A HOUSE RULEBOOK · SETTLED

Euchre

The rules, written in our own words.

Euchre belongs to nobody, so these rules are ours to write. They are the rules most North American tables play, with the common variations on the last page. Written by Nine Fathoms for Settled, 2026. Free to print for your own table.

The deck and the table

Euchre is played by four players in two partnerships, with partners sitting opposite each other. It uses a deck of twenty-four cards: the nine, ten, jack, queen, king and ace of each of the four suits. A full deck serves once its twos to eights are set aside.

Each side keeps its score with two of the spare low cards, often a six and a four, laid one over the other so that the pips left showing give the count.

Choosing the first dealer

To choose the first dealer, one player deals cards face up around the table, and the first player to receive a jack deals first. After each hand the deal passes to the left.

Dealing

The dealer shuffles, and the player at the dealer's right cuts. The dealer then gives each player five cards, going round to the left, in two rounds: two or three cards to each player in the first round, and the rest in the second.

The four cards left over are the kitty. The kitty is placed face down in the middle of the table, and its top card is turned face up. The other three cards of the kitty stay face down and take no part in the hand.

Trump and the bowers

In every hand one suit is made trump. Any trump beats any card of the other three suits, and a higher trump beats a lower one.

The right and the left bower

The highest trump is the jack of the trump suit, called the right bower. The second highest is the other jack of the same colour, called the left bower. When hearts are trump, for example, the jack of hearts is the right bower and the jack of diamonds is the left bower.

The left bower belongs to the trump suit for the whole hand. It counts as a trump and never as a card of the suit marked on it, both when it is led and when a player follows suit.

Below the two bowers, the trumps rank ace, king, queen, ten and nine, so the trump suit holds seven cards.

The other suits

In the two suits of the other colour, the cards rank ace, king, queen, jack, ten and nine. The suit of the same colour as trump has lost its jack to the trump suit, so it ranks ace, king, queen, ten and nine, and holds only five cards.

A card that is neither a trump nor of the suit led can never win a trick.

Making trump

After the deal, the players decide which suit is trump. The partners who choose it are the makers, and the other two players are the defenders.

The first round

Starting with the player at the dealer's left and going round to the left, each player in turn may pass or order up the turned card. To order it up is to tell the dealer to pick it up, which makes its suit trump. The dealer speaks last, and may pick the card up or pass.

The dealer's partner may order up like anyone else, and the dealer's side are then the makers. As soon as a player orders up, or the dealer picks up, the bidding ends.

The dealer's pick-up

A dealer who is ordered up must take the turned card and has no right to refuse it. The dealer adds the turned card to their hand and then discards any one card face down, so that they hold five cards again. The discard is made before the first card is led, and it stays face down with the kitty for the rest of the hand.

When all four pass

If all four players pass, the dealer turns the card face down, and the second round begins.

The second round

In the second round, again starting at the dealer's left, each player in turn may pass or name a suit as trump. The suit of the card that was turned down may not be named; any of the other three suits may.

The first player to name a suit makes it trump, and that player's side are the makers. Nobody picks up a card in the second round, and the dealer discards nothing.

If all four players pass again, the hand is thrown in. Nobody scores, and the deal passes to the left.

Going alone

The player who makes trump may choose to play the hand alone, without their partner. The choice must be announced along with the call that makes trump, before the first card is led.

The partner of a player going alone lays their hand face down and takes no part in the hand. Those cards count for nothing, even if they include the best trumps. When the dealer's partner orders up and goes alone, the dealer still picks up the turned card and discards before laying the hand face down. Some tables leave the turned card on the kitty instead; either way it takes no part in the hand.

The lone player then plays against both defenders, one hand against two. In the standard game only the player who makes trump may go alone, never that player's partner and never a defender.

Playing the tricks

The player at the dealer's left leads the first trick. If that player is sitting out because their partner is going alone, the next player to the left leads instead. Play goes round to the left, one card from each player.

Following suit

A player must follow the suit that was led whenever they can. A player who cannot follow suit may play any card, a trump or any other.

The left bower is a trump in every trick. When trump is led, a player whose only trump is the left bower must play it. When the suit marked on the left bower is led, the left bower does not follow it.

Winning a trick

A trick is won by the highest trump in it. A trick with no trump in it is won by the highest card of the suit led. The player who wins a trick gathers it and leads the next one.

A renege

Failing to follow suit when able is called a renege. If a renege is proved before the next deal, the side that reneged scores nothing for the hand. The other side scores two points, or four if a player of that other side was going alone.

Scoring

A hand ends when all five tricks have been played, and each side then counts the tricks it has won. Only one side scores in any hand: the makers if they take at least three tricks, the defenders if they do not.

The makers

If the makers take three or four tricks, they score one point. If they take all five tricks, called a march, they score two points.

A lone hand

A player going alone who takes all five tricks scores four points for their side. A lone player who takes three or four tricks scores one point, the same as a pair would.

A euchre

If the makers take fewer than three tricks, they are euchred, and the defenders score two points. A euchre scores the same whether the makers played as a pair or alone.

Winning the game

The first side to reach ten points wins the game. Points are scored only at the end of a hand, so the game ends at the close of the hand in which a side reaches ten or more.

Common variations

Many tables change a rule or two. Each rule on this page is a variation, not the standard game, so agree on any you play before the first deal.

Stick the dealer

In this variation, the dealer may not pass in the second round. If the other three players pass, the dealer must name a suit, so a hand is never thrown in.

The dealer's partner goes alone

In this variation, the dealer's partner may order up only by going alone. Any other player orders up as usual.

Defending alone

In this variation, one defender may also choose to play alone against the makers. A lone defender who euchres the makers scores four points.

The joker

In this variation, a joker is added to the deck as the highest trump of all, above the right bower. With twenty-five cards in play, five are left in the kitty.

A shorter game

In this variation, the game is played to five points instead of ten.