

## **Background Information**

### **Definition**

Schnapsen is a trick-taking card game which originated in Austria. It is similar to its German cousin, 66.

The main aim of this game is to get 66 points by winning tricks as quickly as possible. Here, trick refers to one round in the game.

### **Rules**

- ❖ Only the Jacks, Queens, Kings, Tens, and Aces are used.
- ❖ Point distribution:
  - Jack – 2
  - Queen – 3
  - King – 4
  - Ten – 10
  - Ace – 11
- ❖ To win a trick, you must play a more valuable card of the same suit or play a card from the Trump suit. If you don't have a card to win the trick, you must play the least valuable card so as to give the least points to the opponent.
- ❖ If you have the Trump Jack, then at the beginning of the trick, you can exchange it for the more valuable trump card that's placed face up under the talon.
- ❖ If you have both the King and Queen of a same suit, and you play them at the beginning of a trick, you can claim marriage points (30 points if it's a non-trump marriage, and 40 points if it's a trump one).
- ❖ Once the talon (deck of cards) is finished, following suit becomes compulsory. Only if you don't have a card of the same suit can you play a different card (including Trump cards).
- ❖ There are 2 ways to win the game:
  - Your overall point is greater than or equal to 66
  - You win the last trick
- ❖ After winning the game, the player gets points on the basis of the following:
  - If the opponent has not scored any card points, the player gets 3 game points
  - If the opponent has scored less than 33 card points, the player gets 2 game points
  - If the opponent has scored 33 card points or more, the player gets 1 game point

## **Winning Strategies**

There is no perfect strategy to win a game of Schnapsen. This is because it is an imperfect information game. This means that we do not know what moves the opponent can make and can only guess them.

However, some of the strategies that can be used to play optimally, and win a game if possible, are as follows:

- ❖ If you can make a Trump Jack exchange, do it as soon as possible. Having a more valuable trump card is better than having a less valuable one.
- ❖ Declaring marriage moves as soon as possible is ideal. This is because keeping the marriage cards in hand and waiting for the perfect moment to play them may cost us the marriage. It is very difficult to maintain the marriage cards in our hand as we can only hold 5 cards at a time. Also, if we lose a trick, our chance to play the marriage card goes away.
- ❖ If the opponent plays a card, and you can win the trick using a card of the same suit, do it. It allows you to move first the next turn, which is in turn helpful if you want to play a marriage or do a Trump Jack exchange. Also, it gives you some card points which counts towards the final points.
- ❖ Winning a trick with a higher value card of the same suit is more ideal than winning with a less valuable card. This is because you may lose the more valuable card to a trump later on in the game.
- ❖ If the opponent plays a less valuable card like Jack, Queen or King, and you can't win without using a trump card, it is best to lose that round and discard the least valuable card (unless you only have Aces and Tens). However, if the opponent's card is an Ace or Ten, it is worthwhile to use your Trump card to win that trick (preferably the cheapest one), as it is very valuable.
- ❖ When it is our chance to move first, and the game is still in phase 1, that is the talon is open, it is best to play a cheap card as we do not know what cards the opponent has. For example, if we play a non-trump Ace and the opponent has a trump card, we lose a really valuable card to him.