How To Play Euchre

Players and Object

Euchre is a plain-trick game for four players in fixed partnerships, partners sitting opposite.

Just 5 cards are dealt to each player and the object is to win at least three of the five tricks - with an extra bonus for winning all five.

Rank of Cards

A pack of 25 cards is used consisting of A K Q J 10 9 in each of the four suits: hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades, plus a joker. If your pack of cards has no joker, the two of spades can be used as a substitute.

The trump suit has 8 cards ranking from highest to lowest as follows:

Benny, or **Best Bower** (the joker or two of spades)
Right Bower (the jack of the trump suit)
Left Bower (the other jack of the same colour as the trump suit)
Ace
King
Queen
Ten
Nine

The other suits have 6 or 5 cards ranking as normal: **A K Q** (**J**) **10 9**.

Note that Benny and Left count for all purposes as belonging to the trump suit. For example if hearts are trumps, the jack of diamonds is a heart not a diamond. It can be played to a heart lead and if it is led, hearts must be followed.

The word Bower comes from the German *Bauer*, which means farmer or peasant and is also a word for Jack.

The Deal

The first dealer is selected at random. The turn to deal then rotates clockwise throughout the game. The dealer shuffles and the player to dealer's left may either cut

or "bump" - that is, knock the cards to indicate that they should be dealt as they are, without cutting.

Five cards are dealt to each player in two rounds. The dealer deals clockwise, giving each player a packet of two or three cards in any order - any player who was dealt two in the first round gets three in the second and vice versa.

The dealer then turns the next card in the pack face up. This *up-card* is used as a basis for selecting the trump suit. The remaining four cards are left face-down and are not used.

Making trump

This process determines the trump suit and which team are the **makers** - that is the team which undertakes to win three tricks. First each player in turn, beginning with the player to the dealer's left, has the option of accepting up-card's suit as the trump suit or passing. Specifically:

- The player to dealer's left may either pass or say "I order it up"
- If the first player passes, the dealer's partner may either pass or say "I turn it down"
- If the first two players pass, the player to dealer's right may either pass or say "I order it up"
- If all three other players pass, the dealer may either take up the up-card, saying "I take it up", or pass by saying "over" and turning the up-card face-down.

If either of the dealer's opponents order it up or if dealer decides to take it up, the suit of the up-card becomes trump; the dealer adds the up-card to her hand and discards a card face-down. Note that (at least in this version of Euchre), the dealer's partner cannot make trumps and play with a partner. The dealer's partner can only make the turned up suit trumps by playing alone. In Britain this is done by saying "I turn it down", in which case the dealer's cards are placed face-down on the table and dealer's partner plays alone, with the turned suit as trump.

If all four players pass, the up-card is turned face-down, and there is a second round in which players have the option to make any suit trump, other than the suit of the up-card. Again the player to dealer's left speaks first and may either pass again or name a suit. If the first player passes the second may name a suit or pass, and so on. If all four players pass a second time the cards are thrown in and the next player deals.

Note that the trump making process ends as soon as someone accepts or makes trump (rather than passing). That player's side are the **makers** and the other side are the **defenders**.

If the Benny is turned up then the dealer's team are automatically the makers - no one else gets an opportunity. The dealer must choose a trump suit without looking at her cards. She then picks up her five cards and the Benny and discards one.

Going Alone

After trump has been made, but before the first lead, any player may announce that they are playing alone. The partner of a lone player puts her cards face-down and takes no part in the play.

Either a member of the makers side or a defender may play alone. It is even possible that a maker and a defender choose to play alone, in which case there will be only two active players.

The Play

If all four players are in the game, the play begins with the player to the dealer's left leading to the first trick. If one player is playing alone, the person to that player's left leads first. If two players are playing alone, the defender leads.

Any card may be led, and each player in clockwise order must follow suit by playing a card of the same suit as the card led if possible. A player who cannot follow suit may play any card.

Remember that, for purposes of following suit, Benny and the Left Bower are considered to belong to the trump suit and not to any other suit.

The trick is won by whoever played the highest card of the suit led, unless a trump was played in which case the highest trump wins. The winner of each trick leads to the next one.

Scoring

If all four players are playing then the scores are as follows:

- If the makers win 3 or 4 tricks they score one point.
- If the makers win all 5 tricks they score two points.

- If the makers take fewer than three tricks they are said to be **euchred**, and the defenders score two points.

  If a member of the makers' team is playing alone and wins all 5 tricks, the team scores 4 points instead of 2 - otherwise the scores are as above.

  If a member of the defenders' team is playing alone and succeeds in winning at least 3 tricks, thereby euchring the makers, the defenders score 4 points instead of 2 - otherwise the scores are as above.

  The game is normally played to 11 points - that is, the team who first reach 11 or more points over several deals win the game. It is usual for each team to keep score using a spare 5 and 6 from the pack (as these cards are not used in the game). The cards are arranged on the table so that the number of pips showing shows the team's current score. Sometimes people play to 15 points (using a 7 and an 8 to keep score) or to 10 points.