

THE CZECH CARD GAME OF TAROKY

Rules as Played at Holy Trinity Catholic Church

Heun, Nebraska



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THE CZECH CARD GAME OF TAROKY – HEUN RULES

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### General

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The Tarok deck is comprised of fifty-four cards. In each of the four traditional suits (clubs, diamonds, hearts and spades) there are eight cards: four non-face cards (one through four for diamonds or hearts and seven through ten for clubs or spades) and four face cards (Jack, Horseman, Queen and King). There are also twenty-two trump cards (called Taroky) numbered from one to twenty-one (some decks have Roman numerals) with scenes depicted on them plus the card called the Škýz (pronounced "skeez") which resembles a face card of a man but has no suit on it.

The game is played with four players. It is usually played using chips and ends either when one of the players has run out of chips or after a prescribed number of hands have been played. This is flexible and depends on house rules. The usual amount of chips allotted to each player is four red or blue chips (valued at five each) and five white chips (valued at one each).

The Deal

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After shuffling the deck, the dealer presents the deck to the player on his right to either tap or cut. This player also has the right to direct the dealer to deal without cutting the deck.

If the deck is cut or to be dealt without cutting, the dealer first deals six cards (called the Blind) to the center of the table and then twelve cards to each player, six at a time proceeding from left to right. All cards are dealt face down.

If instead the deck is tapped (a light rap with the fingers or knuckles) the dealer first deals six cards (the Blind) to the center of the table and then four stacks of twelve cards each, dealt twelve at a time. The player to the left of the dealer then has the option of choosing whichever stack of twelve he desires. If this player chooses the first stack, the second player in turn must take the second stack, etc. If the player to the left of the dealer takes any stack other than the first, each player in turn around the table may choose the remaining stack of his choice.

## Bidding

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a) Four Play

The player to the left of the dealer normally has the bid after the cards are picked up. However, the player who has the "2" Tarok (povinnost) gets to bid the very first hand. If no one has the "2" Tarok (i.e., it's in the Blind) then the holder of the "3" Tarok bids first. If this player declares he will "Play Four" the remaining players all have the option to pass or "Play Five" (see below). If everyone passes, the person bidding then names a King, such as "King of spades". The player holding that King is the bidder's partner for that hand but normally does not reveal this to any of the other players at this time. Under the unusual circumstances that the bidder has three of the four Kings in his hand, he may call "the fourth King" instead of naming the specific suit. Again, the player holding this King is his partner.

The bidder then has the opportunity to examine the cards in the Blind. First the bidder picks up any three of the six cards out of the Blind without showing them to the other players and decides whether or not he wants to incorporate them into his hand. If this option is chosen then no one sees the second group of three cards in the blind until the end of the hand. If instead the bidder wishes to examine the remaining three cards in the Blind, the first three cards from the Blind must be placed on the table face up for the other players to see while the bidder looks at the second group of three cards and considers adding them to his hand, again without showing these three cards to the other players. If the bidder decides to return to the first three cards for inclusion into his hand, the bidder must lay the second group of three cards face up on the table for the other players to see. The selection of which three cards the bidder chooses determines the number of chips that hand will be worth:

Four chips: Bidder takes first group without looking at second group.

Five chips: Bidder chooses second group.

Six chips: Bidder takes first group after looking at second group.

After looking at one or both groups of cards, if the bidder decides not to play the hand, the bidder may opt to pay each player four chips at this point and then deals the next hand.

If the bidder decides to play the hand, he adds the three cards he picked up from the Blind to his hand and removes three cards from his hand and places them face down on the table. These will be counted as his points at the end of the hand and cannot be any of the three cards he picked up from the Blind, Kings or Taroky unless the bidder has no other choice. In that case, it must be Taroky not picked up from the Blind and the bidder must declare how many of the three cards being discarded from his hand are Taroky.

It is noteworthy that the bidder may call a King which is in his own hand or one which is in the Blind. When this happens, the other three players are partners playing against him. It is said that "he called himself".

When "playing Four", the three remaining cards from the Blind not chosen by the bidder will count as points for the opposing team.

When "playing Four", the bidder plays the first card with each player playing in turn in a clockwise direction.

b) Five Play

If the player to the left of the dealer declares that he will "Play Five" or if someone to the left of him declares it instead of passing after he declares that he will "Play Four", the person "playing Five" then names a King and the holder of that King is his partner. Again, if that King is in the Blind the other three players are partners against him. The Blind is not revealed until the end of the hand. When someone "Plays Five" that person leads the first card of that hand instead of the person to the left of the dealer, hence the person to the left of the dealer loses the chance to call a King that hand and loses the chance to play the first card.

If someone "Plays Five", a player to the left of that person (including the player to the left of the dealer) have the opportunity to "Play Five Over" (see below).

A "Five Play" hand is worth eight chips.

In a "Five Play" hand the team opposing the bidding team receive all the points in the Blind unless the bidder has called himself, i.e., has no partner. In that case, he gets the first three cards turned over from the Blind at the end of the hand with the remaining three going to the opponents.

c) Five Over Play

As mentioned above, this can only occur if someone declares it after someone else has declared the intention to "play Five". The conditions pertaining to "playing Five Over" are the same as for "playing Five" except the hand is worth sixteen chips.

Passing the Bid

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Normally the player to the left of the dealer has the bid after the deal. Should that individual wish to pass that opportunity to the player on his left he may do so, but he must lead the first card of the hand if it is a "play Four" hand. If the bid is passed all the way around to the dealer, he must "play Four".

## The Play

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The player to the left of the dealer starts the play of the cards if the hand is "Four Play" or, if the hand is "Five Play" or "Five Over Play", the player who bid starts the play by leading face up any card in his hand he chooses. Each other player must play in turn in a clockwise manner:

If a suit card is led (i.e., clubs, diamonds, hearts or spades), each other player has to follow suit. If he cannot, he must play a Tarok. If he also has no Taroky, he may play any remaining card in his hand.

If all players follow suit the high ranking card wins the trick.

Order of rank: King> Queen> Horseman> Jack> non-face cards.

It should be noted that the "one" of diamonds or hearts is lower in value than the other diamonds or hearts, i.e., it's a "one", not an ace!

If no one follows suit or plays a Tarok, the player who led wins the trick. Because a Tarok is trump it will win any trick on which no other Tarok has been played. If more than one Tarok is played, the highest Tarok will win the trick. The Škýz is the highest Tarok.

Exception: Although the Škýz will almost always take any trick, if the "21" Tarok, Škýz and the "1" Tarok are all played in the same trick in that order, regardless of where the fourth card is played, the "1" Tarok takes the trick.

If a Tarok is led, each subsequent player must also play a Tarok. If he cannot, he may play any remaining card in his hand.

The winner of each trick leads the next trick.

Determining the Winners

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After all twelve tricks are completed the points acquired by each team are counted to determine the winner of that hand. The cards left over from the Blind are distributed in accordance with the discussion above (under Bidding) and combined with the cards from the won tricks for each team.

There are a total of seventy (70) points available in the Tarok deck. In order to win, the bidding team must win more than thirty-five (35) points. If the bidding team takes exactly thirty-five points and have no additional cards, they lose.

## Counting Points

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Counter	Base Points
Škýz	5
"21" Tarok	5
"1" Tarok	5
King	5
Queen	4
Horseman	3
Jack	2

Before starting to count it is best to place two cards not in the list above (i.e., non-face suit cards and/or "2"- "20" Tarok) at the bottom of the pile being counted so that they are counted last.

The points are counted three cards at a time. The value of each set of three cards is determined as follows:

If there is only one "counter", it's worth the base points of that counter. If there are two "counters", it's worth the sum of the two base points minus one point. If there are three "counters", it's worth the sum of the three base points minus two points. If there are no "counters", it's worth one point.

For example, assume the following groupings of three cards were the cards being counted for a team:

Jack of diamonds + 3 of diamonds + 4 of diamonds - 2 points [only one "counter" present]

Queen of diamonds + "2" Tarok + Horseman of diamonds - 6 points [two "counters" present, so $(4 + 3) - 1 = 6$]

King of spades + Queen of spades + "1" Tarok - 12 points [three "counters" present, so $(5 + 4 + 5) - 2 = 12$]

"5" Tarok + "8" Tarok + "19" Tarok - 1 point [no "counters" present]

"11" Tarok + 1 of hearts - no points [counted as "two cards"]

Total 21 points (and two cards)

Because the total is less than thirty-five points, the team would lose this hand. If each team consists of two players, each member of the losing team pays one of the members of the winning team the number of chips the hand was worth. If someone was playing alone against the other three, i.e., he called himself, he collects the chips from each of the other three players if he wins. He pays each of the other three players if he loses.

Subsequent Dealing

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After a "Four Play" hand the bidder becomes the dealer of the next hand. After a "Five Play" hand or a "Five Over Play", the person to the left of the dealer of the last hand becomes the dealer.

### **Special Cases:**

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Extra chips may be at stake under certain conditions:

(1) King Last

If the called King is played on the last trick of the hand, each of the team who takes the trick wins a chip from one of the players on the losing team if there are two players on each team.

If a player has called himself, he either pays each of the other three players a chip if he has lost or receives a chip from each of the other three players if he has won that last trick. It does not matter whether or not the team winning the "King Last" wins the hand.

(2) Called King Last

If the player who holds the called King declares "King Last!" before the first card is played, the same conditions apply as for King Last (above) but the action is worth two chips. If the called King is played on any trick other than the last trick, the bidding team loses the two chips.

(3) "1" Tarok Last

If the "1" Tarok is played on the last trick of the hand, it also is worth a chip just like playing King Last (above) with the same conditions.

(4) Called "1" Tarok Last

If the player who holds the "1" Tarok declares "1 Last" before the first card is played, the same conditions apply as for Called King Last (above) and the action is worth two chips.

(5) Ten Taroky

Any player holding ten or more Taroky in his hand may call for a chip from each of the other three players by declaring that he has ten Taroky before the first card is played. This even applies for the player "playing Four" who attains this after selecting three cards from the Blind and discarding.

(6) Four Kings

Any player who holds all four Kings in his hand may call for a chip from each of the other three players after playing the last King.

(7) Three High

Any player who holds the three highest counting Taroky ("1", "21", and Škýz) in his hand may call for a chip from each of the other three players by declaring that he had "Three High" after playing the last one of these three.

NOTE: All of the above conditions apply when "playing Four". When "playing Five" all values are doubled and when "playing Five Over" all values are quadrupled. For example, a "Called King Last" while "playing Five" is worth four chips and having ten Taroky when "playing Five Over" is worth four chips from each player.

(8) Taking All Tricks

If either team takes all twelve tricks in a hand, the other team must pay them twice the normal amount due. This is called a "valát" and also applies to cases (1)-(4) (above).

Penalties:

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*(1) Misdeal:* If a dealer misdeals the cards he pays each player one chip and the player on his left becomes the dealer and re-deals.

*(2) Failure to Lay Away Cards:* If a player is "playing Four" and fails to lay away the required three cards before playing the first card, he pays each of the other three players a chip. He then lays away the three cards and the hand continues.

*(3) Misdeal (with no Penalty):* If a player receives a hand from the dealer that contains neither Kings nor Taroky he has the right to call a misdeal. In this case no penalty is imposed, but the player to the left of the dealer becomes the dealer and re-deals.

11/28/97 Revision