

Three Kings

3 players, 52 cards... K(High) → Ace(Low)

Deal:

Lowest cut deals first.

Three Kings may be played in 'closed' form (where tricks are collected by the trick winner and turned over) or 'open' form (where all cards are left face up in front of the players who played them).

First deal of the game

Deal 9 cards each in packets of three. Turn the next card face up on the table and place the remaining cards (the stock) face down on top. The face up card will become available to the player who wins the last trick of phase 1.

Subsequent deals

Deal 9 cards to each player in packets of three. Deal one further card to the player who took the last trick in the previous hand. This player will have 10 cards. They must discard one card face up to the table to reduce their hand to 9 cards. The remaining cards (the stock) are placed face down on top. The face up card will become available to the player who wins the last trick of phase 1.

Play:

Phase 1 (while there are still cards in the stock)

In the first deal of the game, forehand leads. In subsequent deals, the player who took the final trick of the previous hand leads to the first trick. In either case, The player may lead a single card or a group of three cards that constitute a valid meld.

Others must play the same number of cards:

If a single card was led, they can play any card. The highest card of the lead suit wins the trick.

If a meld is led, then they can play any 3 cards. The highest meld played wins the trick

There is no requirement to follow suit, to follow a meld with meld, or to play higher cards if able.

Trick points are scored, and the trick is then removed from play. Starting with the trick winner and continuing in a clockwise direction, players draw sufficient cards from the stock to return their hands to 9 cards once more. If there are insufficient cards in the stock, the number that are present are distributed equally among the 3 players. The player who won the trick then leads to the next. When the stock is exhausted, phase two begins.

Melds: sets of 3 (any 3 of that rank) and sequences of 3 (must be in suit)

KKK	JQK	♣ ♠ ♥ ♦
TTT	9TJ	
888	789	
666	567	
444	345	
222		

Note that melds are ranked from 2 2 2 up to K K K. A set can only be beaten by either a higher set OR a higher sequence and a sequence can only be beaten by either a higher sequence OR a higher set.

The exception is the JQK sequence which can be beaten by another JQK sequence if it is in a higher suit – These rank clubs (highest) down to diamonds (lowest).

Phase 2 (when there are no cards in the stock)

The player who won the last trick of phase one has the option of exchanging any one of their cards for the face up card left over from the deal. To do this they pick up the face up card and then discard one card from their hand face up to the table. The discarded card has no further role in play. This must be done before the player leads to the first trick.

The play of phase two is the same as in phase 1 except that whenever a single card is led to a trick, the other players must follow suit if they are able to. The winner of the last trick in phase two receives 10 cards in the next deal (rather than 9) and also earns the right to lead to the first trick.

Scoring:

Players are awarded 'trick points' immediately before each trick is turned over.

Playing any valid meld (does not need to win trick)	1 trick point
Winning a trick	1 trick point

Note that the last trick is worth 1 additional point to the player who wins it.

A 'set' consists of 15 trick points. When a player reaches 15 trick points that player is awarded one 'game point' and all trick point scores are reset to zero. A new 'set' then begins.

The next time a player reaches 15 trick points, another 'game point' is awarded and scores are again reset. The first player to attain 3 game points wins the match.

Predictions, Special Rules and Handling Ties:

If an ace is led to the last trick, the player leading it receives 5 points if it wins (this 5 points replaces the score for last trick). If the ace fails to win, the player loses 5 points and the player winning the last trick scores 2 points as usual.

When it is their turn to play their first card to phase two, a player may predict they will take the last trick. Only one player may make this prediction (the first one who speaks). The prediction, if successful, yields a bonus of 5 additional points on top of the usual scoring of the last trick. If it is unsuccessful, 5 points are deducted from the player's score, and that player must also start the next 'set' from 5 points behind (they must start from -5 points). Alternatively, a player may predict to take the last trick with an ace. If this is successful, it yields a bonus of 10 additional points on top of the usual scoring of the last trick. If it is unsuccessful, 10 points are deducted from the player's score and that player must start the next 'set' from 10 points behind (start from -10 points). In the case of any failed prediction, the winner of the last trick scores as usual.

If more than one player's score reaches or exceeds 15 in the same hand the highest score at the end of play wins the game point. If two or more players have equal scores, then the order of priority in awarding the point is:

1. The player who reached the score due to a successful prediction in current hand.
2. The player who won the last trick.
3. The player who first reached or exceeded 15.
 - If both reached 15 in the same trick, the winner is the player who won the trick.
 - If neither won the trick, the player who melded earlier in the trick wins.