

The Game of *Gypsy*

Equipment & Players

The game of *Gypsy* is played by four players with a standard deck of 52 playing cards. The eight of clubs is special—it is called the *gypsy* and may be replaced with a joker. Players should position themselves as if at the four points of a compass, each player facing the player opposite himself or herself. Players should remain in the same order for the duration of the game.

Overview of Gameplay

One game of *Gypsy* is played in several *rounds*, each of which comprises two *phases*—bidding and playing for *tricks*. Before bidding, the deck is dealt (see “Dealing” below); then, after all the *tricks* have been played, scoring is assessed and players’ cumulative point totals are updated (see “Scoring” below).

Winning the Game

If a player has accumulated at least 25 points and has at least two more points than each of the other players, the game ends, and the player who has accumulated the most points wins.

Playing a Round

Dealing (1)

The dealer deals 12 cards to each player (48 cards will be dealt in all), one card at a time, starting with the player on his or her left and proceeding clockwise. The 12 cards dealt to each player are that player’s *hand*. The four remaining cards are set aside, face-down; these cards are the *kitty*. When all the cards have been dealt, each player make look at the 12 cards dealt to him or her.

Bidding (2)

When bidding, a player considers the strength of his or her *hand*, and declares how many *tricks* he or she expects to win in this *round* of play—players may bid to win as few as zero *tricks* and as many as 13 *tricks*. Each player bids once in turn, beginning with the player on the dealer’s left. After a player declares his or her bid, the player to his or her left bids (the dealer is the last player to bid).

If the sum of the four players’ bids does not add up to 13 *tricks*, the *kitty* will be distributed—one card to each of the four players—by the player who controls the *kitty* for that round. The first player who bids zero controls the *kitty* (see “Distributing the Kitty” below). If no player bids zero (it is generally rare for a player to bid zero), the player whose bid is the greatest controls the *kitty*. If no player bids zero and two or more players are tied for the highest bid, the player whose bid is the lowest controls the *kitty*.

Distributing the Kitty (3)

If, after bidding is complete, no player controls the *kitty*, the cards in the *kitty* are set aside until the end of the *round*. No player may look at the cards in the *kitty* for the duration of the *round* if the *kitty* is set aside in this way.

If, after bidding is complete, a player does control the *kitty* (see “Bidding” above), that player looks at the cards in the *kitty*. If the eight of clubs—the *gypsy*—is among the cards in the *kitty*, the player who controls the *kitty* adds the *gypsy* to his or her *hand*. Otherwise, the player who controls the *kitty* chooses one of the cards in the *kitty* and adds that card to his or her *hand*. The player who controls

the *kitty* distributes the remaining three cards in the *kitty*, one to each player, however he or she chooses. Players add these cards to their *hands*.

The First Lead (4)

After the *kitty* has been distributed or set aside, the player who holds the two of clubs in his or her *hand* makes the first *lead* (see “Leading” below).

If no player holds the two of clubs in his or her *hand*, then the player who holds the three of clubs in his or her *hand* makes the first *lead*. (This occurs only if the two of clubs is in the *kitty*, and the *kitty* has been set aside for this round.) If no player holds the three of clubs in his or her *hand*, then the player who holds the four of clubs in his or her *hand* makes the first *lead*. If no player holds the four of clubs in his or her *hand*, then the player who holds the five of clubs in his or her *hand* makes the first *lead*.

Leading and Playing (5)

The player whose turn it is to *lead* is the *leader*. The *leader* chooses any card in his or her hand and plays that card face-up in front of the other players. If the *gypsy* is played by the *leader*, the player to his or her right decides the *in-suit* for this *trick*.

Each other player, starting with the player on the left of the *leader* and proceeding clockwise, chooses one card in his or her hand that matches the *in-suit* and plays that card face-up along with the other cards in the *trick*. If a player does not have any cards in the *in-suit*, he or she may choose any card in his or her hand to play instead.

A player may play the *gypsy* at any time, even if he or she could play a card in the *in-suit* instead. If a player has the *gypsy* and no other clubs in his or her hand, he or she does not have to play the *gypsy* when clubs are the *in-suit*. In short, the *gypsy* may be played or not played regardless of which suit is the *in-suit* or which other cards that player holds in his or her hand.

When all players have played one card in turn, the *trick* is finished, and the player who played the card of highest value wins the *trick*. The *gypsy* has the highest value of any card in the deck, followed by the Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, ... , 2 of spades, followed by the Ace through 2 of hearts, followed by the Ace through 2 of diamonds, followed by the Ace through 2 of clubs (excluding the 8 of clubs, which is the *gypsy*).

The player who won the *trick* collects all four of the cards that were played and places them face-down in front of him or her. This player is the leader for the next *trick*.

End of the Round (6)

Play continues until all cards have been played, that is, 12 or 13 tricks depending on whether the *kitty* was distributed or set aside. *NB: All players will play their last cards on the same trick!*

Scoring

Scoring Nonzero Bids (7)

Each player receives points at the end of each round based on his or her bid and the number of *tricks* he or she won in that round.

Players who win exactly the same number of *tricks* as their bid receive a number of points equal to their bid plus two. For example, a player who bid three and won exactly three *tricks* would receive $3 + 2 = 5$ points.

Players who win more *tricks* than their bid receive a number of points equal to their bid minus the number of tricks won in excess of their bid. For example, a player who bid three and won exactly four tricks would receive $3 - 1 = 2$ points; a player who bid four and won exactly six tricks would also receive two points, because $4 (\text{bid}) - 2 (\text{tricks won in excess of four}) = 2$.

Players who win fewer tricks than their bid lose points. The number of points that a player loses is equal to the difference between his or her bid and the number of *tricks* he or she won. For example, a player who bid three and won exactly two tricks would lose $3 - 2 = 1$ point; a player who bid four and won exactly one trick would lose $4 - 1 = 3$ points.

Scoring Zero Bids (8)

Players who bid zero and win exactly zero tricks receive a number of points equal to the highest number of points won by any player with a nonzero bid plus two. For example, in a round where the highest score of any player with a nonzero bid is five points, a player who bids zero and wins exactly zero tricks receives $5 + 2 = 7$ points. If two or more players bid zero and win exactly zero tricks, they all receive the same number of points. If all players bid zero (which would be exceedingly unusual), any player won exactly zero *tricks* receives 2 points.

Players who bid zero and win exactly zero tricks may not lose points, even if the highest number of points won by any other player that round is negative. In this case, the zero bidder who wins zero tricks receives two points. For example, in a round where the highest score of any other player is -1 points, a player who bids zero and wins exactly zero tricks receives two points, even though $-1 + 2$ would only equal one point.

Players who bid zero and win at least one trick lose a number of points equal to the number of tricks they won. For example, a player who bid zero and won two tricks receives -2 points.

Play Continues

Check for a Winner (9)

At the end of a round, after each player's score has been tallied and added to his or her cumulative total, players should check to make sure no player has won yet (see "Winning the Game" above).

Starting the Next Round (10)

If at the end of a round no player has won, the player to the left of the previous dealer becomes the new dealer, and a new round begins (return to "Playing a Round—Dealing (1)").