



Continental

Continental is a game like *Gin Rummy*, *Remigio* or *Canasta*, whose main objective is to form combinations with cards. It has two characteristics that makes it different: the melds that must be made after each deal are fixed and the players are allowed to take any players' discard, even if it is not their turn, drawing another "penalty" card from the stock.

- **Object of the game**

The principal object is to meld the cards in the established combinations and put them down on the table, scoring all the cards the player holds in his hands, melded or not. At the end of the last hand, the player with the lowest score wins the game.

- **The pack**

Continental is played with several Spanish poker decks of 52 cards, although the English poker decks with the same number of cards are also admitted. Two jokers are needed for each deck.

Up to four players, the game must be started with two decks and finished with three. From five up to eight players, it is recommended to start with two decks, to add one more after the first two hands, and additional one after the next two hands.

- **Number of players**

Continental is always an individual game played from two up to eight players.

- **Rank and value of cards**

The rank of cards, from highest to lowest, is: king (K), horse (Q), jack (J), ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two and ace.

The value of cards is shown in the following table:

Value of cards	
Joker	50 points
Ace	20 points
K, Q, J, 10, 9 and 8	10 points
7, 6, 5, 4, 3 and 2	5 points

- **The deal**

The first dealer is chosen at random. After the shuffle, the deck is cut by the player to the dealer's left and the dealer will give six cards face down to each player, one at a time, anticlockwise. Then, he will divide the undealt deck in two stocks, placed in the centre of the table; one for drawing the cards in the player's turn and the other one for drawing the "penalty" cards. The first stock usually has more cards than the second one. From the first stock, the dealer will turn the top card face up beside it to begin the discard pile.

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• Melds

In each hand, the players can make these two melds:

- *Trio*. Three cards of the same rank.
- *Sequence*. Four cards of the same suit, consecutive in rank.

The joker can be used to substitute any card of the deck. A trio can be made with two jokers and one natural card but not with three jokers only.

The maximum number of cards in a trio is determined by the number of cards in a deck (four cards in each deck plus two jokers). In the sequences, this number is thirteen (all the cards of the same suit), though some of them can be substituted by jokers. The sequences can start and finish with any card and the ace can be placed between king and two.

In *Continental*, the melds that must be made by the players are fixed and those melds must be played in the following order:

- *First hand*. Six cards are dealt and *two trios* must be melded.
- *Second hand*. Seven cards are dealt and *one trio* and *one sequence* must be made.
- *Third hand*. Eight cards in *two sequences*.
- *Fourth hand*. Dealing nine cards, *three trios*.
- *Fifth hand*. Ten cards are dealt to form *two trios* and *one sequence*.
- *Sixth hand*. With eleven cards, *one trio* and *two sequences*.
- *Seventh hand*. Dealing twelve cards, *three sequences*.

Only if three or four players participate, the game can be prolonged, dealing up to sixteen cards and following according to the explained order.

• Penalty cards

In *Continental*, any player can take any player's discard.

If the player takes the discard in his turn, the play goes on normally. If the player takes the discard out of his turn, he must take another card from the "penalty" card stock. Due to this double drawing, a player, after melding the fixed combinations, can hold cards in his hand without melding.

If any player wishes to draw his own discard, if the other players have not taken it, he must take another card from the "penalty" card stock.

• The play

The player to the dealer's right, the leader, starts the game, taking the top card of the discard pile or, if he wishes, drawing the top card of the stock. Thereafter, he discards one of his cards, placing it face up on the discard pile, and finishing his turn. If the leader does not draw the card from the discard pile, any player can take it following the turn, drawing another card from the "penalty" card stock. Each turn comprises a draw and a discard, which ends the player's turn.

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During a player's turn, if he has succeeded in melding the fixed combinations, he may put them down on the table, even if he is not able to finish the game, holding his remaining cards, melded or not.

The advantages for a player of putting the melded cards down are:

- *To reduce his penalty points if any player finishes.*
- *To add his not melded cards to other player's previous melds.* In the sequences, he cannot divide them and put repeated cards.
- *To use the jokers;* after putting down his cards, any player can substitute one joker for the natural card they represented, being able to use it in any other sequence. A player can place one joker in a trio, in order to avoid that the other players may use it.

On the other hand, putting down has the disadvantage that for the other players will be easier to finish the game.

When the hand is finished, the cards are shuffled by the next dealer for the next hand. When the last hand is finished, the player with the lowest score wins the game.

- **The scoring**

When a player finishes melding out his whole hand, the rest count the total value of the cards they hold in their hands, even if they are part of a combination.

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