

# PINOCHLE

By Chris Hayes

## Overview of the Game

Pinochle is a trick-and-meld game. The most common form needs 4 players and additionally includes an ‘auction’, similar to contract bridge. However, this booklet describes a two player variant. It is worth noting that historically, this form of two player Pinochle appeared first, as a variation on an older game, Bezique. Pinochle uses a 48 card deck - two sets of the nine through ace of a standard French deck, with aces high. It is assumed the reader is familiar with basic trick-taking as in Spades, Hearts, etc.

The object of the game is to earn at least 1000 points total over several *rounds* before the other player. To keep track of points, I suggest using poker chips or a notepad.

To begin a round, shuffle the deck and deal 12 cards to each player for their hand. Place one card face-up in the center of the table (the *upcard*) from the deck. This card's suit determines the *trump suit* for the round. Traditionally the deck is then placed cross-wise on top of the upcard, making a T shape. For drawing purposes, the upcard (or its replacement when melding the *dix*) is considered part of the deck.

## The Main Phase

The round consists of trick-taking (with trumps) and *melding* happening between tricks, and a shift in rules (*playoff*) when the deck runs out.

Pinochle follows an unusual ranking (high-low): aces, tens, kings, queens, jacks, nines. Aces and tens are worth 10 points each and kings and queens are worth 5 points when won in tricks. The jack and 9 are worth nothing. Points earned in tricks are tallied at the end of the round. (Note: The traditional version of Pinochle uses a different card valuation.)

The non-dealer leads the first trick. *It is not required to follow suit before the deck runs out.* As usual, the winner of a trick leads the next trick. After a trick, both players first draw a card. If the deck is down to two cards (including the upcard), then the loser of the trick must draw the upcard. When the deck runs out, the game immediately moves to the *playoff*. If not in the playoff, the winner may then choose to *meld* cards from their hand by laying down a combination in front of them. Only one meld may be played before a trick. The melds

and their points are:

- The jack, queen, king, ten, and ace of trumps (*a run*): 150 points.
- The king and queen of trumps (*royal marriage*): 40 points.
- The king and queen of a non-trump suit (*common marriage*): 20 points.
- Four aces, one from each suit (*aces around*): 100 points.
- Four kings, one from each suit (*kings around*): 80 points.
- Four queens, one from each suit (*queens around*): 60 points.
- Four jacks, one from each suit (*jacks around*): 40 points.
- *Pinochle*, the queen of spades and jack of diamonds (Q♠ J♦): 40 points.
- *Double Pinochle*, the best meld in the game (Q♠ Q♠ J♦ J♦): 300 points.
- Nine of trumps\* by itself (*Dix*): 10 points.

\*: When the first meld for the nine of trumps occurs, it instead replaces the upcard. Exchange the nine of trumps for the upcard.

Cards in melds are still available for play in tricks, like cards in a hand. Be sure to note what melds were played, or score melds immediately, as they will all be used in tricks by the end of the round.

Cards may be re-used for *different* meld categories. For example, a king in a marriage may be used for kings around. But a king in a marriage may not be used to marry the second queen in that suit. If the cards from a royal marriage are extended into a run, then the run's value (150) *replaces* the marriage's value (40) rather than adding them together to 190. Similarly, a pinochle (40 pts) may be upgraded to a double pinochle (300 pts), they do *not* somehow both count (340 pts or 380 points).

# The Playoff

When the upcard is taken then the game becomes more strict. The following things happen:

- Technically not required, but traditionally all melds are picked up by their players and put back in their hands. Each player should have 12 cards in their hand. If they don't, someone messed up.
- Players are now required to *follow suit* as in standard trick-taking games. Secondly, the player who doesn't lead *must win if able*. A player may not play a trump if they could follow suit, even if they would lose by following suit.
- No more melds may be claimed.
- The winner of the last trick earns an extra ten points.

After the last trick is played, points are tallied for tricks. If a player has 1000

or more points, then the game is over. The player with the most points wins. In the case of a tie, continue playing until 1250, then 1500 if necessary, and so on. Otherwise, play a new round.

Two final comments: Each hand has 240 points total for cards won in tricks. Don't modify the game by making 10 rank between 9 and J, as it is intentionally high ranking and unused in melds.

## Three or More Players

There are two ways to modify this form of Pinochle for several players. One is to use the same deck, but change the hand size. The goal is to have the same number of cards in the deck as are dealt. For example, for 3 players this is 8, and for 4 players this is 6. The other way is to add cards to the deck, so that there is one 24 card 'set' per player (ex. 72 total for 3), and each one starts with a 12 card hand.

## Quick-Reference Table

Tricks	Points
Ace	10 pts
Ten	10 pts
King	5 pts
Queen	5 pts
Jack	0 pts
Nine	0 pts
Win Last Trick	10 pts
Melds	Points
A10KQJ (Trumps)	150 pts
Marriage (Trumps)	40 pts
Marriage	20 pts
Aces Around	100 pts
Kings Around	80 pts
Queens Around	60 pts
Jacks Around	40 pts
Pinochle: Q♠ J♦	40 pts
Double Pinochle	300 pts
9 of Trumps ('Dix')	10 pts*

*\*Swap with upcard, put it in hand.*