

Schafkopf

Overview

Set up: One german suited deck with A K O U 10 9 8 (long deck), or A K O U 10 (short deck). A French suited deck may be used with Queens as Obern and Jacks as Untern

Players: 4

Classification: Trick taking, partnership, contract

Cards per player: 8 for long deck, 6 for short deck

Dealing Pattern: Player right of dealer cuts the deck. Cards are then dealt 1-by-1 starting left of dealer. Dealer rotates left after each round.

Card Hierarchy (Strongest to Weakest): A K O(Q) U(J) 10 8 9

Suit Hierarchy: Acorns(Clubs♣), Leaves(Spades♠), Hearts, Bells(Diamonds♦)

Card Values: Aces 11 pts, 10s 10 pts, Ks 4 pts, O(Q) 3 pts, U(J) 2 pts

Contracts: See § Contract Hierarchy

Objective

- Have the highest score after 4 rounds.

Rules

- The cards are dealt out and the auction phase begins.
- Normal trick taking rules apply. The highest trump takes the trick if one is played, otherwise the highest lead suit takes the trick.
- After the auction closes, play begins with the caller and continues left. Subsequent tricks begin with the last trick's winner and continue left.
- Play continues until all cards have been played. Players' scores for the round are determined by the number of points collected (see § Scoring).

Auction

After the deal, the auction phase begins. Beginning left of dealer, the players take turns bidding on which contract(s) they would like to play. On his turn, the player may choose to pass or bid a contract. At this point, the bidder simply states the name of the contract he would like to play or passes, and bidding moves on to the next player. The next player may either choose to pass or bid a contract of higher rank than those already bid. Whoever declares to play the highest-ranking contract is named the caller. If all players pass, the cards are

collected, reshuffled, and redealt with dealer rotating left as usual (unless either the Ramsch or Forced Call rules are in effect; see § Optional Contracts). The player to bid the highest ranked contract is deemed the caller, and those not on the caller's team are deemed the defenders.

Contracts

Broadly, all contracts simply specify which cards are trumps, and how teams will be formed (either 2v2 or 1v3). Contracts can be thought of to lie in one of three categories which, in ascending rank order are: partnerships, solos, and slams.

Core Contracts

Call for Ace

Category: Partnership

Trumps (Strongest to Weakest): Obern (Queens), Untern, Hearts

In this contract the caller calls for one of the four aces. He must call for an ace not in his hand but whose suit is in his hand (e.g. if the player does not hold any bells, he may not call for the ace of bells.). The holder of the called ace becomes the caller's partner, the other two players becoming partnered together against the caller's team. No communication is allowed to be made about who does or does not hold the called ace; it may only be revealed through play who has the called ace, and therefore, what the teams are.

Wenz

Category: Solo

Trumps: Untern (Jacks) only

In this contract the caller plays alone against the other three players. In this variant, only the Obern (jacks) are trumps.

Suit Solo

Category: Solo

Trumps (Strongest to Weakest) Obern, Untern, 1 suit of caller's choice

The caller plays alone and announces which suit will be named trump. In addition the Obern and Untern are trumps. The caller plays solo against the three other players.

Slams

Category: Slam

Any solo contract may be promoted to a slam. In a slam, the caller must take every trick (not just all 120 points). Slams score double over their solo counterparts (see § Scoring).

Sie

The unbeatable hand. If a player is dealt the 8 Obern and Untern, they show their hand and declare "Sie" (pronounced zee).

Optional Contracts

Ramsch

Category: Partnership

Trumps: Obern (Queens), Untern (Jacks), Hearts

This contract differs from the others in that it is an optional rule that forces the players to play a Ramsch contract if certain conditions are met. This rule is mutually exclusive with Forced Call. In Ramsch, if all players pass during the bidding phase, then partnerships are formed with teammates sitting opposite one another. The objective is to score 59 or fewer points.

Marriage

Category: Partnership

Trumps: Obern, Untern, Hearts

A player may call a marriage if he has only one trump. The player, deemed the suitor, places this trump face down, proposing a marriage. Beginning on the suitor's left, the dealer offers each player in turn the opportunity to marry the suitor. If no player accepts the marriage proposal, the card is returned to the suitors hand and bidding passes to the next player. If the proposal is accepted, the betrothed must take the face down card into her hand and give a different non-trump card from her hand to the suitor. The two now form a team and must take at least 61 points.

Vulture

Category: Solo

Trumps: Obern (Queens) only

Same as Jacks Only except the Queens are the only trumps.

Suit Wenz

Category: Solo

Trumps: Untern (Jacks) ,1 suit of caller's choice

Same as Jacks Only except the caller also announces 1 suit to be trump.

Suit Vulture

Category: Solo

Trumps: Obern (Queens), 1 suit of caller's choice

Same as Vulture except the caller also announces 1 suit to be trump.

Junk Hand

Category: Slam

Trumps: none

There are no trumps and the caller must not take a single trick. If the caller takes even one trick they have lost the round.

Kreuzbock

Category: Partnership

Trumps (Strongest to Weakest): Obern (Queens), Untern, Hearts

Kreuzbock is an optional rule that is played after a lost solo contract. In this game, partnerships are automatically formed with the players sitting opposite one another and trumps are as in Call for Ace. The team to lead the first trick is the team containing the player to last announce a score doubling, and failing that, the last player to perform a lay. Failing even that, the team to lead is the player left of dealer. The leading team counts as the caller for scoring.

Forced Call

Category: Partnership

Trumps (Strongest to Weakest): Obern (Queens), Untern, Hearts

The Forced Call rule is mutually exclusive with Ramsch. Like Ramsch, this is an optional rule that requires playing a Call for Ace contract after all players pass. In this contract, the player holding the Ober of Acorns (Jack of Clubs) *must* play a Call for Ace. If the holder does not have the suit of any aces he does not hold, he may call for any of the aces not in his hand. If the caller holds all the aces, he may call for a 10 he does not hold, and failing that a King.

Contract Hierarchy

The hierarchy of contracts is organized in the table below from highest on top to lowest on bottom

Category	Contract
	Sie
Slams	Suit Solo Slam
	Wenz Slam
	Vulture Slam
	Suit Wenz Slam

	Suit Geier Slam
	Junk Hand, Ramsch Slam
Solos	Suit Solo
	Wenz
	Vulture
	Suit Solo
	Suit Wenz
	Suit Vulture
Partnerships	Marriage
	Call for Ace
	Forced Call
Ramsch	

Scoring

A team's score is determined by the number of points earned through taking tricks. Specifically, a team earns 11 points for every ace taken, 10 points for every 10 taken, 4 points for every king taken, 3 points for every Ober (Queen) taken, and 2 points for every Unter (Jack) taken. Thus, there are 120 points available for each round. The winning team is that which takes more than half the points (unless playing a negative contract [e.g. Ramsch], in which case the winning team is that which takes less than half). The winning team determines their score by following the table below. Scoring is zero sum. That is, the score earned by the winners is subtracted from the losers. Generally, Schafkopf is played for money, in which case instead of earning a score one collects or pays out money as appropriate. The amount owed to the winners by the losers is determined from a so-called "ground tariff". Specifying the ground tariff as G, the score is calculated from the table below:

Contract	Tariff	+Schneider Bonus	+Schwartz Bonus	+Matadors Bonus	+Contract Multiplier	+Doublings	=Total
Partnerships	$1 \text{ or } 2 \times G$	$+1 \times G$	$1 \times G$	$+ \text{each} \times G$	$\times 2$ if Marriage	$2^n \times G$ n is number of doublings performed during round	Sum
Solos	$4 \text{ or } 5 \times G$						
Slam					$\times 2$		
Sie					$\times 4$		

Schneider Bonus

The Schneider (eng: cutter) bonus is awarded to the winning team for collecting 91 to 120 points

Schwartz Bonus

The Schwartz (Eng: black) bonus is awarded to the winning team for collecting all tricks. This differs from collecting all 120 points because it is possible to form tricks that carry no points, i.e. a trick with only 8s and 9s.

Matador Bonus

This is an optional bonus for the winning team collecting the Obern (Queens) in rank order. For example, if the winning team collects first the Ober of acorns (Jack of clubs) followed by the Ober of Leaves (Jack of Spades), the collector scores 2G. If the order was reverse, the collector would not score a matador bonus.

Contract Multiplier

Slam contracts double the score over a solo game. This applies to the marriage contract as well.

Score Doubling

Stoß

During the first trick, players have the option to double the round's score. Before or as the first card is lead, the defenders may announce "Stoß" or "Kontra" whereby the round's score is doubled. The callers may now declare "Gegenstoß" or "Re" to double the points further. The defenders may then declare "Sub" to double once more and finally, the callers may announce "Re-Sub" to double a final time.

Laying

After collecting the first trick, the collector has the option for perform a "lay" whereby they lay a possession on the table signaling they would like to double the round's score. The option to lay then moves to the layer's right. Laying may only be performed after collecting the first trick and *before* starting the next trick.