

I Promise

Whether played for stakes or fun, I Promise is an engaging trick-based game that is a favourite with kids and adults alike.

Number of players

This is a game for two or more players.

Age and skill level

For ages ten and above; level 4.

Cards

Cut the cards to select a dealer; the player who draws the lowest card deals. The dealer distributes the cards until there are not enough to make another complete round of the table. Each player must have the same number of cards. Spare cards are put to one side.

Before the players look at their cards, the dealer turns over the last card dealt to himself or herself as this card indicates the trump suit for the deal.

The players now assess their cards and begin making their 'promises'. The player to the left of the dealer starts the process and must declare how many tricks they 'promise' to win during the hand. The number announced is recorded by the dealer.

How to play

When all players have made their predictions, the trick playing begins, with the player sitting to the left of the dealer laying the first card.

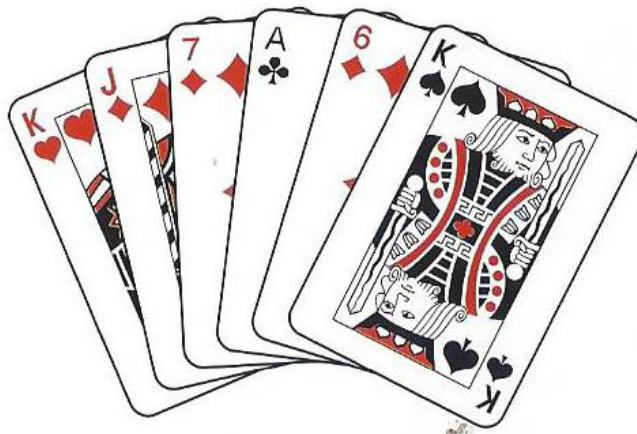
All players must either follow suit or, if they can't, play a trump. If they can do neither, they discard a card. The player laying the highest trump, or if no trumps are played, the highest card that follows in suit, wins that particular trick.

At the end of each trick, the dealer records who won. The trick winner gets to lead off the next trick.

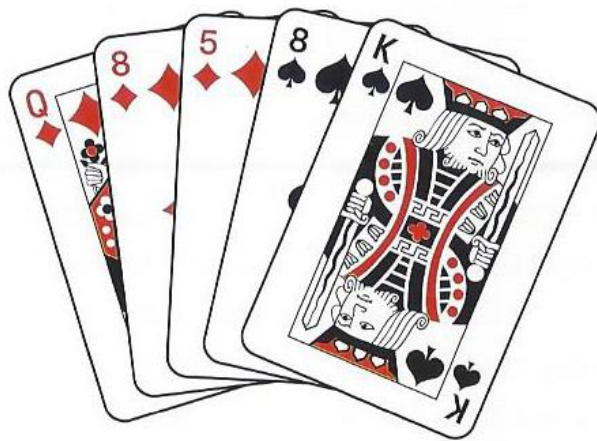
Play continues until the cards run out. The scores are then counted up and players are awarded one point for each winning trick, plus a bonus of ten points if they successfully predicted the number of winning tricks they would make. So, for example, if Tom said he'd win three and did so, he'd earn 13 points for the hand, but if Meryl had said she'd win five but only won four, her total would be four points. Players continue playing hands in this way and the first person to reach a total of 100 points is the winner.

Winning way

Avoid reaching your predicted total too early in the hand, as you may find that your opponents gang up on you to ensure you win an additional trick that will mean you lose your ten-point bonus. For example, if you predict you will win



This player could bid three tricks fairly safely



With only two high cards, this player would be safer bidding two tricks – or three if spades or diamonds were trumps

three tricks and take the first two of eight, you would be unwise to play a high-ranking trump at the next hand. It is very likely that you'll take the trick, but with five hands remaining you cannot afford to win any more, and you may find yourself vulnerable should your opponents decide to conspire against you. If they all play low-ranking cards, you may be forced to take an unwanted victory, taking you over the amount of tricks that you predicted you'd win .

I PROMISE NOT TO

Variations on the game include reducing the number of cards by one each time, moving the deal around the table and predicting how many tricks you won't win. In this version, a player has all his or her points deducted for that round if they end up winning the amount of tricks they said that they wouldn't win.