

Swiss Jass

The rank and values of the cards

A standard Jass pack has 36 cards. In the west and south of Switzerland French suited cards are used: the four suits are hearts ♥, diamonds ♦, clubs ♣ and spades ♠ and the cards in each suit are ace, king, queen, jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6. In the northeast, the cards have the Swiss German suits of bells 🔔, shields 🛡️, acorns 🌰 and flowers 🌸. The cards in each suit are ace, king, ober, under, banner, nine, eight, seven, six.

In the Swiss German packs note that the aces have two large suit symbols (having in the distant past actually been deuces). The banners also have two suit symbols, but should be easy to distinguish from aces because they symbols appear on a flag or banner. Perhaps the only tricky card is the ace of shields, which can be confusing because the shields are a different shape from the others.



The ace of shields and banner of bells are illustrated to the right. The king, ober and under of each suit are identified by the words **KÖNIG**, **OBER** and **UNDER** printed on the card.

In North America, Jass cards and equipment can be obtained from [TaroBear's Lair](#).

Jass games are [point-trick games](#). When there are trumps, the card ranks and values are different in the trump suit from the other suits. The rank of the cards in each suit, from highest to lowest, and their values in card points are given in the following table:

Non trump suit		Trump suit	
Ace	11	Under / Jack	20
King	4	Nine	14
Ober / Queen	3	Ace	11
Under / Jack	2	King	4
Banner / Ten	10	Ober / Queen	3
Nine	0	Banner / Ten	10

Eight	0	Eight	0
Seven	0	Seven	0
Six	0	Six	0

In addition the whoever wins the last trick gets an extra 5 card points. Thus the total number of card points available is 157.

A player or side that wins all the tricks is said to have made **match**. For this they normally score an extra 100 card points, making 257 altogether.

The Under of trumps is called the **Puur** (Swiss version of the word Bauer, meaning peasant, which in the form Bower also appears in [Euchre](#)). The nine of trumps is called **Näll**.

Some Jass games have contracts that are played without trumps. In this case, to make up for the lack of Puur and Näll the eights are worth 8 points each instead of zero, so that the total points available are still 157.

The trick-taking rules

All Jass games are played counter-clockwise. The cards are played in tricks. As usual each trick is won by the highest trump in it, or if no trump is played, by the highest card of the suit led. The winner of each trick leads to the next. In many games the player to the right of the dealer leads to the first trick, but in some games with bidding the declarer leads first.

Any card may be led to a trick. The rules about which cards the other players may play to the trick are unique to Swiss Jass. *Please read the following carefully!* If a non trump suit is led, and you have a card of the suit led, you must **either** follow suit (play any card of the suit led) **or** play a trump, subject to the [undertrumping rule](#). If trumps are led, you must follow suit with a trump if you can, **except** when the **only** trump in your hand is the Under (Puur), in which case you may play anything. If you have no card of the suit led you may play anything, subject to the [undertrumping rule](#).

Undertrumping rule

There are two versions of this, depending what kind of Jass you are playing.

If it is a pure positive game, such as [Schieber Jass](#), *Handjass* or *Steiger Jass* (where the object is to win card points) then the **stricter** undertrumping rule applies:

- If a non-trump has been led and another player has already trumped it, you are **not** allowed to play a **lower** trump, unless you have **nothing but trumps left in your hand**, in which case you may play any trump.

If it is a negative or mixed game, such as *Hindersi*, [Mittlere](#) or *Differenzler* in which the object is not to take as many card points as possible, but maybe to avoid taking points or to get close to a specific value, then the **weaker** undertrumping rule applies:

- If a non-trump has been led and another player has already trumped it, you are **not** allowed to play a **lower** trump, unless you have **no cards of the suit led**, in which case you may play any card.

The Weis

The word *Weis* denotes sets of cards which, held in a player's hand at the start of play, may be announced for points. There are two ways of counting weis: the large weis and the small weis.

The **small weis** are:

sequence of three cards in suit	20 points
sequence of four cards in suit	50 points
sequence of five or more cards in suit	100 points
four tens (banners)	100 points
four obers / queens	100 points
four kings	100 points
four aces	100 points
four nines (if played)	150 points
four unders / jacks	200 points

With the small weis, the same card may not be used in two different combinations. E.g. a player holding all four kings and the ober under ten of bells might choose to treat this as four kings and a sequence of three, or as a sequence of four. A sequence of seven cards scores no more than a sequence of five (though it beats it). A sequence of eight (or nine) cards may be regarded as a sequence of five and a sequence of three (or four).

The **large weis** are:

sequence of three cards in suit	20 points
sequence of four cards in suit	50 points
sequence of five in suit	100 points
four tens (banners)	100 points
four obers /queens	100 points
four kings	100 points
four aces	100 points
four nines (if played)	150 points
sequence of six in suit	150 points
four unders / jack	200 points
sequence of seven in suit	200 points
sequence of eight in suit	250 points
sequence of nine in suit	300 points

With the large weis, the same card *may* be used in both a set of four and a sequence. E.G. a player holding all four kings and the ober under ten of bells could treat this as four kings and a sequence of four.

Each weis on a list is better than those above it on the list. A longer sequence is better than a shorter one. In comparing sequences of the same length, the one with the higher card is better. In comparing identical sequences in different suits, one in the trump suit is better. If two players have identical sequences in non-trump suits, the one wins whose turn to play to the first trick is earlier.

For the purposes of Weis, suits are always in the order A K O U B 9 8 7 6.

Announcing Weis

The details vary from game to game, but the general way in which Weis are announced is as follows.

As each player plays a card to the *first trick* of a hand, she may announce a weis (set of cards, as listed) that she holds if it is at least as great as any which has so far been announced. She may hold a weis but choose not to announce it. She might choose to announce a weis that was not her best, though it is hard to imagine why anyone should do so deliberately.

When the trick is complete, if more than one weis has been announced, a discussion takes place about which one was best. In this discussion players reveal only sufficient information to establish which Weis is highest. For example if there are two four card sequences in contention, the players first each say what is the highest card of their sequence, and if these are equal, whether they are trumps. Once this has been resolved, the holder of the winning weis scores for it, and for any others which she holds and chooses to announce. In a partnership game, the partner(s) of the player with the best weis may then also choose to announce and score for any weis they hold. The opponents score nothing for weis, even though some of theirs may be better than some of the weis scored by the other side.

Once an item of weis has been scored for, any player other than the one holding it may ask to see it. Its holder then displays it for everyone to see. The purpose of doing this is not to check if it is genuine (competent card players would know in any case by the end of the hand); it is to help the asker, and possibly her partner, in planning the play of the hand.

Variations

Some players allow four 9s, worth 150, as weis.

Some Jass games contain a contract called **undenufe** in which the cards rank in reverse order - 6 highest. In this case the reverse ranking also applies when comparing sequences of equal length, or equal scoring fours of a kind.

In undenufe, some people value the 6 rather than the ace as 11 points, and allow a Weis of four sixes worth 100 points, in place of four aces.

The Stöck

A combination of king and ober of trumps, held by the same player in her hand, generally scores 20 points and is known as **stöck**. This is **not** a kind of weis and cannot be invalidated by another player's weis. Stöck can be announced and scored when the second of the two cards is been played, or when the cards are exposed as part of a weis, or at any later time, up until the counting of points won in tricks at the end of the play of that hand. Stöck can be claimed and scored at any earlier time if the player thereby gets enough points to win the game.

Schieber Jass

Introduction

Schieber Jass is a partnership game for four players, played with a Jass pack. The players sit opposite to their partners.

The pack has 36 cards. There are four suits: acorns, shields, flowers, and bells. In each suit, there are nine cards: ace, king, ober, under, banner, 9, 8, 7, 6. If you cannot obtain such a pack, you can play it with a bridge or poker pack, using queens for obers, jacks for unders, 10s for banners, and discarding cards smaller than 6s.

The rank of the cards (followed by their point values in brackets) within each suit is: Ace(11), King(4), Ober(3), Under(2), Banner(10), 9(0), 8(0), 7(0), 6(0). However, when there is a trump suit, the rank within the it is: Under(20), 9(14), ace(11), King(4), Ober(3), Banner(10), 8(0), 7(0), 6(0). These points count to the team winning the trick containing the card. There is also a bonus of 5 points to the team which wins the last trick. Thus there is a total of 157 points in the pack.

The deal, and the play, are anticlockwise. The dealer deals all the cards out, in threes, starting with the player on her right. Any player can deal the first hand, and the player who holds the seven of flowers is *forehand* and begins the bidding, leads to the first trick, and deals the second hand. On the second and subsequent hands the player to dealer's right is forehand, and the deal rotates to the right after each hand.

A session continues until one side has scored at least 3000 points: typically this will take about twelve hands.

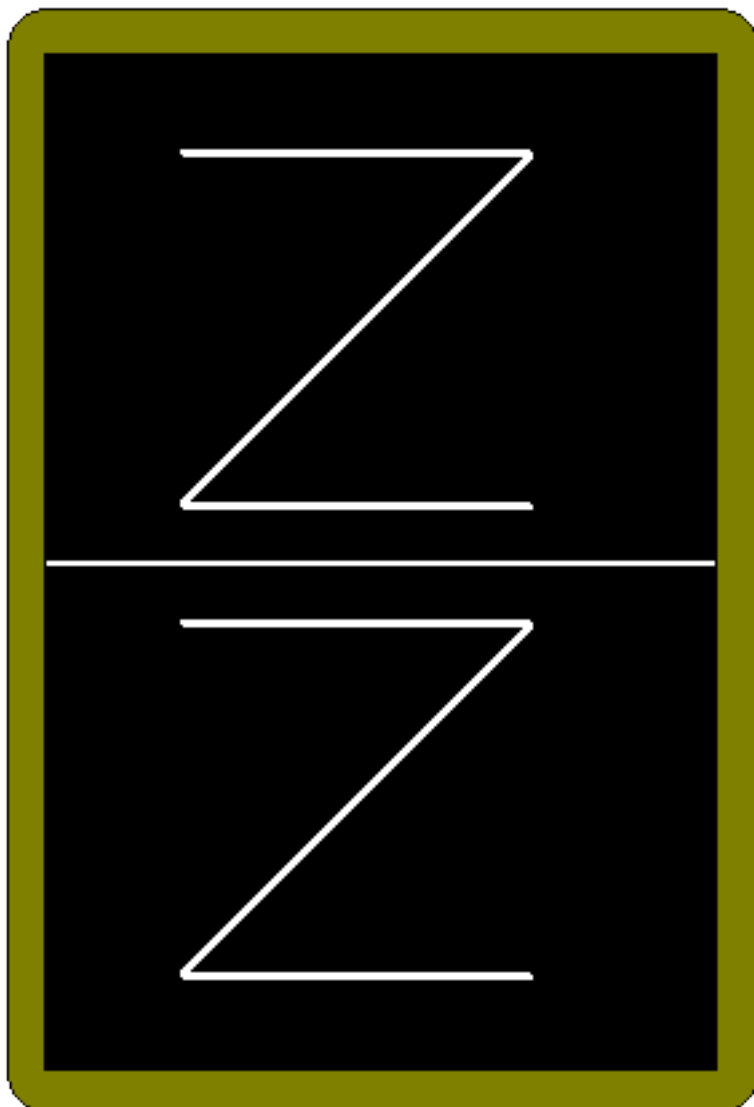
The Slate

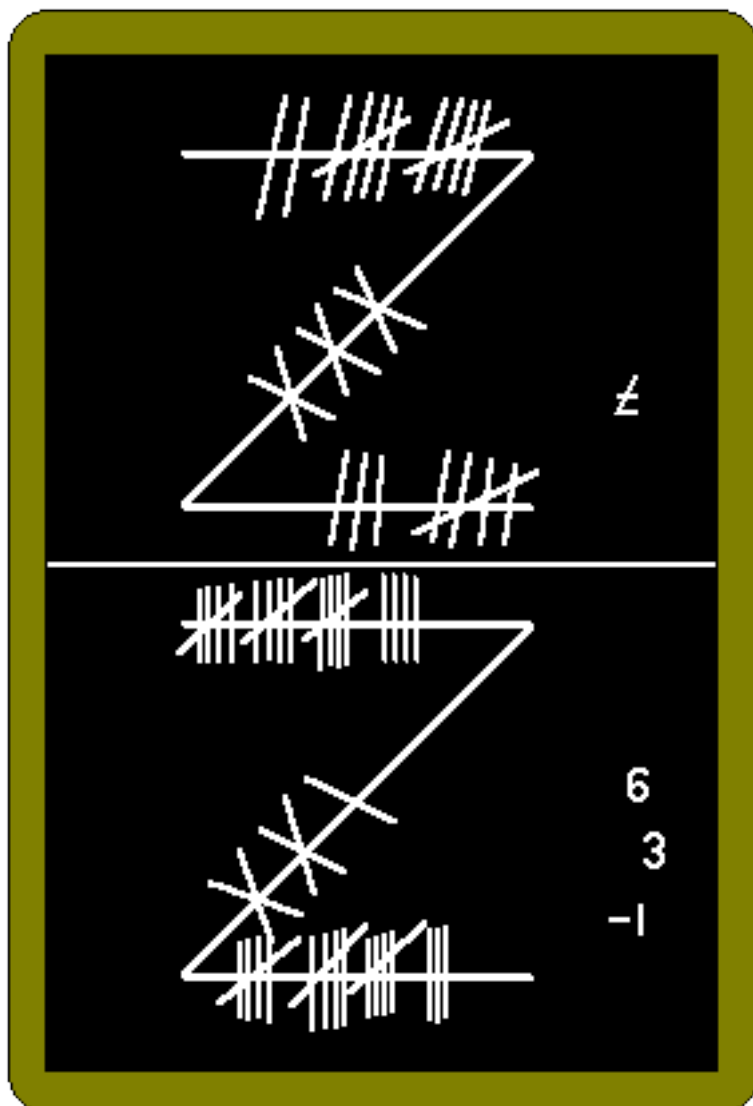
To score, a slate marked as shown is traditionally used. In Switzerland, where Schieber Jass is usually played, it is possible to buy slates painted like this. If you cannot obtain such a slate, you can draw your own Zs, either on a slate or on a piece of paper, or manage without the Zs altogether.

Each partnership appoints a scorer. The slate is placed between the two scorers, and each uses the Z nearer to herself to record her team's score.

Hundreds are marked on the top line of the Z. They are grouped into fives. Fifties are marked on the sloping line of the Z, and grouped in pairs. Twenties are marked on the lower line of the Z, and grouped in fives. Smaller numbers are simply written on the slate. The details of how to record a score are left to the individual scorer's discretion. For example, a score of 257 might be recorded by marking two 100s on the top line and a 50 on the middle line, and writing down "7"; or by marking two 100s on the top line, three 20s on the lower line, and erasing a "3" previously written; or by

marking two 100s on the top line, three 20s on the lower line, and writing down "-3".





This shows a slate in use. The team which is scoring on the near end has 19 100s, 5 50s, 18 20s, and 8 in odd digits, for a total of 2518. The other team has 8 100s, 6 50s, 12 20s, and an odd 7, for a total of 1347. Note that as the slate is between the two scorers, they are writing opposite ways up.

The same method of scoring can be used on a blank slate, without Zs. The 100s, 50s and 20s are marked in three rows, in roughly the same relative positions as if the Zs were there.

If you don't want to bother with all this, you can instead score by adding up the numbers on a piece of paper. In doing so, you will lose nothing but authenticity.

Bidding

After the deal, forehand (normally the player on dealer's right, but in the first deal the holder of the seven of flowers) chooses a contract, or "shoves" - the word *schieben* means to shove. If she shoves, her partner *must* then choose a contract. Possible contracts are:

- Acorns scores single
- Flowers scores single
- Shields scores double
- Bells scores double

Obenabe scores treble

Undenufe scores quadruple

- **Acorns, Shields, Bells, Flowers:** play with the specified suit as trumps. If your cards have Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades instead of the Swiss suits then the black suits score single and the red suits score double.
- **Obenabe:** Play with no trumps. So that the pack will add up to the usual 157 points, the 8s also count eight points each.
- **Undenufe:** Play with no trumps, and the suits inverted. The suit order is thus 6 (highest), 7, 8, 9, Banner, Under, Ober, King, Ace (lowest). As in Obenabe, the 8s count eight points each. Undenufe is pronounced with the d and the f silent.

The single, double, treble, and quadruple apply to *all* scores made on the hand: tricks, Weis, and Stöck.

Rules of Play

The play is in tricks. Forehand leads to the first trick (on the first hand this is the holder of the seven of flowers; on subsequent hands it is the player to dealer's right). The winner of each trick leads to the next.

If there is no trump suit, the other players are obliged to follow suit when they can do so; those who cannot follow suit may play any card. A trick is won by the highest card of the suit led.

If there is a trump suit, a player who is able to follow suit must *either* do so *or* play a trump; a player who cannot follow suit may play any card subject to the restrictions on undertrumping explained below. A trick is won by the highest trump in it; or if there were no trumps, by the highest card of the suit led.

If a non-trump is led, and someone has already played a trump on it, subsequent players are not allowed to undertrump unless they have nothing but trumps in their hand. If you hold cards other than trumps and can follow suit, you must either follow suit or play a trump which is larger than the highest trump played to the trick so far; if you hold cards other than trumps but cannot follow suit, you may play any card except a trump which does not beat the highest so far played to the trick.

A player is *never* compelled to play the Under of trumps (known as the *Puur*). If trumps are led, and a player holds no trump other than the *Puur*, she need not play it but may play any other card.

Weis and Stöck

As the first trick is being played, players announce their Weis. For an explanation of Weis, see the [General Rules of Jass](#). The partnership with the best single instance of Weis scores points for all their Weis; the other partnership do not score for any Weis they may hold. Weis are scored on the slate immediately, remembering to multiply by the factor for the contract. E.G. the contract is obenabe, a player announces four obers, and her partner announces a sequence of three. Obenabe is worth treble, so 3 times (100 plus 20) is 360. This might be scored as three strokes on the top line of the slate and three on the lower line.

A player who holds both the king and ober of trumps may announce "stöck" as she plays the second of them, for 20 points. This 20 is multiplied by the factor for the contract, and scored on the slate when it is announced.

Scoring

At the end of each hand, each side adds up the trick points they have taken, remembering to include 5 points for the last trick. The two totals should add up to 157. If either side took all nine tricks, they add a bonus of 100 for "match" to their score of 157, making 257. Each side then multiplies its total card points for tricks by the factor for the hand, and scores it on the slate.

Winning the Game

The first team to achieve a total of 3000 points wins the game. This may happen in the middle of a hand. If the losing partnership have not by then reached 1500 points, they are said to be *Schneider*, and the winners win two games.

Because of the scoring method, and because players may count the values of tricks already made in the course of a hand (without being able to turn them over and look at them), it may not be obvious when this total has been achieved. So any player may at any time claim to have won the game. When such a claim is made, play ceases, a player who held the king and ober of trumps at the start of the hand may announce stöck and score it, and the tricks made by the claiming partnership are counted and scored. Then the total recorded on the slate for that partnership is added up. If it is then at least 3000, the claiming partnership has won. Otherwise they have lost.

If one partnership claims to have won in the first trick of a hand, the other partnership may itself claim to have won. The question is then, who won first? In cases in which both partnerships claim, the question is resolved by using the rule **Stöck-Weis-Stich**. First of all, **Stöck** is scored (the hand has ended, so it may be announced by anyone who held it). If this takes the partnership scoring it to 3000 or over, then they win. Then **Weis** is scored. Again, if this takes the partnership scoring it to 3000 or over, then they win. Finally, **Stich** is scored, by adding up the points in

the trick that has been played, and seeing if the partnership winning it has achieved 3000.

Variations

The **Stöck-Weis-Stich** rule is variable. Sometimes the house rule is **Stöck-Stich-Weis**, or another permutation. In some Swiss cafés, you will see a notice saying "Stöck-Weis-Stich" or whatever: this is the local house rule, hung up by the management to avoid disputes among customers.

Some do not allow Obenabe and Undenufe.

The object of the game is to be the first to achieve 3000 points. Some players regard being the first to achieve 1500 points as a subsidiary object. This is known as the **Bergpreis**: the partnership that first gets to 1500 is first to the summit of the mountain (Berg, in German), while the primary object is to get down the other side of the mountain again. This is thought to have something to do with bicycle races.

Schieber Jass can be played by **six players**, in two partnerships of three, sitting alternately. Forehand can shove to the partner sitting two places to her right, who can shove to the third partner. Using a normal Jass pack everyone gets 6 cards, but it is also possible to play with a double pack from which the cards below 9 are removed, so that there are 48 cards and everyone gets 8. When playing with a double pack the second played of two equal cards beats the first.

Most people nowadays play that in Undenufe, the Aces are worth 0 points and the 6s are worth 11 points. In our opinion this is a pity, as it makes the play less interesting. Some people (usually the same ones) allow four 6s as a Weis when playing undenufe. This then replaces four aces.

Some allow four 9s as a Weis, worth 150. Most do not.

Some players now allow a Weis of four of any rank, scoring 100 (except for four unders which are worth 200, and four nines which may by agreement score 150).

Some people now play the ["large weis"](#), in which sequences of more than five cards score extra (20 or 50 more per card), and a card can be used simultaneously as part of a four of a kind and a sequence.

Some people allow **zurückschieben** (shoving back), whereby after forehand has shoved, her partner can shove back, forcing forehand to choose the contract after all.

There are many variations on the multiples applied to the various suits, obenabe and undenufe. Some people play all contracts scoring single, in which case the total

needed for game is reduced to 1000, and the target for the Bergpreis, and the amount the losers need to score to avoid Schneider, is 500.

Coiffeur Schieber is a modern variation in which each contract must be played by each team (or player) once during the session - see the [Coiffeur Schieber page](#). The additional contracts Slalom, Gusti and TUO found in Coiffeur Schieber can also be introduced into normal Schieber.

Advice on Skilful Play

Forehand should not make a "vegetable" suit (acorns or flowers) trumps unless there is a hope of being able to make match. By choosing to play in a low-valued contract, she might be preventing her partner from nominating a very profitable contract.

If your partner shoves to you, and your hand is no use for anything, choose a low-valued contract so that you will not lose too badly.

If you shove, and your partner calls a trump suit, lead a trump.

If you have five cards in the same suit, or four cards including the Under in the same suit, it may be good to play a contract with that suit as trumps.

If you have a chance of making match, play in a way which might let you do so, even if it is more likely to result in the unnecessary loss of one trick.

Try never to choose a contract in which you cannot guarantee a single trick: your opponents might make match against you.

In choosing a contract, remember the weis. E.G. if you are dealt:

acorns U 6 shields U 9 7 flowers A U bells U 8

consider bidding undenufe. You probably won't do very well in the play (shields would play better). But you are guaranteed one trick so you won't have match made against you, and the 200 Weis for four unders will be multiplied by four. So you will score at least 800 points. Of course, you should consider how many points each partnership needs before deciding whether to do this.

In choosing a contract, consider the score. If you are well behind, you should be more inclined to take risks and choose high-valued contracts, in the hope of catching up.

The score may also affect the way that you play. The validity of any of the above items of advice may be affected by the score.

If you are playing a suit contract, and an opponent leads the Ace of a side suit in which you hold the King, you can trump the Ace and then lead the King to win

another trick. This is possible in Jass games because of the trumping rule, which is different from that in whist or bridge.