



The Rules (#1 Have Fun)

The Equipment

Euchre equipment is pretty basic. The Euchre deck is a twenty-four card deck consisting of a 9, 10, J, Q, K, and A of each of the four suits. (Most players also use cards to keep track of the score, but this is one of those gray, personal taste things. For the mucky details, see the Scoring section later in the page.)

The Terminology

There are a few terms that every euchre player ought to know:

Trump is probably the most important concept in the game. The trump suit is set at the beginning of each hand, and the cards in that suit are the most powerful cards in the game (a 9 of the suit will beat an ace of any other suit- although an ace of trump will crush that 9). This concept is already familiar to anyone with experience in spades or bridge.

An *off suit* is any suit but trump.

The *kitty* is the stack of four cards left over after the deal is complete.

Bowers (pronounced to rhyme with "showers".) are the Jack of the trump suit (the 'right' bower) and the Jack of the suit that is the same color as the trump suit (the 'left' bower). These two cards are, respectively, the highest and second highest cards in any given round.

A *round* is completed whenever each player has played a card.

A *hand* consists of five rounds, ie when all the cards from one deal have been played.

Whenever a person wins a round, his/her team gets one *trick*. This is usually indicated by the winner taking the four cards of the round that they won.

If the hand you're dealt contains no cards of one or more of the suits, those suits are called *voids*. These are real nice- they get around that whole have-to-follow-suit stuff.

The Set-Up

Euchre was designed for four players. Players sit around a common area (tabletops serve this purpose admirably especially here at RP's), so that there are two pairs of players facing each other- these pairs are the partnerships.

The Deal

One player is chosen at random to deal the first hand. After each hand is played, the deal passes clockwise around the table.

The player who deals must, according to etiquette, offer a cut to the opponent to his right. As for actually dealing the cards, the dealer should always deal to the opponent to his left first, then proceed clockwise around the table (pretty basic card stuff, right?). The usual manner is to deal three cards to one's opponent, two to one's partner, three to one's other opponent, and two to oneself. Then, the dealer deals another round to bring each player up to a total of five cards. **THERE WILL BE FOUR CARDS LEFT OVER.** This is normal- you didn't screw up somewhere (unless you *don't* have four cards left over...) These four cards are called the 'kitty' (Don't ask- I don't know).

When everyone has the right number of cards (by the way, you **are** allowed to look at your hand), the dealer places the kitty face-down on the table. The dealer then flips over the top card.

Calling Trump

The suit of the face-up card in the kitty is the first suit proposed as trump. Beginning with the player on the dealer's left, each player gets a chance to accept or decline that suit as trump. To accept the proposed suit, a player tells the dealer to pick up the face-up card. The dealer then adds that card to his hand and discards one card face down on top of the kitty. (It's usually a low, non-trump type, but that's a matter of personal taste.) To decline the proposed suit, a player just passes. If the dealer declines the suit, the card is turned over and the kitty becomes basically a moot point.

If every player declines the proposed trump, then each player gets a chance to call any suit except the declined one as trump, beginning with the player to the dealer's left. (Hmmm... see a pattern here?) As soon as any player calls trump, play begins. Usually, if everybody passes a second time, then everybody throws their cards in and the deal passes to the left. However, we will be playing **stick the dealer**. In this variation, the dealer is not allowed to pass a second time. If no one else calls trump, the dealer must do so. In other words, every time the cards are dealt, someone's going to score some points.

There is *one* more trick to going alone. If you think that your hand is pretty buff (or if your partner is absolutely horrible), you may want to consider **going alone**. Just order up the proposed trump or call a suit, as usual, then tell your partner to sit back ("Stay at home" is the phrase true euchre aficionados prefer) and enjoy. If the person who would have lead the hand is sitting out, the next player in the rotation leads, otherwise the hand is played as normal, minus one person. Cons to this technique- your partner, who can usually be counted on to take a trick, is now out of the hand, doing nobody any good. Pros- you get to look gutsy, and if you take all five tricks, you get double points! Winning without sweeping will get you the usual number of points – **HOWEVER** – if you get "Euchred" playing alone your opponents will win not 2 but 4 points (it's a CSL thing – **Pressure!**).

Really useless rule: If the calling team goes alone, then the **DEFENDING** players also have the option of going alone, beginning with the player on the attacker's left (when the attacker is facing the table, ya wiseacre.) Granted, this is usually akin to voluntary self-sacrifice, but there you have it.

The Play

The player to the left of the dealer leads; they can play any card from their hand. Play then proceeds clockwise. The next player must play a card of the same suit, if able. If not, they may either "trump" or "throw off". The two remaining players, in turn, play a card, following the leader's suit if they can.

Trumping is accomplished by throwing any card of the **trump suit**. Since even a nine of trump will beat any card of an off suit, this is sometimes a good idea. **Throwing off** means playing a card which is (a) not trump and (b) doesn't follow suit. REMEMBER- if you can follow suit, you must follow suit. If you throw off, you personally cannot win the trick, so this is generally only a good idea when it looks like your partner will take the trick.

Once each player has played a card...

The person that played the highest trump card takes the trick. If no trump was played, then the trick goes to the person that played the highest card of the suit led. Remember that in off suits, aces are high.

The player who took the trick leads the next round. The rest of the rounds are played in a similar fashion, with the winner of each round leading the next.

Finishing the Hand

Once all five rounds have been played, each team totals their tricks. The team which takes the most tricks wins the hand, earning points according to the table below, under **Scoring**. If the team which called trump takes the most tricks, they earn one point, plus a bonus point if they take all five. If they fail to take at least three tricks, however... It's not pretty. This is a fun little event known as a Euchre. If this happens, then the calling team gets **NO POINTS WHATSOEVER** HAHAHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHA... and the defending team gets two points and bragging rights forever.

Scoring

You can only score 1, 2, or 4 points in any given hand, so it doesn't get that complicated. Here is a quick sum-up (The team that called trump is the Calling Team, the other is the Other Team, cool?):

	Caller's Points =====	Other's Points =====
Calling Team takes		
0 - 2 tricks (EUCHRE!):		
All four players playing:	0	2
Caller going alone:	0	4
Caller & Defender going alone:	0	4
3 - 4 tricks:		
All four players playing:	1	0
Caller going alone:	1	0
Caller & Defender going alone:	1	0
5 tricks:		
All four players playing:	2	0
Caller going alone:	4	0
Caller & Defender going alone:	4	0

Not too tough, right? Well, there's one more tricky part. Like I mentioned earlier, the score is usually kept with cards. Now, the way that I and everybody I know keep score (technically, the "right" way) is this: you use a six and a four (any suit you please, but hearts seem to be lucky), and you cover one card with the other. Then, as your team

scores points, you uncover that many spots on the cards. You go alone and take all five, you uncover four more spots on the cards. *The first team to uncover all ten spots wins!* Easy, no? Unfortunately, not everybody sees fit to score this way. The usual alternative is to use two fives to score. If you feel you must go this route, then the technique is pretty much the same- you just uncover the proper number of dots:

Special Rules

Like every card game ever invented, there are hundreds of variations on the basic game of euchre. We've compiled a list of some of the most common...

Stick the Dealer (CSL Rule in Use)

In this variation, the dealer is not allowed to pass a second time. If no one else calls trump, the dealer must do so. In other words, every time the cards are dealt, someone's going to score some points. This is a pretty good addition, but is kind of tough on beginners.

Ace-No Face (Not a CSL Rule being used)

This is a protective sort of thing. If a player is dealt a hand with (only) one ace and no face cards, then they are allowed to call "Ace-No Face". Everybody's hands are thrown in and the current dealer deals again.

This is a really great way to waste time, and probably shouldn't be used when all the players have some experience in the game.

Partner's Best (Not a CSL Rule being used)

This is another cheeseball rule. When a player decides to go alone, then after trump is called, the player's partner chooses a card and passes it to the fellow with the loner hand. This makes getting a loner entirely too easy, and most games end up lasting about five rounds.

Farmer's Hand (Definitely Not a CSL Rule being used)

This rule is questionable even for fans of Ace-No Face. If someone is dealt three nines or three tens, they have the opportunity to, before they decide on the proposed trump, to exchange their puny cards with the three face-down cards in the kitty. Some folks allow players to call Farmer's Hand if they have any three-card combination of nines and tens- these are probably the same people that wear elbow pads when they speed-walk. Any number of players can invoke this rule during a given round, but bear in mind that after the first farmer's hand, the kitty is guaranteed to consist of ugly cards.

No First Blood (Not a CSL Rule being used)

We didn't run across this one until college. In a nutshell, this rule states that the first lead of the round may not lead trump. We're pretty much in favor of this one- stops the leader from fishing out everybody's money cards with a bauer-bauer quickie.

Helpful Hints to Euchre Strategy

Well, we were kind of hoping to avoid this- most of our friends are far more serious about euchre strategies than they are about, say, organized religion. At any rate, here we go...remember this is only our opinion!

All right. In euchre, kind of like every other card game known to man, there's an infinite variety of strategies to choose from. Some just tend to win more often than others. Now, we're not saying that if you follow the strategies on this page, you'll never lose a game of euchre. But you **WILL** avoid the embarrassment of having a partner that refuses to admit they know you...

Always take the trick

Pretty self-explanatory, really. Make your opponents fight for every trick they take.

Trump early, trump hard

If your partner calls trump and you look down and see the ace of trump or left bauer (or, God help you, both) sitting in your hand, the chances are good that your partner would dearly love to know where those babies are- specifically, whether they're sitting in your opponents' hands with mischief on their minds. So, show your partner what he's afraid of- play your big nasties in the first round or two, and let your partner get on with whatever strategy is up his sleeve.

NEVER trump your partner's ace

This is a biggie. People have been banned from the dinner table for this particular oops. If your partner has the trick in the bag, do **NOT**, for the love of God, trump in. And if you feel that, deep in your soul, you simply **MUST** trump that ace- at least don't do it with the nine or ten of trump, eh?

Trump your partner's ace

Okay. We lied. There are times when trumping that ace becomes unavoidable. If you've got nothing left but trump, fire away and watch your partner's face light up with joy (of course, if you trump the ace when you should've thrown off, few juries would vote to convict if your partner strangled you on the spot). Also, if you know- or suspect a **WHOLE LOT**- that your opponent is void in the ace's suit, by all means bring out the heavy artillery.

Going fishing

Annoying. Really annoying. This is where you lead with your bauers and draw out everybody else's trump. **USE WITH CAUTION**- drawing out your partner's only trump, say the ace or left bauer, is not considered a friendly gesture.

Historical Note

Euchre was probably derived from the game Jucker which was formerly played in Alsace. Euchre reached the USA in the early nineteenth century and was the original game for which the Joker was introduced into the playing-card pack in the 1850s (to serve as the highest trump). It has already been mentioned that Euchre is popular in the US Navy, and it may be through this maritime connection that it travelled in the later nineteenth century from America to other English speaking parts of the world. Certainly in Britain it is mainly found in regions where there has been a strong Naval influence.



Euchre Superstitions

Heehee. You crazy euchre fanatics. What would this game be without ya? Bear in mind as you read this section that these "tactics" are NOT made up. The tips here are followed religiously by serious euchre players. (This is for lack of a better term. It's not kosher to say "looney tunes whose nice doctors still let them play with cards").

"Four on six, get more tricks..."

An earlier version of the euchre page, demonstrating scoring, showed the six sitting on top of the four. Well. You can't imagine the barrage of constructive criticism we received over that little gaffe. Apparently, the six (being obviously heavier than the four) weighs the poor thing down, making scoring almost impossible. Kinda hard to argue with logic like that.

"Sprouting"

If you're having trouble scoring, why not try showing just a little bit of the pips on your score card. Give the buggers a little encouragement, sort of thing.

"Don't trap yourself"

The idea here is that you don't want to get trapped between the two sets of score cards. If you can trap your opponents, on the other hand...

"In the barn"

When you need only one more point to win the game, you and your partner are "in the barn"- and you are required by tradition to do everything possible to rub your opponents' noses in the fact. Among our own circle of friends, this is usually achieved by sticking the score cards behind your ears and making barnyard noises. This IS optional.

"Turning the tables"

This one comes to you verbatim from Southern Illinois U:

This is a symbolic tactic used when down 7-1 or worse. Cards are dealt as normal but players do not pick them up. Instead everyone rotates one quarter-turn to the left; play resumes as normal. You can also physically turn the table, but we've found there is a greater chance of spilling beer this way.

"Milking your partner"

For the hardcore euchre type, the man that being *in the barn* just isn't good enough for. Here, when your team is in the barn, you stick your hands out, fingers interlocked, with the thumbs pointing down (kind of like UDDERS! Get it?). Your partner can then pull on the thumbs in a milking motion- unless, of course, he values his dignity.

"The bathtub rule"

Frankly, this one seems a mite ludicrous. We did put in the barnyard thing, though, so our credibility's probably already been shot. Alright. Here's the strategy (this assumes, obviously, that there's a bathtub within a handy distance)- if the tub is dirty, you and your partner want to sit parallel to it; opposite it, if it's clean. So remember- if you're playing in unfamiliar territory, always, always, always peek in on the loo before you begin.

"The Dance of Shame"

This comes to us from a gent at Bowling Green State University in Ohio who freely admits stealing the idea from some buds at University of Cincinnati (anyone else seeing an "Ohio" theme here?) We're afraid we can't go into too much detail on this one; this IS a wholesome, family-oriented kind of page. The gist is this: if your team is ever so unfortunate as to lose, 10-0, then you and your partner must take a leisurely jog to a predetermined point and back, wearing substantially less than you otherwise might. Needless to say, this rule is not suggested for a quiet winter evening game anywhere north of the Mason-Dixon.

Side note. Now the boys at the Teke house in Western Illinois U. are laying claim to this fine tradition. Can anybody settle this?