

Oh Hell! - Moncton Outdoor Enthusiasts

Players

From 3 to 7 people can play. The game is best when played with 4 to 6.

Cards

A standard 52 card deck is used. The cards in each suit rank (from high to low) A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2.

Object of the Game

The object is for each player to bid the number of tricks he thinks he can take from each hand, then to take exactly that many.

The hook is that at least one player will fail on each hand, because the total number of tricks bid by the players may not equal the number of tricks available on that hand.

Sequence of Hands

The game consists of a series of hands. The first hand is played with 7 to 10 cards dealt to each player, depending on the number of players:

- 3 to 5 players, 10 cards each;
- 6 players, 8 cards each;
- 7 players, 7 cards each

Each successive hand is played with one card fewer, down to a hand of just one card each, then one card more per hand back up to the starting level.

On the hand with 1 card, the players must each hold their card on their forehead, so each player can see all the other player's cards but not their own.

Hands go through the possible trump suits in a fixed sequence including "no trumps".

Deal

To determine the first dealer, draw cards. The player with the highest card deals first. The turn to deal rotates clockwise with each hand.

The cards are shuffled and cut and the dealer deals the cards singly until everyone has the appropriate number of cards for the hand being played.

Bidding

The bidding in each hand begins with the player to the left of the dealer, then continues clockwise, back around to the dealer, who bids last. Each bid is a number representing the number of tricks that player will try to take. Everyone must bid - it is not possible to pass, but you can bid zero, in which case your object is to take no tricks at all. A bid

may be changed only if the next player to the left has not yet bid.

Remember the hook: the dealer may not bid the number that would cause the total number of tricks bid to equal the number of tricks available; a hand will always be "over-bid" or "under-bid".

Play

The play begins with the player to the dealer's left, who leads the first card. The lead may be any suit (including trump). Play follows clockwise. Each player must follow the suit led, if he can. If not, he may play any other card in his hand, including trump. The player who has played the highest trump card, or if no trump was played, the highest card of the suit led, wins the trick. That player then leads to the next trick. Continue until all tricks have been played and won.

Scoring

The scorekeeper is designated prior to each game. The scorekeeper, needless to say, has a distinct advantage, and should be monitored closely for "inadvertent" errors. The designated scorekeeper notes each bid and resulting scores on a score sheet. There are many different ways to score Oh Hell!

In the simplest version, a player who wins the exact number of tricks bid scores 10 plus the number of tricks bid (10 points for zero tricks, 11 for 1 trick, 12 for two tricks, etc.) Players who take more or fewer tricks than they bid score nothing. This method has the advantage that the scorekeeper, having written down the bids at the start of the play, can simply write a figure "1" in front of those that were successful and delete those that are not. The game with this scoring method is often known as Blackout or Blob, because the scorer obliterates or blacks out unsuccessful bids, so that they become black blobs on the score sheet.

Optional - Perhaps the most widespread scoring method is to award 1 point for each trick won plus a bonus of 10 points for players who win exactly the number of tricks they bid. So for example a player who bid 2 would score 12 points for winning exactly 2 tricks, but only 1 for 1 trick and 3 for 3 tricks. This gives a player whose bid fails a slight incentive to win as many tricks as possible.

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