

All-Fours

The earliest description of the game of ALL-FOURS was published in 1674 in Charles Cotton's The Compleat Gamester. According to Cotton the game originated in Kent and it is much played there. There are references to the game in Fithian's Journal in Virginia in the 1770's. He comments that he is embarrassed that his aunt is known to play this game, as it has a reputation as a game of low repute.

Equipment:

1 Pack of 52 cards

Play:

This is a card game for two players.

The two players decide on a winning score before the game begins. The winning score could be any number from 7 to 15. Most often it is 11.

The first dealer is decided by cutting the pack of cards. The 1674 rules say that the player with the highest PUT card wins. In the game of PUT the cards are ranked high to low in this order – 3,2,A,K,Q,J,10,9,8,7,6,5,4. In all other play of All Fours the cards are ranked in the normal order.

The dealer deals six cards to each player in groups of three and turns up the next card – the 13th card to show the proposed TRUMP suit. If the card is a Jack it scores 1 point. The other player may either accept the trump suit or beg one. If the player begs, the dealer must either allow the player to score one point and throw in the cards or deal another three cards each and turn over another trump card and repeat this until a different trump suit is turned.

The player leads to the first trick. Players may trump at any time but can only throw a non-trump of a different suit from the lead if unable to follow suit. The higher trump wins, or if no trump is played, the higher card of the suit led. The winner of a trick leads to the next.

When all the cards have been played, points are scored in the following order. HIGHEST - one point for the holder of the highest trump dealt. LOWEST - one point for the original holder of the lowest trump dealt. JACK - one point for a player who wins a trick containing the jack of trumps. GAME - one point for the player whose tricks contain the higher value in cards, counting ace=4, king=3, queen=2, jack=1, ten=10.

The first player to reach the winning score – as agreed upon at the start of the game wins.