

All Fours

Background

An English tavern gambling card game popular in the 17th and 18th centuries and is described in *“The Compleat Gamester”*, by Charles Cotton (London, 1674). A variation of this game is still commonly played in Trinidad.

It is a trick taking game that uses a standard 52 card deck (commonly called a French deck) and is generally played by 4 players paired at partners.

The ranking of the cards during play is – A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2 and no suit is higher than any other.

Dealing

The dealer is selected by the draw of the highest card using the card ranking in the game Put. *“...whoever cuts the highest "Put-card" deals.”* The dealer deals 6 cards to each player in batches of 3. As in most other games, the deal passes to the left after each play.

Establishing the Trump Suit

After each player has 6 cards, the dealer turns up the next card. The suit of that card becomes the trump suit. If it is a jack, the dealer automatically scores one point. After the trump card is turned up, the opponent can accept the trump suit and begin play or challenge the trump suit by saying "I Beg."

If the non-dealer begs, the dealer can choose to:

- Throw in all the cards and give the opponent one point**
- Deal another three cards to each player and turn up a new trump card**
 - If it is the same suit as the original trump suit card, another 3 cards are dealt to each player and another trump card is turned up**
 - This is repeated until a new trump suit is turned up**

Playing the trick

The player to the left of the dealer leads the first card and thereafter, the winner of the trick leads the next. The other players must follow suit. Each in turn play one card following the suit of the lead card. A player cannot follow suit may play any other card or may choose to play a trump card. However, unlike other trick games, players may play a trump card at any time, even if they have other cards in their hand that are of the suit of the card led. The highest card of the suit led takes the trick unless a trump card is played. In this case, the highest trump card played takes the trick.

Scoring

Once all the tricks have been played, the cards are scored for points.

- ❖ 1 point for the holder of the highest trump card**
- ❖ 1 point for the original holder of the lowest trump card dealt**
- ❖ 1 point for a player who wins a trick containing the jack of trumps**
- ❖ 1 point for the player whose tricks contain the highest value in cards**

To determine the trick with the highest value in cards, all the cards in each trick are added up using the following point system:

- Ace – 4 points**
- King – 3 points**
- Queen – 2 points**
- Jack – 1 point**
- 10 – 10 points**
- All others have no value**

(It is unclear how the point for a turned up jack is treated if the trump suit is changed. It could either be like the modern Trinidad game, in which all turned jacks are scored, or like the 19th century American game, in which only the jack of the final trump suit can be scored.)

The winner is the first player to reach the agreed target score, which can be from 7 to 15, but is most commonly set at 11.