

**About**

Schafkopf is the most popular card game in Bavaria. It is a four player point trick game with bidding. The distinguishing feature of Schafkopf is the rules and procedures around the calling of an ace in the basic 'deuce game' contract through which a silent partner is selected and whose secret identity is only revealed through the play of the cards.

**Players & Cards**

4 players  
32 cards (7 – A) in four suits:

Acorns	Leaves	Hearts	Bells
			

**Deal & 1<sup>st</sup> Lead**

Deal out the whole deck in packets of 4 cards.  
Each player has 8 cards at the end of the deal.  
Regardless of who wins the bidding, forehand (left of the dealer) always leads to the first trick.

**Suit rank, card rank and card points**

**Ranking of suits for Obers and Unters:**  


**Rules of play:**  
Follow suit, otherwise play any card.  
If a trump is led, must play a trump if holding one.

**Ranking and number of trumps for tricks in contracts:**

Deuce (14)	
Suit Wenz (11)	 ... then <b>A 10 K O 9 8 7</b> of chosen suit (  )
Wenz (4)	
Solo (14)	 ...then <b>A 10 K 9 8 7</b> of chosen suit (  )
Ramsch (14)	

**Card points:**  
**A(11) 10(10) K(4) O(3) U(2) 9(0) 8(0) 7(0)**

**Bidding**

First to bid is the player to the left of the dealer who may 'pass' or bid by saying 'I'll play'. If they 'pass' next in line then speaks, and so on.

*In social games the bidding process is more informal. However, players do try not to reveal unnecessary information and players earlier in the order still have priority for contracts that are equal.*

- Once someone says 'I'll play', then subsequent players may only say 'pass' or 'I'll play too' which means that they are willing to play at least a suit wenz.
- If someone says 'I'll play too', original bidder must now either 'pass' or say 'I'll play myself' which means that they are also willing to play at least a suit wenz.
- The challenging player must now either 'pass' or announce their best contract.
- The first player must now either 'pass' or match this bid.
- Once there is an outcome between these two players the next player(s) in order (if any) then have a chance to overcall the current bid or say 'pass'.

The idea is that players exchange minimum details about the cards they hold until it is necessary. It also means that if two players want to play an equal contract (both want to play wenz for example) then the player who is earlier in the order has priority. The player who wins the bidding is known as the 'declarer'. This player then announces their final contract. If all players pass, then the official rules say that the cards are thrown in and the deal passes to the left. However, many players choose to play a game of ramsch instead.

**Ramsch**

Players should agree before the game begins whether ramsch will be active should all players pass. In ramsch, card rankings and trumps are as for a 'deuce game' i.e. all the obers, unters and hearts act as a trump suit (there are 14 trumps). Players must follow suit. If a player has no cards of the lead suit they may play any card. If a trump is led, all players must play a trump if they have one. Everyone plays alone and the player who takes most card points loses.

**Contract rank, aim and explanation:**

Highest  Lowest	Sie	Immediate win (received 4 obers and 4 unters in the deal)		Card ranking and points as shown on previous page
	Solo tout	On own	Take all tricks	
	Wenz tout	On own	Take all tricks	
	Suit wenz tout	On own	Take all tricks	
	Solo	On own	Take 61 card points	
	Wenz	On own	Take 61 card points	
	Suit wenz	On own	Take 61 card points	
	Deuce game	With partner	Take 61 card points	

**Contracts**

**Calling an ace – only in the ‘deuce game’**

*If the declarer is unable to name a suit that fulfils the conditions below, they cannot play a ‘deuce game’ and must name a higher contract.*

- Establishing the silent partner:
  - The declarer calls a suit (from acorns, leaves, or bells... **not** hearts) in which they **do not hold the ace** but **do hold at least one card** (... so the 7, 8, 9, 10, or K). The player holding the called deuce (called ace) is the partner of the declarer, though they must not identify themselves.

- For the holder of the called deuce (called ace):
  1. You **must** play it if its suit is **led** to a trick by anyone else.
  2. If **you** wish to lead the called suit you must play the deuce (ace) - not a different card of the suit.

*The called ace cannot be otherwise ‘thrown in’ to tricks in other situations. If the called deuce (ace) is not either demanded by another player (rule 1) or **led** by its holder (rule 2) it must be kept until the last trick.*

**Exception...** If the holder of the called ace also has 3 other cards of that suit, and the suit has not yet been led, they are allowed to ‘run away’. This means they are allowed to break rule 2. and lead a different card of the suit if they wish (provided they still have all four cards in their hand at the time). After ‘running away’ the called ace becomes free from any restrictions and may now be led or otherwise ‘thrown in’ to tricks as desired.

**Scoring**

**Scoring schedule for different contracts:**

Contract	Result	Winer(s)	Loser(s)	
Deuce game	Normal win	+ 1 each	- 1 each	If the declarer loses the contract, they lose the ‘winner(s) points’ and pays each defender the amount of the ‘loser’s points’
	schneider	+ 2 each	- 2 each	
	schwarz	+ 3 each	- 3 each	
Suit wenz	normal win	+ 6	- 2 each	
Wenz	schneider	+ 9	- 3 each	
Solo	schwarz	+ 12	- 4 each	
Any Tout	All tricks taken	+ 18	- 6 each	
Sie	Immediate win	+24	-8 each	
Ramsch	Most card points loses	+ 1	- 3	

- Schneider** – Taking 90 or more card points.  
**Schwarz** – Taking all tricks.  
**Tout** – Taking all tricks having announced that you will do so (one of the ‘tout’ bids such as ‘wenz tout’ or ‘bells solo tout’)  
**Note** – After each hand is played the scores of all the players will always sum to zero.

**Variations**

There are a huge number of variations in the number of cards in the deck, the scoring method and in the range of further additional options for contracts that can be bid. The rules above are those from the Schafkopfschule (Schafkopf School) in Germany, except that:

- The official rules do not allow for ramsch to be played.
- The official rules do include the option for one of the defenders to double the value of the game.

You can find out more about the many variations for the game of *Schafkopf* by going on-line