

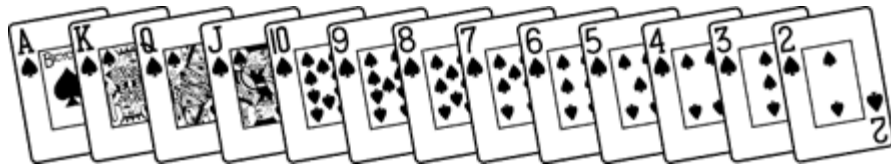
# Hearts

Many trick-taking games are not directly related to Bridge or Whist. Perhaps the foremost one is Hearts, which is truly one of the greatest card games ever devised for four players, each playing individually. The game is fairly easy to play, yet there is plenty of scope for high strategy.

**Number of Players.** Three to seven people can play, but the game is absolutely best for four, each playing for himself. Two players may play Domino Hearts; more than seven should play Cancellation Hearts. These versions are described later.

**The Pack.** The standard 52-card pack is used.

**Rank of Cards.** A (high), K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2.



**The Draw, Shuffle and Cut.** Each player draws one card from a shuffled pack spread face down. The highest card deals first, and thereafter the deal passes to the left. After the shuffle, the player on the dealer's right cuts.

**The Deal.** The dealer completes the cut and distributes the cards one at a time, face down, clockwise. In a four-player game, each is dealt 13 cards; in a three-player game, the  $\diamondsuit 2$  should be removed, and each player gets 17 cards; in a five-player game, the  $\diamondsuit 2$  and  $\clubsuit 2$  should be removed so that each player will get 10 cards. For the six-player game, the  $\diamondsuit 2$ ,  $\diamondsuit 3$ ,  $\clubsuit 3$  and  $\clubsuit 4$  are removed, so that each player gets eight cards. Finally, with seven players, the  $\spadesuit 2$ ,  $\diamondsuit 3$  and  $\clubsuit 3$  are removed so that each player gets seven cards. However, if you have more than five players it is best to have two tables of 3 for six players and a table of 4 and a table of 3 for seven players.

**The Pass.** After looking at his hand, a player selects any three cards and passes them face down to the player on the left. The player must pass the three cards before looking at the cards received from the right. There is a passing rotation of left, right and across. With more than four players the passing rotation should be left and then right. A recent popular passing variation is to designate the fourth hand of every deal as a keep or hold hand where no cards are passed.

**Object of the Game.** The goal is to avoid winning in tricks any heart or the  $\spadesuit Q$  (called Black Lady or Black Maria). Or, to win all 13 hearts and the  $\spadesuit Q$  (referred to as "Shooting the Moon"). Ultimately, the object of the game is to have the lowest score when the game ends.

**The Play.** The player holding the  $\clubsuit 2$  after the pass makes the opening lead. If the  $\clubsuit 2$  has been removed for the three handed game, then the  $\clubsuit 3$  is led. This is now the standard rule. Each player must follow suit if possible. If a player is void of the suit led, a card of any other suit may be discarded. However, if a player has no clubs when the first trick is led, a heart or the queen of spades cannot be discarded. The highest card of the suit led wins a trick and the winner of that trick leads next. There is no trump suit. The winner of the trick collects it and places it face down to form a neat "book" or stack of cards. Hearts may not be led until a heart or the queen of spades has been discarded. The queen does not have to be discarded at the first opportunity. The queen can be led at any time.

**Scoring.** A separate column on a score sheet is kept for each player. At the end of each hand, players count the number of hearts they have taken as well as the queen of spades, if applicable. Hearts count as one point each and the queen counts 13 points.

**Each heart:** 1 point

**The ♠Q:** 13 points

The point totals are then entered in each player's column. The aggregate total of all scores for each hand must be a multiple of 26. *Note:* The number of tricks a player wins does not count per se; the scoring is based solely on who wins tricks containing hearts and/or the queen of spades.

The game is usually played to 100 points (some play to 50). When one player hits the agreed upon score or higher, the game ends; and the player with the lowest score wins.

**"Shooting the Moon."** One of the great thrills of the game, shooting the moon or making a "slam", is when a player takes all 13 hearts and the queen of spades in one hand. Scores will differ dramatically. Instead of losing 26 points, that player scores zero and each of his opponents score an additional 26 points.

#### **Scoring Variations.**

1) Instead of a score sheet, chips are used. Each player pays one chip for each heart, thirteen chips for the ♠Q, and the lowest score for the deal takes all. Players who tie split the pot, leaving any odd chips for the next deal.

2) In this version called Sweepstakes, each player pays one chip for each heart and 13 chips for the ♠Q. If one player alone scores zero, he takes the pot; if two or more players make zero, they split the pot. If every player earns 1 point or more, the pot remains for the next deal, or until it is eventually won.

**Irregularities.** *Misdeal.* If the dealer exposes a card in dealing, or gives one player too many cards and another player too few, the next player in turn deals.

*Play out of turn.* A lead or play out of turn must be retracted if another player demands it before all have played to the trick. After everyone has played, a play out of turn stands without penalty.

*Quitted tricks.* Each trick gathered must be placed face down in front of the winner, and tricks must be kept separate. If a player so mixes his cards that a claim of revoke cannot be proved, he is charged with all 26 points for the deal, regardless of whether the alleged revoke was made by him or another player.

*Revoke.* Failure to follow suit when possible, or to discard the ♠Q at the first opportunity (when this variant rule is in force), constitutes a revoke. A revoke may be corrected before the trick is turned and quitted. If not discovered until later, the revoke is established, play is immediately abandoned, and the revoking hand is charged with all 26 points for the deal. If a revoke is established against more than one player, each is charged 26 points. However, the revoke penalty may not be enforced after the next deal has started.

*Incorrect hand.* A player discovered to have too few cards must take the last trick, and if his hand is more than one card short he must take in every trick to which he cannot play.

#### **Omnibus Hearts**

This version adds two features to standard Hearts whereby a player may actually score plus. The play of the cards takes on heightened interest, since it combines "nullo" play (to avoid gathering hearts and the ♠Q) with positive play to win plus points.

**Number of Players.** Four to six people can play. The game is best for four participants, each person playing for himself.

**The Pack.** The standard 52-card pack is used.

**The Plus Card.** The hearts and the ♠Q are minus cards, as in standard Hearts. In addition, the ♦10 counts plus 10 for the player who wins it. (In some localities, ♦J instead of ♦10 is the plus card.)

**Slam.** When a player wins all fifteen counting cards - the thirteen hearts, ♠Q, and ♦10 - it is called a slam and he scores 26 plus (instead of 16 minus).

### **Cancellation Hearts**

**Number of Players.** Seven to ten people can play.

**The Pack.** Two standard packs of 52 cards are shuffled together.

**The Deal.** The cards are dealt around as far as they will go evenly. Any remaining odd cards are placed face down for a widow.

**The Play.** No cards are passed before the play. The player to the dealer's left makes the opening lead, and the rules of play are the same as in Four-Hand Hearts, with the following additions:

- 1) The widow is added to the first trick.
- 2) Cancellation: Two cards of the same rank in the same trick cancel each other, and neither can win the trick. If all cards played to a trick are paired, the trick goes to the winner of the next trick.

### **Hearts Without Black Lady**

Hearts may be played without scoring ♠Q as a counting card, so that there are 13 points in play. In this version, players do not pass off three cards to each other, but play their original hands. Settlement is usually by the Howell method: For each heart taken, the player puts up as many chips as there are players besides himself; he then removes as many chips as the difference between 13 and the number of hearts he took. *Example:* In a four-hand game, a player who won seven hearts puts in 21 chips and takes out six.

### **Domino Hearts**

**Number of Players.** Two to seven people can play.

**The Pack.** The standard 52-card pack is used.

**The Deal.** Each player receives six cards, dealt one at a time. The remainder of the pack is placed face down in the center of the table, forming the stock.

**The Play.** The player to the dealer's left leads first. The rules of play are the same as for Four-Hand Hearts, except that a player who cannot follow suit to the lead must draw cards from the top of the stock until he can play. After the stock is exhausted, a player unable to follow suit may discard. The game continues until all cards have been won in tricks, with each player dropping out as his cards are exhausted. If a player wins a trick with his last card, the turn to lead passes to the first active player on his left. The last survivor must keep all the cards remaining in his hand.

**Scoring.** The same as in Four-Hand Hearts, except that the ♠Q is usually not scored.

### **Auction Hearts**

This game is the same as Hearts Without Black Lady, except that players bid after the deal for the privilege of naming the suit to be avoided. In bidding, a player names the number of chips he will put up as a pot, if allowed to name the suit. Bidding begins with the first hand dealt and rotates to the left, each player being allowed to bid only once. A player must either bid higher than the preceding bid or pass. The highest bidder puts up his chips and names the suit. He leads first, and thereafter play proceeds as in the regular game.

**The Play.** When the hands are played out, each player adds one chip to the pot for each card he has taken of the forbidden suit. The player taking no cards of the forbidden suit wins the pot; if two players score no minus points, they divide the pot. If an odd chip remains, it is left for the next pot. If more than two players take no cards of the forbidden suit, or one player takes all 13, or each player takes at least one, no player wins; the deal passes, and the successful bidder on the original deal names the suit to be avoided, without bidding. The play then proceeds as before, and at the end of the hand, each player puts up a chip for each card of the forbidden suit he has taken. If no player wins on this deal, a new deal ensues, and so on, until the pot is won.

*Joe Andrews, author of "Win at Hearts," and founder of the American Hearts and Spades Players' Association (AHSPA), has generously added to portions of the Hearts section. Card players interested in joining AHSPA and who would like to enjoy a good game of Hearts in their city, or on the Microsoft Hearts Game Zone at [www.zone.com](http://www.zone.com), may E-mail Mr. Andrews at [heartsmoon@aol.com](mailto:heartsmoon@aol.com).*