

Card Games

from “The Compleat Gamester” by Richard Seymour, London, Fifth Edition 1734

[Editors Note: Some of the original rules are hard to understand. Our notes tell how we have been playing these games.]

Thirty-One

Any number can play. They each put down two stakes. The dealer deals 2 cards face-down, then one card face-up to each player. Whoever has the highest face-up card wins the first stake. The ace of diamonds is the very highest card, otherwise suits do not matter. If there is a tie, the eldest hand wins. Next the eldest hand turns over his cards, and draws more if he wants, to get nearest to 31 but not over. If he makes 31, he wins immediately. Otherwise the next eldest hand plays, and so on. If no one makes a 31, the next highest hand, not over 31, wins the second stake.

The Beast

Three or more can play. The best cards are king, queen and so on; ace is lowest. Suits do not matter. Each player stakes into three heaps: the King, the Play and the Triolet. Five cards are dealt to each player. He who plays the King takes up that heap. He who wins the most tricks takes up the heap called the Play. He who has 3 of a kind takes up the Triolet. [Editors Note: A player must claim the Triolet by showing his 3 of a kind before any tricks are played. If the Triolet is not claimed, it is added to on the next round. At the end of the evening, the Triolet may be divided between the players or paid to the tavernkeeper. The player who plays the *first* King, takes that heap. Tricks cannot be a tie; the elder hand wins that trick. If several players win the same number of tricks, the Play heap is divided between them.]

Put

Two or three can play. The dealer deals 3 cards a-piece. The eldest hand may “Put” if he likes his hand, or fold if he doesn't. The Adversary must “see” the Put, or fold. If either folds, they must pay 1 token. Then the players lay down one card of their choice, all at the same time, and the highest wins the trick. The player who wins the most tricks wins the whole set, but if they win the same number of tricks, none win the set. The best cards are 3, 2, ace, king, queen and so on. Sometimes they play without Putting. [Editors Note: We find it is easier if the best cards are ace, king, queen and so on.]

Wit and Reason

There are two players: one has all the red cards, the other has all the black cards. Flip a coin to see who leads. The leader plays a card and says what it is. The follower plays a card and says what they add up to. They continue taking turns until they reach 31, but not over. The winner is the one who makes the most 31s. [Editors Note: Each time a player reaches 31, they win a token and play starts anew with another trick. The leader is the loser of the previous trick. In the event that one player cannot play without going over 31, the other player may play additional cards from his/her hand. There will be tricks where no player can reach 31; these tricks have no winner and play starts anew with another trick.]

The Art of Memory

Any number can play. Take three times that many cards, and lay them face upwards on the table. The dealer then shuffles them and deals. The first player calls for a card, which must be laid on the table, face downwards, by the player holding it. So it goes around. If anyone calls for a card that is already laid down, or not in play, he must drink a glass or pay a token.

[Courtesy of Le Voyageur Trading Company. 9/2014]