

Card Game for 2 Players

GIN RUMMY

Historical Notes

Now the most popular two-handed card game in the western world, Gin was invented by Elwood T. Baker in 1909 and so named because the game it was patterned after was called "rum." It was first called Gin Rummy by players in Hollywood's movie colony in the 1940s.

Object

To earn the higher score by doing the best job of forming matched sets of the cards in your hand. A matched set consists of a group of three or four cards of the same rank (9♣, 9♦, 9♠, 9♥) or of three or more cards of the same suit in sequence, that is, a straight flush (4♥, 5♥, 6♥, 7♥, 8♥, etc.).

The same card cannot be used as part of both a group and a sequence in the same hand.

Deck

Standard 52-card deck.

Rank/Value

Face Cards count as 10 points each, all others count their index value (that is, the A♥ counts 1 and the 7♣ counts 7. In sequences, aces are always low — Q♥, K♥, A♥ is not a set.

There are no trump or wild cards.

Deal

Initial dealer chosen at random. Remaining deals by the winner of the previous hand.

Deal 10 cards to each player, one at a time, face down, opponent first. Then one card is placed face up, within reach of both players, to begin the discard pile. Remaining cards (stock) are stacked face-down on the table beside the discard pile.

Play

Non-dealer either picks up the discard or declines the opportunity, whereupon the dealer may pick it up. If the dealer also declines the discard, then the non-dealer picks up the top card from the stock. Whoever takes a card from the

stock or the discard pile must then remove a card from their hand and place it atop the discard pile, so that each player always has 10 cards in their hand at the end of their turn.

Cards drawn from the stock may be discarded immediately, but a card taken from the discard pile cannot be discarded in the same turn.

There are three ways to end a hand:

Gin: When a player has made matched sets (groups and/or sequences) of all but one card, he discards the unmatched card face down, says "gin," and then lays out his hand, face up, to display his sets.

Knock: When a player's unmatched cards (not including a discard) total 10 or fewer points, the player may make the same face-down discard and say "knock," and display his hand with the unmatched cards (called "deadwood") segregated to one side. In the case of a knock, the knocker's opponent may "lay-off" his unmatched cards onto suitable sets in the knocker's hand. For example, the 5♥ might be added to a sequence of 6♥, 7♥, 8♥, 9♥ or to a group of 5♣, 5♦, 5♠.

Tie: If the stock is reduced to only two cards, and the player who just drew can neither gin nor knock, the game is a tie and no score is recorded. The dealer of that hand deals again.

Scoring

There are two popular ways to score Gin Rummy, the Family way and the Tournament way. Both systems award points for ginning, knocking, and for the unmatched cards (known as "deadwood") in the opponent's hand.

Tournament scoring: This system produces high scores (for easy conversion to meaningful money) and, simultaneously reduces the impact of unusually lucky hands.

For Gin, score 25 points plus value of all deadwood in opponent's hand.

For Knock, if the value of knocker's deadwood is lower than the value of opponent's

deadwood (after any laying off by opponent) score the difference. If value of opponent's deadwood is less than or equal to the knocker's (this is called an "undercut") score the difference plus 25 points for the opponent.

When a player's score reaches 100 or higher, add a bonus of 100 points for winning the game. Then give both players 25 points for each hand they won in that game. In case of a shut-out (that is, one player has no score for a game) the winner's score is doubled. Long-term tallies can result in large point differentials.

Family scoring: This is recommended for those who play only for fun.

For Gin, score 20 points plus value of all deadwood in opponent's hand.

For Knock, if value of knocker's deadwood is lower than value of opponent's deadwood (after any laying off by opponent) score the difference. If value of opponent's deadwood is less than or equal to the knocker's (an "undercut") score the difference plus 10 points for the opponent.

When a player's score reaches 100 or higher, they have won. Long-term tallies are a matter of who has won the most games.

Strategy

Discard high-value cards as soon as possible lest you get caught with massive amounts of points in your deadwood. For the same reason, save low-value cards.

Knock as soon as possible, unless the hand has been overly long and you have reason to fear being undercut. Those who play Gin Rummy well will knock often and gin rarely.

Keep track of the discards, especially those of your opponent.

When it comes to a choice of possible discards, hang on to those that offer the most flexibility in making sets.

Keep your hand to yourself. (Remember Goldfinger?)

Miscellaneous

Only the top card of the discard pile should be visible.

If knocker is found to have a deadwood count of more than 10, their opponent has the choice of either accepting the knock or of requiring the knocker to continue play with his hand exposed. If the knocker determines that he can reduce the deadwood count to 10 or fewer by re-arrangement of the sets, he should be allowed to do so. ■

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