

**About**

Spades is an exact bidding game played in fixed partnerships. It is an American game that has become popular as a game played in on-line card rooms and in card game Apps. In this game, spades are always trump, though spades cannot be led to a trick until a spade has been played to a trick on the lead of another suit, or until the player has nothing but spades in hand. Partners separately announce a number of tricks that they will aim to take. These bids are combined to form the bid the partnership must try to fulfil.

**Players**

Four players.  
In fixed partnerships.

**Cards**

52 (2 – A) ()  
Cards rank 2 (lowest) – A (highest)

**Deal**

- Deal 13 cards each
- Deal passes to the left
- **Spades are trump**

**Play**

Left of the dealer begins. Must follow suit, otherwise play any card.

*Spades cannot be played until spades have been 'broken'... spades can be broken by a player who has no card of the lead suit (i.e. they may choose to play a spade), or broken by a player who only holds spades.*

**Bidding & Details**

Starting with the player left of the dealer, players each bid the number of tricks they will try to take. A player's bid can be any number from 1 to 13. A player may also bid 'nil' which is a contract to take exactly zero tricks. All players must bid either 'nil' or at least 1 trick.

The partners' bids are added together to form the bid that each partnership must try to fulfil. For example, if East bids 3 and West bids 2, then the partnership must try to take  $3 + 2 = 5$  tricks in total. It does not matter if during play, East takes 4 tricks and West 1 trick, because together the partnership still has  $4 + 1 = 5$  tricks. There is no immediate penalty for exceeding the bid (e.g. taking 6 tricks) – though doing so repeatedly eventually incurs a penalty (see below).

A player who bids 'nil' must take exactly zero tricks to be successful, and any tricks that a nil bidder does take cannot count towards helping the partner make their bid (though they do count as 'overtricks') – see below.

**Scoring**

A partnership that takes at least as many tricks as they bid scores  $10 \times$  their bid, plus 1 for every 'overtrick'.... e.g. if the partnership bid 5 tricks and they took 7 tricks, they would score  $5 \times 10 + 2 = 52$  points. If the partnership fails to take enough tricks they would score  $-10 \times$  their bid.

If (over a number of deals) a partnership accumulates a total of 10 'overtricks', they are penalised 100 points. For example, if a partnership had 8 overtricks and then accumulated another 4 overtricks, they would lose 100 points (for 10 overtricks) and also accumulate 2 overtricks towards their next 10 overtrick penalty. 'Overtrick' penalties are applied separately to the positive or negative score for the bid.... e.g. during a hand, a partnership may win 42 for success with their bid, but lose 100 for having accumulated 10 overtricks... thus scoring  $-58$  for that hand.

Successful 'nil' bidder scores 100 points, if unsuccessful they score  $-100$  points. In either case, the partner's bid is scored in the usual way (as above).

**Finish**

A game is played up to an agreed score, usually 500 points.

If both partnerships reach a score of 500 in the same deal, then the partnership with the higher score wins.

*Some players allow a 'blind nil' (worth 200 points) to be bid by a side that is at least 100 points behind. It must be bid before looking at your cards... when allowed, some players also allow the 'blind nil' bidder to swap 2 cards with their partner just before the first trick begins.*