

Contract Sabacc

Contract Sabacc is a three- to five-player trick-taking game played with a 78-card Centran Sabacc deck. All actions in the game proceed counterclockwise.

The Cards

There are four suits (coins, flasks, sabres, staves) with fourteen cards in each suit. The strength of the cards for each suit goes from weakest to strongest as follows: 1 (Ace), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Legate), 12 (Commander), 13 (Mistress), 14 (Master).

The strongest cards in the deck are the trumps, known as "*Sabaccs*." These beat any suit card and are numbered weakest to strongest from -1 (The Magician) to -21 (The Universe). The card numbered 0 (The Idiot) is the strongest card of all.

The three aforementioned Sabaccs, as well as Masters of each suit are known as "*Honours*."

The Ante

Each player adds one chip to the center of the table (the Ante Pot).

The Deal

One player, chosen at random, takes on the role of dealer. The dealer shuffles the deck and deals all the cards, starting with the player to the dealer's right, so each player gets the following:

Three players: 24 cards each, with a talon of 6 cards dealt to the center of the table.

Four players: 18 cards each, with a talon of 6 cards dealt to the center of the table.

Five players: 15 cards each, with a talon of 3 cards dealt to the center of the table.

The Bidding

Each player bids to meet a set contract. The player to the dealer's left starts the bidding and, in turn, each player bids a contract. Players may make a bid higher than a previous bid, or pass. Bidding continues until all players but the highest bidder pass. The highest bidder is called the "*declarer*," and they will play against all the other players, called "*defenders*." If no one bids, the hand is void and the player to the dealer's right becomes the new dealer.

Also, upon making a bid, each player adds a number of chips, as in Poker but without the option of folding. Each player's wager remains in front of him, and at the end of the bidding the declarer adds an extra matching stack for each defender. If the declarer wins, he gets all the chips on the table except the Ante Pot, which is awarded for special

bonuses. If the declarer loses, the defenders divide the chips (again, except for the Ante Pot) evenly.

Bids, from lowest to highest rank, are as follows:

Take (stake 1 chip): the declarer adds the talon to their hand and sets aside the same number of cards of their choice. These cards are called the "*aside*" and form the beginning of the declarer's score pile. The declarer may not set aside a Master or a Sabacc unless they cannot discard anything else, in which case they must set aside a non-Honours Sabacc. Any Sabacc cards set aside must be displayed face-up.

Push (stake 1 chip): same as Take, but outranks Take and indicates a stronger hand value.

Guard (stake 2 chips): same as Take, but outranks Take and push, and indicates a stronger hand value.

Guard without (stake 4 chips): the talon goes directly into the the declarer's score pile. No one sees it until the end of the hand.

Guard against (stake 6 chips): the talon goes directly into the opposing score pile. No one sees it until the end of the hand.

Gameplay

The player to the dealer's right leads the first trick. The strongest card wins the trick. The winner of the previous trick leads the next trick, and so on, until the players run out of cards. Each time a player leads, the next players must follow suit: if they do not have that suit, they must play a Sabacc; if they do not have a Sabacc, they can play any card and lose the trick. During play, any tricks taken are placed face-down in the trick winner's aside pile.

Counting, card values and scoring

At the end of the round, the declarer counts the point value of all cards in his scoring pile. Cards are paired and scored using the following method:

- One Honours card + one ordinary card: 5 points
- One Mistress + one ordinary card: 4 points
- One Commander + one ordinary card: 3 points
- One Legate + one ordinary card: 2 points
- Two ordinary cards: 1 point
- One ordinary card: 1/2 point

There are 91 card points in a round. To meet the contract and win a round, the declarer needs a grand total of at least 46 card points.

Bonuses

By carefully managing their card play, players can claim, as a bonus, part, or all the Ante Pot. If two players are eligible for a bonus in a round, only the highest bonus is awarded:

Idiot at the End: if a player wins the last trick of a round with 0 (The Idiot), they win 1/4 of the Ante Pot (round down)

Magician at the End: if a player wins the last trick of a round with -1 (The Magician), they win half the Ante Pot (round down).

Slam: if a player wins all but three tricks in a round, they win 3/4 of the Ante Pot (round down).

Grand Slam: if a player wins all tricks in a round, they win the Ante Pot.

At the end of a round, the player to the dealer's right becomes the next dealer. A game ends once every player has had a chance to deal.

At the end of a game, any money left in the Ante Pot may be divided equally among the players or left in the pot if more games are to be played.

