

Weathervanes is a trick taking game for four players played over four rounds. Each player card has all four suits, but in differing arrangements. Each card also indicates its own top that when played "points" in a particular direction. Throughout the game, players will use these features to play tricks and gain cards to a tableau to earn points. Although the game is played over four rounds, scoring is continuous throughout the game and will not always happen at the same time for all players.

Designer's note: The name Weathervanes is a working title and may change if game mechanics reveal a better matching theme. As such the theme is not currently present in the game's terminology, artwork, or rules. The theme behind the current title is that cards are weathervanes that point in the same direction as the wind. The wind then blows various leaves (suits) around into yards (Display area) which must be raked into piles (tableaus). Use of your imagination while playing is appreciated.

Components

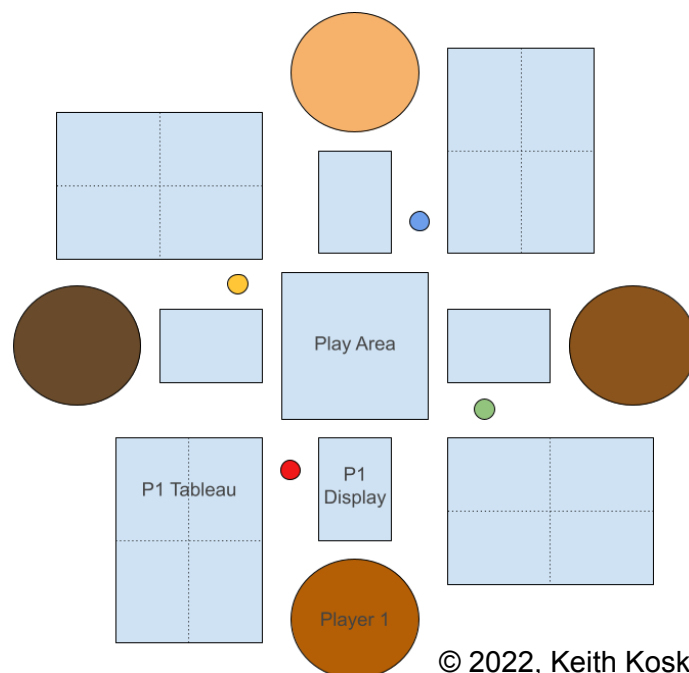
- Custom deck of 48 four-suited cards (2 each of numbers 1-24)
- 4 Bonus Tokens, one of each suit color
- Score keeping materials

Setup

Players should seat themselves equidistant around their play area.

Begin by randomly giving one Bonus Token to each player which they place on the table in front of them. Shuffle the deck and deal one card face up in front of each player as their initial "Display" card. Then deal the remaining cards to each player to form an 11-card hand.

The play area should have room for each player's "tableau" (a 2x2 grid of cards) in front of them as well as a single, common discard pile, all of which begin the game empty.



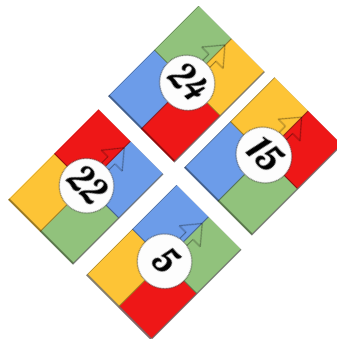
Rules

The lead player for each round is the player with the red Bonus Token. They begin the round by playing any card from their hand into the center of the play area. When doing so, the card must be oriented such that one corner is at the center of the play area. This corner's suit is now the lead suit for the trick. This will also cause the card to point in a particular direction (typically between two players).

Then each player in clockwise order also plays a card to the trick. **Players must follow the lead suit if able**, placing a matching corner of a card to meet the lead card at the common point. If a player is unable to follow suit, they may choose any other card in their hand to play. Whether matching suit or not, **all cards in a trick must point in the same direction**.

After all players have played a card, and if all players followed suit, the trick will form an inner rectangle of the lead color. **The highest card of the lead suit wins the trick**. There is no tie breaker rule because it's impossible to both tie and match suit.

Now, starting with the winner of the trick and proceeding in play order, **each player takes the Display card closest (moving clockwise) to where the just-played trick is pointing**. This card is then added to their tableau and possibly scored (see **Scoring**).



Example: Alberta leads the trick with a Blue 5. Bernie follows suit with a 22. Cecil is unable to follow suit, so chooses to play his 24 (as red). Donna is able to follow suit, so she plays her 15. Bernie wins the trick. He collects Donna's Display card because hers is where the trick pointed to. Then Cecil collect's Alberta's Display card, Donna gets Bernie's, and finally Alberta gets Cecil's. Bernie will lead the next trick.

Once all players have collected a Display card, they take the card they played into the trick and move it in front of them to become their new Display card.

The winner of the trick now leads the next trick. Play proceeds in this way until all cards in hand have been played.

Tableau Placement

Following each trick, a player will have gained a Display card which they then add to their tableau as follows.

- **All cards in a tableau must point in the same direction.**
- If their tableau is not empty, the player must place the card so that it shares at least one edge with a card already in their tableau.
- **The tableau must fit into a 2x2 grid.** The boundaries of the grid are not defined. The newly placed card must simply not extend the tableau to three or more rows or columns.
- Once placed, cards in the tableau cannot be rearranged.
- **The center of the tableau** (formed by the four inner corners of placed cards) **must have the same suit.**
- Outer matches (adjacencies on the cardinal edges of the tableau) are beneficial (see **Scoring**) but not required.

Note: In a tableau with exactly two cards, the shared edge may match in both suits. When this is the case, for any rule concerned with a tableau's central suit, the player may choose either option.

Scoring

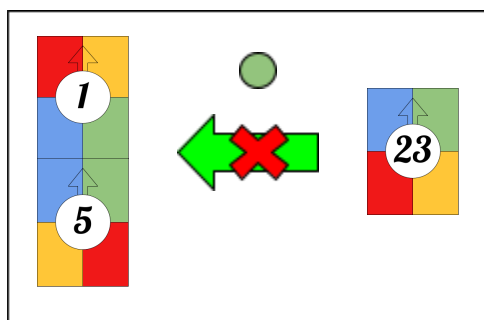
If a player is unable to place the new card, they immediately score their current tableau (see below) then place the new card into the now empty tableau. A player also scores immediately if they complete their tableau with a fourth card. Players may never choose to score early if neither of these conditions is met.

Scoring is as follows:

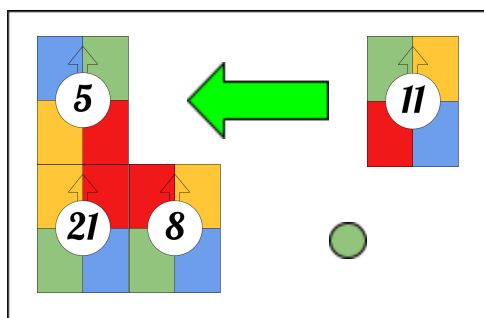
- Each card in the tableau is worth as many points as there are cards in the tableau. That is, tableaus of increasing size will score 1, 4, 9, or 16 points respectively.
- For each outer match, the tableau scores an additional point.
- If the tableau's inner suit matches their Bonus Token, each card scores an additional point (minimum 2 cards).

The maximum score for a single tableau is 24 points. Once scored, the tableau is cleared and placed face down into the discard pile.

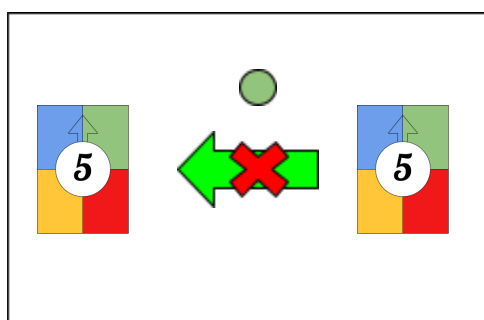
Scoring Examples:



This tableau already contains a 1 and a 5. There is no legal placement for the 23, so the tableau must be scored. The inner suit is ambiguous, but the player currently has the green Bonus Token so they score it as green. This scores them 7 points: 4 for having 2 cards, plus 2 for the Bonus Token match, plus 1 for an outer match (blue). After scoring and discarding the tableau, the 23 becomes the first card of the new tableau.



This tableau is gaining its fourth card. It will score immediately instead of when a fifth card would be added. It scores 18 points: 16 for having 4 cards, 2 for outer matches (yellow and green) and 0 for its (red) inner suit matching the player's current (green) Bonus Token. After scoring and discarding the tableau, it will be empty.



This tableau already contains a 5. There is no legal placement for a second 5, so the tableau must be scored. A minimum of two cards is required to match the player's Bonus token, so it scores only 1 point. After scoring and discarding the tableau, the newer 5 becomes the first card of the new tableau.

Starting a New Round

Leaving all tableau and Display cards in place, gather and shuffle all cards from the discard pile. Deal as much of this deck as possible equally to each player. Any extra cards are set aside, face down, back into the discard pile. Each player passes their Bonus Token to the player to their left. The player with the red Bonus Token now leads the first trick of the new round.

Game End

After four rounds, each player will have led a hand once each and had all four Bonus Tokens. Players may have cards left in their tableaux and will have a Display card from the final trick.

Each player places their own Display card into their tableau following normal placement rules. They then score this final tableau. (Note: Do not clear the tableau until after ties are resolved.) The player with the highest total score wins!

In the case of a tie, the tied player with the most cards in their final tableau wins. If the tie persists the tied player with the most outer matches wins. Persistent ties share the victory.

Variants

The following variants may be used in any combination.

Constrained Lead: When leading a trick, players must lead with the suit matching their current Bonus Token.

Partial Misère Scoring: Each player's final tableau at the game's end is counted as negative points toward their total score. High score still wins. Ties are broken as in the standard rules but replacing "most" with "fewest".

Bonus No-kens: No bonus points are awarded for inner suits when scoring a tableau.