

Spoil Five – Also called Maw



Background

Spoil five is a Gaelic trick taking game that is over 400 years old. The game of Maw, as it was originally called, is commonly mentioned in English literature from 1550 onward. It lost popularity in England in the 1660s but remained popular in Ireland and is still the national card game of Ireland.

Use a standard 52 card deck (commonly called a French deck) and is generally played by four or five players but can be played by up to 10 players.

The ranking of the cards is very unique in that the red suits are ordered differently than the black suits. For the plain suits, the ranking is as follows:

Red - K-Q-J-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-A

Black – K-Q-J-A-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10

In the trump suit, the five is always the highest, the jack second, and the Ace of hearts is always the third highest. The ranking is as follows:

Red – 5-J-A of Hearts-A-K-Q-10-9-8-7-6-4-3-2

Black – 5-J-A of Hearts-A-K-Q-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10

Pool

Each player places two chips (representing a pre-determined amount of money) into the pool for division to the winners of tricks after each hand. The dealer usually puts in a little more.

Dealing

The cards are dealt around until someone gets a Jack. That player becomes the first dealer. The cards are dealt in a clockwise manner beginning with the player on the dealer's left. Each player is dealt a total of 5 cards in batches of two then three.

Establishing the Trump Suit

Once the deal is complete, the remaining cards are placed face down and the top card is turned up to indicate the trump suit.

Robbing

If any player holds the Ace of trumps, that player says “Rob” and takes the upturned card to his/her own hand and then discards an unwanted card from their own hand, placing it face down beside the deck. If that player chooses not to make the exchange, he/she must ask the dealer to turn down the trump card, announcing that he/she has the Ace. If that player doesn't, their Ace becomes the lowest trump. If the upturned card is an Ace, the dealer can say “Rob” and take the card. Robbing a card must be done before the first card of the first trick is played. If not, the player holding the Ace of trump not only loses the privilege but also is prohibited from winning the pool.

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. Players must follow suit. The highest card laid down takes the trick. Here are the rules of play:

- **If trump is led, you must follow suit with a trump, if you can, unless the only trump you hold is one of the top three trumps – 5, J or A♥, and the lead is lower than the one you hold. If the lead is higher – say a 5 and you hold the Jack – then you must follow with a trump. If you hold any lower trumps, then you must follow suit.**
- **If a plain suit is led, and you can follow suit, then you may either do so or play a trump, whichever is preferred, but you may not discard from another plain suit.**
- **If you can't follow suit, you can play any card.**

Winning the Pool

After all the tricks in the hand are played, the player who has won three or more tricks wins the pool. If no player has taken three tricks, the pool remains for the next hand.

Jinking

If a player wins the first three hands, that player has a choice:

- ❖ **Claim the pool and the next hand begins.**
- ❖ **Decide to play on to win all five tricks. This is called jinking. If successful, in addition to winning the money in the pool, each player must pay the amount of the original stake. However, if that player fails to win all five tricks, the pool remains for the next hand.**

Pool for the Next Hand

If the pool is won, each player puts two chips into the pool for the next hand. If the pool isn't won and carried over, each player only adds one chip for the next hand.