



Skull King

The Skull King Game of Dice

The trick game of dice with addictive factor by Manfred Reindl for 3 to 6 players from the age of eight.

Game materials

- 36 dice
- 6 screens
- 1 bag
- 1 score pad

Background

Wild treasure hunts, thunder and lightning on the high seas, and no end of rum in the harbour pub! That's a pirate's life. Yet when it comes to making really important decisions, the Skull King game of dice comes into play. With a bit of skill and luck, the cleverest of the pirates wangle tricks from their opponents. The pirate to make the most precise prediction about the tricks leaves the contest as the winner.

Objective of the game

The pirates' contest extends over eight hands maximum (only 7 or 6 in the event of 5 or 6 players). In each hand the players have to show the number of "dice" tricks they intend to win in that hand. And then they have to set about making this claim come true...

Any player who fails to fulfil his bid because they bid too many or too few tricks loses glory and fame. It can be very lucrative to make a no-tricks bid. But it is also a very risky business...

Whereas, during the first hand, each player has only one dice and, therefore, one round at their disposal, from hand to hand

the number of dices increases by one. This means that each hand is one round longer than the previous one. In each hand the players endeavour to achieve as many points as possible. The player with the most points is the winner.

Have you ever played Skull King?

If not, then it is time you did! Then you can skip this section and continue with the "Preparing to play" section.

The rules are really easy to learn for anyone who has already played the "Skull King" card game. **The rules are very similar and only the following points are different to those of the card game:**

1. The highest number (or symbol) always wins, irrespective of the colour of the dice.
2. In the event of a draw, the last thrown number (or symbol) always wins.
3. There is no "Scary Mary" dice and no "Escape dice". Instead, the white flags are on the special dice and on the yellow dice. The yellow dice doesn't count as a special dice.



Preparing to play

One player is responsible for the score pad, enters the names of the players and keeps a note of the points. The points are added up / subtracted immediately in each round, meaning that the current status is always evident. Each player is given a screen to put up in front of them.

All dice are put in the bag and shaken well.

One player is appointed to start the game.

Overview of the dice



There are seven different-coloured dice. The **colour of the dice** indicates the **strength of the dice**. The dice are displayed on the screens according to their value from the top (strong) to the bottom (weak). A black dice has higher numbers than a red dice, for instance. The three dice colours above the line which **only have symbols instead of numbers** are special dice and have special features: see “Special dice”.

On the left-hand side you can see how often each dice occurs in the game (1x Skull King, 3x pirates, 2x Mermaid, 7x black dice, etc.). Next to it, the frequency of the symbols and numbers on each dice of the relevant colour is depicted.

Sequence of a hand

Each player takes dice from the bag and places them behind their screen without the other players seeing them.

The **number of dice changes from one hand to the next**. In the first hand, each player takes only one dice, in the second hand each player takes two dice, etc.

Each hand is divided into rounds. Per hand as many rounds are played as the players have dice.

Each round, **each player has to throw one dice one after the other**. Once each player has thrown a dice, the player that has thrown the highest score gets to keep this dice. In the event of a draw, the highest number with the last thrown number (or symbol) always wins. Winning a throw of the dice is called a “trick”.

After all the players have looked at their dice, they have to decide how many tricks they will win with these dice in this hand.

How to play **YO - HO - HO!**

As a sign that a player has decided on the number of tricks, he stretches a fist out towards the centre of the table. When all the players are holding up their fists towards the middle of the table, they utter the pirates’ battle cry of “YO - HO - HO”. As they do so all the players raise their fists and bang them on the table with each word of the pirates’ battle cry. With the second “HO” the players all open their fists at the same time and spread out as many fingers as the tricks they want to win in that round.

Each player’s trick bid is written down in the narrow column on the notepad.



Then the thrusting and stabbing begins:

The first player starts the first round by throwing the first dice. In a clockwise direction, every other player **throws one of their dice**: however, the **colour already played must be followed**. This means that the player has to throw a dice in the same colour as the one just thrown.



The following players have to throw the same colour as the first dice thrown.

If this isn't possible, the player throws another dice. However, this is only allowed if the player **CANNOT** follow the dice colour already thrown. However, the colour of the first thrown dice still applies for the other players to follow.

Once all the players have thrown their dice, they look to see who has won the trick (i.e. who has won the round). The player that has won the trick is given all the dice from this round, and places them in front of their screen. If a player has won several tricks, he places the dice separately according to tricks, so that it is always easy to see how many tricks each player has already won. **The winner of the trick then throws the first dice of the next round.**

When all the dice have been thrown, the hand comes to an end and the scores are written down.

What types of dice are there, and which dice wins the trick?

When **evaluating the dice**, the **colour** of the numbered dice **no longer counts!** The colour of a dice only shows which numbers are on the dice and indicates a tendency whether higher or lower numbers are likely to be on the dice.

IMPORTANT! The trick is always won by the player that has thrown the **highest number** (irrespective of the prior colour thrown).

If the **same number of points** is thrown in one round, the **last number to be thrown is the "higher"**.

Example: Leon throws a black 6. Now the other players also have to follow the colour by throwing a black dice. Nina throws a black 7. Sophie doesn't have a black dice and throws a 2 with the red dice. Tobias doesn't have a black dice either and throws a yellow 7 with the yellow dice. Jonas throws a black 5.

Nina and Tobias both have a 7 and, hence, have both thrown the highest number. Since Tobias threw his dice after Nina, he wins this round (and hence has won a trick). The fact that Tobias didn't have the last colour to follow no longer counts in the score, since only the highest number last thrown counts. He takes the dice and places them in front of his screen. He then takes a new dice from his stores behind the screen, and starts a new round.

A player must always follow the colour first played. However, even if **they could play the same colour**, a player can **always** throw one of the following **special dice** which bear symbols rather than numbers:



Special dice:



Mermaid

If a skull and crossbones dice is thrown with the Mermaid dice, the Mermaid is **higher than all numbers**. However, the Mermaid is always trumped by Pirates. The Mermaid is more powerful than the Skull King, however. If, in one trick, skull and crossbones are thrown on one Mermaid dice and on one Skull King dice, the Mermaid always wins the trick (irrespective of which other dice scores there are in the trick) and the player receives an additional bonus for throwing it.



Pirates

If a skull and crossbones are thrown on one Pirate dice, the Pirate is **higher than any number and higher than the Mermaid**.

There are then only three ways of **NOT** winning the trick with a thrown skull and crossbones:

- It is thrown **before** another Pirate.
- It is trumped by a **Skull King** in the same round.
- It is trumped by a **Mermaid** since the Mermaid trumps the **Skull King in the same trick**.



Skull King

If the skull and crossbones are thrown on a Skull King dice, it can only be trumped by the **Mermaid**. **All other dice scores are lower** than the Skull King. If a Pirate skull and crossbones are part of the trick won with the Skull King, the player of the Skull King is awarded a bonus. However, the player is only awarded this bonus if the Pirate dice also displays a skull and crossbones. If a flag was thrown with the Pirate dice, the player isn't awarded a bonus.



To recap: **special dice can be thrown at any time!**
Even if it is possible to follow suit!

Please note:

- If the first dice in the round is a special dice, the next dice with numbers to be thrown determines the colour to be followed for the rest of the round.
- If 2 (or 3) Pirate skull and crossbones are thrown in one round, the last dice to be thrown is higher, and it wins the trick.
- If 2 Mermaid skull and crossbones are thrown in one round, the last dice to be thrown is higher, and it wins the trick.



White flag

There is a white flag both on the yellow dice with numbers and on all **special dice**. The white flag has the **value 0** and, hence, is always the lowest dice result.



However, if **all players** throw a white flag, the player to throw **the first white flag** wins the trick.

This is the only situation in which, in the event of a draw, the last thrown symbol doesn't win the trick – instead, it is the first symbol to be thrown.

Scoring

A player who bids the correct number of tricks receives 20 points per trick that they have won.

Example: A player bids three tricks, which they win. In this case, they receive a total of 60 points.



If a player wins more or fewer tricks than they bid, they receive neither plus points nor bonus points. They receive 10 minus points for each trick that deviates from their bid.

Example: A player bids fives tricks but only wins one trick. The difference is four tricks. Hence, they get 40 minus points.

IMPORTANT!

If a player bids “no tricks” and manages not to make a trick, they receive points corresponding to the current round, multiplied by 10.

Example: In round 4, a player makes a bid to win no tricks. At the end of the round they have managed not to win any tricks. They receive 40 points for this (round 4 x 10 points).

However, if a player is not successful in their bid, and they are forced to take one or more tricks, they receive the same number of points, but as minus points. If a player bids “no tricks” and proves to be wrong, it is irrelevant if they get one or, for example, three tricks.

Example: In round 6, a player makes a bid to win no tricks. In the course of the round, however, they had to take two tricks. They receive -60 points for this (round 6 x 10 points).

This means that making a no-trick bid is also risky business! It can mean that a player wins lots of points, or they could also lose a lot of points.



Bonus points






Gold coins are depicted on the skull and crossbones of the dice of the Skull King and the Mermaid. A player can receive bonus points with these dice. However, a player can only win bonus points if they get precisely the same number of tricks as they bid. If a player doesn't manage this, they cannot get any bonus points.

If a player captures one or more Pirates in a trick with the **Skull King**, that player receives a **bonus of 30 points for each Pirate skull and crossbones in the trick.**

If a player has captured the skull and crossbones of the **Skull King with the Mermaid** in a trick, they receive a **Bonus of 50 points** for it.

Overview of the ranking



Example: Leon throws a skull and crossbones  with a Pirate dice. Nina could now determine the colour to be followed with any dice with numbers. Instead, she takes a special dice and throws a skull and crossbones  with the Skull King. Sophie can also decide which dice colour she would like to throw, and throws a  with the black dice. Tobias now has to follow the black colour, and throws a . Jonas has a black dice, but he decides to use a special dice and throws a skull and crossbones  with a Mermaid.

This means that Jonas wins this round, since the Mermaid beats the Skull King. If Jonas also achieves the number of tricks he bids in this hand, he receives an additional 50 bonus points for the captured Skull King skull and crossbones.

If Jonas hadn't thrown a skull and crossbones with the Mermaid, Nina would have won the round with the Skull King and received an additional 30 points for the captured Pirate skull and crossbones if she had also achieved the number of tricks she had bid in this hand.

End of the hand

The number of tricks bid and the points scored are written down on the score pad. Once a hand has been played and the points written down, all the dice are returned to the bag. For the new hand, each player takes one dice more than in the previous hand. The player to start the game changes in a clockwise direction before each hand.

End of the game

When 3 or 4 players are playing, the game ends after 8 hands. When 5 players are playing, it ends after 7 hands and when 6 players are playing, it ends after 6 hands. The player with the **most points** (or the fewest minus points) **wins the game**.



Landlubber scoring

If you prefer to sail in calmer waters, you can play according to the following, simplified point system for landlubbers:

1. If a player's trick bid turns out to be right, they receive 20 points for each trick won.
2. If a player's bid turns out to be wrong, they receive 0 points.
3. If a player bids "no tricks" and manages not to make a trick, they receive points corresponding to the current round, multiplied by 10 (for instance, in the third round this would be 30 points).
4. However, if a player doesn't manage this, and they have to take one or several tricks, they receive minus points corresponding to the current round, multiplied by 10 (for instance, in the fourth round this would 40 minus points).
5. There are no bonus points for capturing a Pirate (by the Skull King) or for capturing the Skull King (by the Mermaid).

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