

Cinch



Terms to understand:

Trick: one card from the hand of each player

Trump: a card, or the suit, which is especially privileged to win over cards of other suits.

Players.

Four players in partnerships of two. Partners face each other across the table.

Cards.

A regular pack of 52 cards. For both trump suit and non-trump suits the cards rank: Ace (high), King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2. Trump suit cards rank over non-trump suit cards.

Object.

To win peg points in tricks. Peg points are tallied, typically recorded on a score board. See illustration of a board below.

The Deal.

Starting with a full deck of 52 cards (no Joker) each player receives six cards, dealt clockwise in two rounds of three at a time.

The Bid.

Starting at the dealer's left, each player bids the number of points he thinks his partnership can win. Bidder may pass if need be. If all players pass the dealer deals again. The minimum bid is two. The following player must either pass or make a higher bid. After all 4 players have bid (or passed) the highest bidder has the privilege of deciding the trump suit.

The Money Bid.

This is a special bid. If any player believes his partnership can win the game with the current trick he can bid Money. The outcome of the trick when Money is bid determines the outcome of the game regardless of the score of peg points. The bidder making a Money bid must have the Jack of the trump in hand. All 4 peg points (High, Low, Jack and Game) must be achieved in a Money bid to win. The Money bid is a "winner take all" bid and is often a last resort bid when a partnership is in a "do or die" situation, when a team has no chance of catching up to the opposing partnership and the opposing partnership is within 4 points of winning the game. A Money bid can be made for any hand, and regardless of the score, including the first trick of the game.

A Money trick (and the game) can be completed with only two cards played. For example the bidding player might have Ace, Jack and 3 of a trump suit and gamble the 3 is Low (hoping the 2 isn't in play). He leads with the Ace. The next player could play the 2 of trump and by having the Low defeat the Money bidder, and win the game.

The Play.

The high bidder leads with a trump card. A hand if able to follow suit must either do so or (on a non-trump lead) play a trump; that is, he may trump even if able to follow suit. A trick is won by the highest trump in it, or if it contains no trump, by the highest card played of the suit led. The winner of a trick leads to the next. When hand is finished, points are tallied, both peg points and game points. If the high bidder's partnership does not score the amount bid, they have failed to attain their bid, the partnership's total peg points is set back the amount bid. This is a "Cinch". The first partnership to reach eleven peg points wins.

Important Rule!

You can play a trump card ANYTIME, even if a non-trump card was led to start the trick.

Scoring.

Each partnership records which of the 4 available peg points it has scored (if any) in a trick. There are at most 4 peg points:

- **High**, the highest trump in play, scored by the partnership **playing** it in a trick.
- **Low**, the lowest trump in play, scored by the partnership **playing** it in a trick. The lowest trump played in a trick is placed face up - showing low to that point in the trick and remains in possession of the partnership that played. If lower trump card is played the previous low card is turned over. The low card, being face up, serves as a reminder of the suit of trump for the trick.
- **Jack**, the jack of trump, scored by the partnership retaining or winning it in a trick.
- **Game**, the total of game points for high cards taken in trick. The partnership with the highest value in game points wins 1 peg point. In the case of a tie of game points the partnership that made the bid does not qualify for the game points.
 - Each 10 has a value of 10 game points
 - Each Ace has a value of 4 game points
 - Each King has a value of 3 game points
 - Each Queen has a value of 2 game points
 - Each Jack has a value of 1 game point

Retention of cards.

Both the High card and the Low card of the trump suit remain in possession of the partnership that played them, even if outranked in a trick by the opposing partnership.

The Cinch.

A Cinch is recorded for a partnership whenever they have led a trick and failed to reach their bid. The Cinch is recorded on the special section of the score board, at most one per trick and a maximum of 5 Cinches per game. Cinches have no impact on winning or

losing the game. However when there are money stakes at risk, the number of Cinches are recorded as additional penalties to the losing partnership (which are added to the winner's pot). Cinches recorded for the winning partnership are disregarded at game end.

Irregularities.

If game points are tied and the bidding partnership does not need game point to make their bid, then game point is not counted.

Bidders peg first.

The partnership that made the successful bid is the partnership that pegs first on the scoreboard. This is critical only when both partnerships have enough points to reach the winning 11th point. The first one to peg 11 or more points wins.

Round-Robin Matches

Typically players draw a number from a pool and their name is recorded on the score sheet next to the number and that determines the partnership. To illustrate, players 5 and 6 form partnership (pair) 3 and players 7 and 8 form partnership 4. The partnerships stay together for the entire match and play the games following the pattern in appropriate pattern table. For example in a 3 table match (12 players) pair 3 plays pair 4 in round 1, pair 1 in round 2, pair 5 in round 3 and so on.

Gambling for money.

Here is a popular scheme when gambling for money in a round-robin match.

- Each player pays \$2 into the pot at the beginning of the match.
- When a game is over each player of the losing partnership pays 25 cents into the pot plus 10 cents for each Cinch recorded against them. The winning partnership pays nothing and their Cinches are not of consequence.
- When the round-robin match is over the jackpot is shared.
- \$4 dollars is set aside (\$2 each player) for the “Booby prize”, this being awarded to the partnership with the least number of wins.
- The remainder of the jackpot is distributed to the top 3 partnerships:
 - First place is awarded 50%
 - Second place is awarded 30%
 - Third place is awarded 20%
- In the event of ties for any rank partnerships play off.
- In the event of a tie for Booby prize the winners of the play-off get the prize.

How to Play Cinch and Strategies and conventions of the game.

In addition to the rules you might find it helpful to read how to play and some strategies and conventions of play. Remember that you will quickly pick up how to play from joining with others and actually playing.

After 4 players are organized into two partnerships where partners sit facing each other a player from each partnership cuts part of the deck. The player with the higher card is declared to have first deal. He shuffles the cards and the player to his **right** cuts the cards.

The dealer deals 6 cards to each player, dealing three cards at a time to each player in two rounds clockwise rounds of the table.

The dealer then places the balance of the cards face down next to the player on his **left** who will be the dealer for the next hand (this placement helps players to remember who deals the next hand). Players take turns dealing after each hand, going clockwise.

Typically players organize their cards into alternating suits and colours, for example diamonds, clubs, hearts, spades, this making it easier to make bids and play.

Bidding is a contest to get the highest bid, for that gives that player control over which suit is trump. The risk of that however is that if the partnership with the highest bid fails to make their bid then their score is reduced by the bid amount and are assessed one Cinch penalty. The higher the bid the more likely the bidder will determine trump suit, hopefully to their advantage, but also the higher the penalty if they fail to make the bid.

Each player gets one bid. The player to the dealer's left has the first bid so must decide if he has any strong cards in a particular suit. Often if an experienced player has two sure points in his hand he will bid three, counting on his partner to help score another. It doesn't always work but often will. Here are examples of some hands and what the appropriate bid might be. Card with no rank and game value will be mentioned here for the sake of simplicity, though if they are of the trump suit can be prove to be useful if the player's partner gets the bid and leads in the same suit for they may take game points.

The Four Points you can bid to win in a hand: High of Trump, Jack of Trump, Low of Trump and Game points	
The strongest possible and ideal cards are Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10 and deuce of any one suit.	This is definitely a Four bid at least, actually being a good Money bid. The Ace and deuce would be a sure 2 points, being high and low. The Jack, subject to capture in this case would be a sure third point for you have the Ace, King and Queen, the only cards that can capture the Jack of trump, so it is safe from the opposition. The only challenge, though small, is to ensure most game points are collected. Playing the deuce first would draw out some of the other trump cards.

Ace, King, Queen and deuce of any one suit and two more high cards (Aces or Kings) or two more low cards of the same suite.	This would be a Three bid. Ace and deuce would be high and low of trump. You have two opportunities to capture the Jack of trump and have a good chance of catching game points and it is even possible to score 4 if lucky.
Ace, King or Queen, deuce of any one suit and two more high cards (Aces or Kings).	This would be a sure two bid but a three bid is a fairly good bid. Ace and deuce are two sure points, and with the King you have two opportunities to catch the Jack. The two non-trump high cards may prove adequate to catch game points.
Ace and 3 of any one suit.	This would be a two bid, perhaps a three bid. You'd have one sure point with the Ace and if the deuce isn't in play a second point from the 3 being low.
King & deuce of any one suit.	This would be a two bid, perhaps a three bid. You'd have one sure point with the deuce and if the Ace isn't in play a second point from the King being high.

So here is a typical play. The first player has only low cards, ranging from 3-9 in various suits, this a poor hand, he would pass and say "Pass".

The next player to his left has the next bid and having the King and deuce of Spades would bid "Two", thinking he has the High if the Ace of Spades isn't in play. He has a sure point with deuce being the low.

The third player has the Ace and three of Hearts and 4 other low cards in other suits, also a two bid, but since he would have to bid higher to get control, not wanting to risk a Cinch, would pass.

The fourth player, the dealer of the hand, has an Ace, King, Queen and the deuce of one Diamonds so would bid "Three".

So the player who made the highest bid, in this case the Three bid, is the successful bidder and has earned the right to pick the trump suit and plays his first card. This first card played determines trump suit. He leads with the Ace of Diamonds, hoping to capture the Jack of Diamonds.

The play goes clockwise from the bidder, the other players required to play cards in the same suit if they have it. If a player cannot follow suit he can play any other card. If his partner's card is the highest ranking card he would try to feed a card of non-trump suit with high game value to his partner, ideally a 10 or failing that Aces, King, Queen or Jack

When each player has played one card the trick is taken by the partnership that won it. The highest ranking card played takes the trick, and trump suit outranks all cards of the other three suits.

Three of the four cards go into possession of the winning partnership, placed face down. The lowest card of trump remains in possession of the partnership that played it and is placed face up, should this card prove to be low of trump (of course deuce is the lowest). If a lower card of trump suit comes out in subsequent play it then becomes the low and the previous low is flipped face down and if necessary is handed over to the partnership that earlier won it.

The player who played the winning card leads the next trick. He can lead with any card of his choosing, trump or non-trump. If he has two high cards he would lead high again, to try and capture the Jack. Other players must follow suit if they can and if they cannot follow suit can play any card.

A player can choose to play a trump suit card ANYTIME, even if a non-trump suit card was led. For example the deuce of trump will outrank the Ace of any non-trump suit. This is often useful for winning good game point cards (10s and face cards).

When all 6 cards have been played the hand is over and points are counted and scored on the score board. If the bidding partnership has scored all or more of their bid, in this example 3, they score that. If the other partnership has scored any they score that.

If the bidding partnership has failed to score their bid they lose the equivalent number of points from their existing score on their board, for example if they already had 5 points and only scored 2 points they move their leading peg back to 3 points. Furthermore any time a bidding partnership fails to make their bid they are also assessed a penalty of one cinch, this being recorded with the third peg on the scoreboard, in the shorter section of the scoreboard.

The next hand is dealt by the player to the left of the first dealer and the game continues as before and ends when one partnership scores 11 or more points or at the conclusion of a Money Bid.

If both partnership attain a score of 11 or more in the same hand it is the partnership that made the leading bid the pegs first, thereby winning the game.

Cinch Scoreboard

3 pegs per partnership

Cinches	Start	Score	
[Dark Gray]	○	[Dark Gray]	
○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○
[Dark Gray]	○	[Dark Gray]	
○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○
[Dark Gray]	○	[Dark Gray]	