.