

Oklahoma

Oklahoma is a game of the Rummy family, not unlike Canasta. It is less complex than Canasta but satisfying to those who like to make lots of melds and hold plenty of cards in their hands.

Number of players

Oklahoma is best for three players, as described here, but can be played by two, four or five players with the same rules.

Cards

Two standard packs are joined together and a Joker added, making a pack of 105 cards in all. The cards rank from Ace (high) to 2 (low), but all eight 2s and the Joker are wild cards (representing any card the player wishes). Ace in a sequence can be either high or low but cannot be used 'round the corner (King, Ace, 2). The cards have special values in scoring, as detailed later.

Players draw to decide dealer, the lowest card drawn denoting the dealer (the Joker counts low). Thereafter the winner of a hand deals the next.

Each player is dealt 13 cards, one at a time. The remaining cards are placed face down in the centre to form the stock. The top card is placed face up beside the stock to begin a discard pile.

How to play

The object is to form sequences or sets. The player to the dealer's left may take the turned-up card into his hand or

refuse it. If he refuses it the second player has the option and if he refuses it the dealer has the option. The card can be taken only by a player who can meld, i.e. use it to complete a set of three or more cards of the same rank, or a sequence of three or more cards of the same suit, which he lays down on the table in front of him. A player who takes the card and melds completes his turn by discarding another card face up in its place, the turn passing to the next player clockwise. Play then proceeds normally as described below.

Should the turn pass round the table and back to dealer's left again, eldest takes the top card from stock into his hand. He may now meld or not, but completes his turn by discarding a card onto the discard pile. Play now proceeds with each player having the option of taking the top card of the discard pile into his hand, or the top card of the stock.

There are two obligations for a player taking the top card of the discard pile. He must immediately meld with it, either by using it to form a new meld or by adding it to a meld he already has on the table. Players may at any time on their turn add cards to their own melds (but not to

their opponents'). Having melded with the top card, the player is obliged to take the rest of the discard pile into his hand. He may then make as many melds with these cards as he pleases. His turn does not end until he discards, which he does by beginning a fresh discard pile.

A melded sequence can be as long as 14 cards (a complete suit with an Ace at each end), but a set of cards of the same rank cannot be of more than four cards, whether or not it includes wild cards.

When a wild card (2 or Joker) is used in a sequence, its user must announce the card that it represents, and it cannot be changed. So a player using a 2 to form a meld of, say, ♥9, ♥8, ♣2, specifying the ♣2 as being the ♥7, cannot later add the ♥7 to the meld and use the ♣2 as the ♥6 or ♥10. However, the Joker has a special property. If a player uses one in a meld, and later acquires the card that the Joker represents, he can, on his turn, replace the Joker with the card and take the Joker into his hand for use a second time. A player can take the discard pile if it is headed by the card his Joker represents, by taking the card to replace his Joker. When discarding, a player is not allowed to discard the ♠Q, unless it is the only card left in his hand.

The deal ends either when one player goes out (i.e. melds all his cards and discards) or when the stock is exhausted. A player taking the last card of the stock is allowed to meld, if able, and discard, whereupon the deal ends, and no further

melds are allowed.

A player cannot go out without discarding. It follows that a player with two cards only in his hand cannot go out by drawing a card from stock to form a set or sequence with them, because this would leave him with no card to discard, so his only chance is to acquire cards to add to his existing melds. When a player goes out, his opponents cannot add cards from their hands to their melds.

At the end of the deal, each player scores for the cards in his melds, with the cards still held in his hand debited against him. Cards value as follows:

Joker: melded 100; in hand -200.

♠Q: melded 50; in hand -100.

Ace: melded 20; in hand -20.

K, Q, J, 10, 9, 8 (excluding ♠Q):
melded 10; in hand -20.

7, 6, 5, 4, 3: melded 5; in hand -5.

2: melded, the value of the card it represents (except ♠Q, when it is worth 10); unmelded -20.

A player who goes out is given a bonus score of 100 points, but not if he goes out on his first turn. A player who goes out who has not previously melded is said to go out 'concealed', and gets an additional bonus of 250 (this does not count towards his running game score). The game score is 1,000 points, the game ending with the deal on which a player passes that score. If two or three pass 1,000 on the same deal, the highest score wins. The winner receives a bonus of 200 for game.