



Tresillo

Tresillo is a trick card game for three players. It originated in Spain at the beginning of the 17th century, when it was also known as *El Hombre* (The Man). *Tresillo* spread rapidly across Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries and became a very famous and fashionable game, enjoying a position of prestige similar to *Bridge* today.

- **Object of the game**

The object is to try to win five tricks, if the player is the *Declarer*, known also as the *Player*, or to avoid that this one obtains, if they are the *Opposition*, to score the points played in the hand.

- **The pack**

Tresillo is played with a Spanish deck of 40 cards.

- **Number of players**

Tresillo is basically played by three players. It is very common for four people to take part, but there are only three active players in each hand. The fourth player will be the dealer, but he does not win or pay like the others.

- **Rank and value of cards**

The rank of card depends on if it is a trump suit or not.

Rank of cards when a suit is declared trump.

- Coins and cups: ace of swords ("espada"), mala card, ace of clubs ("basto"), point ("punto"), king (12), horse (11), jack (10), two, three, four, five and six.
- Swords and clubs: ace of swords ("espada"), mala card, ace of clubs ("basto"), king (12), horse (11), jack (10), seven, six, five, four and three.

Rank of cards when a suit is not declared trump.

- Coins and cups: king (12), horse (11), jack (10), ace, two, three, four, five, six and seven.
- Swords and clubs: king (12), horse (11), jack (10), seven, six, five, four, three and two.

For each hand, one of the suits is chosen as the trump suit. Nowadays, it is usually played with a *favourite* or *preferential suit*. Most common way of playing is by choosing, generally, a short suit (swords or clubs) as the preferential suit for all the hands. In the bids, the plays with preferential suit have preference and a higher score.

Regardless the trump suit, there are always two cards that are considered as trumps: ace of swords, called *espada*, and ace of clubs, called *basto*. *Mala* card varies according to the trump suit. If it is coins or cups, mala is the seven of the chosen suit, and if it is swords or clubs, it is the two of that suit.

The aces of coins and cups are known as punts, and they are the fourth trump when its suit is chosen as trump.

The cards have no value in points since just the number of obtained tricks is considered, to win or lose the game.

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• The deal

In each hand, the dealer is one of the players. If the players were three people, in each hand, the player to the *leader's* left would be the dealer.

In this case, the rest of the game is played as the players were four. Next to the dealer, a pot is placed to collect the players' chips.

Four cards are drawn, one of each suit, and placed face down on the table. Each player takes one of these cards. The player who drew the card of coins has the choice of seat, the one with the card of cups sits to his right, the card of swords to this player's right, the fourth place is occupied by the player who drew the card of clubs. The player with the card of coins is the *dealer*, the next player to his right is the *leader*, the one to his right is *in the middlehand*, and the fourth player is the *rearhand*.

The dealer distributes nine cards to each active player, one at a time, anticlockwise, and the remaining thirteen cards are placed face down on the table. The players, trying to improve their hands, will use these undealt cards.

The turn to deal passes to the right after each hand.

• The bidding

The player to dealer's right speaks first, followed by the rest of active players in anticlockwise order. Speaking in the auction is actually called singing ("*cantar*"). It continues around the table, for several turns if necessary, until a declarer is determined, having passed the other players.

In all the bids, the declarer has to take more tricks than either defender. The bids, in ascending order, are:

- *Play*. With no preferential suit. The declarer chooses the trump suit, discards the number of cards that he estimates necessary and replaces them by the same number of cards from the top of the stock.
- *Play with preferential suit*. This is like the previous one but the trump suit is the preferential suit.
- *Flip*. The declarer turns over the top card of the stock to reveal the trump suit and takes it. Then, he discards the cards he does not need it and draws from the stock the necessary number to have nine cards in his hand.
- *No change*. The declarer chooses the trump suit and plays with the cards he holds in his hands, without discarding. However, his defenders can discard some cards in the normal way.
- *No change with preferential suit*. This is the same as the previous bid but it ranks higher because the preferential suit is chosen as the trump suit.

• Bola

Winning all nine tricks is called *bola* and is rewarded with an extra payment. If the player wins the first five tricks, he must decide whether to claim a win or to play on. If he leads to the sixth trick rather than claiming, he is considered to be trying for *bola*. If the player succeeds, he gets the additional payment for *bola*, but if he loses a trick, he has to pay the others for his failed *bola*, though he is still paid for the basic contract.

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• The auction

After the deal, there is an auction. The players, starting by the *leader*, declare their bids with the cards in their hands to establish the *Player*, the one who commits to winning five tricks or more and will decide the trump suit. If two players want to play the same contract, the player who has the highest priority will be the *Player*.

When bidding, the players use the following expressions:

- *I pass*. The player does not want play, and takes no further part in the auction. If in the first turn, all the players pass, that hand is cancelled, and the turn passes to the next dealer, who must place one more chip in the *pot* as usual.
- *I play*. The player considers his hand good enough for playing. This expression can be announced only in the first turn of the auction, and once it is declared, the next players must say "I pass" or "I play more".
- *I play more*. The player is prepared to over bid the one made by a previous player. If this player is the *leader*, he will equal the previous bid made by the middlehand or rearhand. The players can play more until one of them reaches the highest bid, *No change with preferential suit*.

• Estuches

The highest three trumps, *espada*, *mala*, *basto* are collectively known as *estuche*.

These cards have special characteristics:

- *Espada*. The player is not forced to play it, even if a defender plays a trump card and he has not got any other trump.
- *Mala*. The player who holds this card is only forced when the *espada* is led and he has no other trumps.
- *Basto*. The player who holds it is forced to use it when the *espada* and *mala* is led and he has no other trumps.

• The play

After the *Player* has determined the trump suit, by simply announcing it or by turning the top card of the stock face up, the players can try to improve their hands by getting some cards from the stock. Once the *Player* has discarded some of his cards, it is the turn for the *Opposition*. The *Defenders* play against the *Player*, and will decide between themselves who is the *first Defender*, who will try to defeat the *Player* by taking as many tricks as possible, and who is the *second Defender*, who will play to help the first opponent.

The *first Defender* has the chance to discard and draw new cards from the stock after the *Player* has done so, and finally the *second Defender* can do the same. If any cards are left in the stock, the *second Defender* can now discard face down any number of cards up to this number, and draw an equal number of replacements from the stocks. If any cards remain in the stock after the second discards, they are called "Sleeping cards", as they do not take part in the game.

The cards that have been discarded by the players also remain face down until the end of the play. The players are not allowed to look again at the cards they discarded.

There is no obligation for discarding.

The *leader* leads to the first trick and the *Defenders* play one card in their turn. The play is anticlockwise. The winner of a trick leads to the next. Each trick is won by the highest trump played to it, or if no trump is played, by the highest card of the suit led.

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There is an obligation for assisting, playing any card they wish from the suit led. A player with no card of the suit led may play any card, including a trump. The completed tricks are stored face down and crossed in front of the player.

Although players are not allowed to look at the discards, they can inspect the cards played to previous tricks irrespective of who won the tricks.

The cards are played out in nine tricks. After the play, the players score and note the result of the game and the payments that are made with chips, according to whether the contract was successful. The main payments are made to and from the pot. There are other payments between the players that depend on the rank of the contract.

The *Player* wins the hand by making more tricks than any of the *Defenders* and loses it when he makes an equal or lower number of tricks than the *Defenders*. If the *Player* wins the same number of tricks, it is called *puesta*, and if he wins less, it is called *codillo*.

If the *Player* takes just one trick, but cleverly arranges for the opponents to win four tricks each, it is called a *royal puesta* ("puesta real").

• The surrender

If the contract is *Play* or *Flip*, the *Player* can propose to surrender, just before playing to the fourth trick. The declarer will choose this option when the risk of *codillo* outweighs the chances of winning. If the opponents accept the surrender, the result is a *puesta*. But either opponent has the right not to accept the surrender, but to say "I continue" or "I follow". In this case, the play continues, and the opponent who desired to continue takes over the role of *Player*, while the original *Player* becomes a *Defender*.

A *No change* contract cannot be surrendered.

• The scoring

The dealer puts always 5 chips into the pot. When the outcome of the contract is known, payment is made in tokens. There are two parts to this:

- *The puesta system*. For each hand, there is an "amount in play". This is the amount that the *Player* will win from the pot if successful, or pay to the pot if the result is *puesta*, or pay to the pot and the winning opponent, in case of *codillo*.
- *The conditions*. These are direct payments between the *Player* and the other players, depending on the contract undertaken, and certain other events.

• The puesta system

The "amount in play" depends on the value of chips in the pot, the amounts (if any) noted in the paper, and whether the pot already contains an amount paid in by a previous losing *Player*. There are three main possible cases:

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- *The first puesta*. This is the case when there are no outstanding debts on the paper scoresheet. In this case, the “amount in play” is whatever is in the pot plus one chip for each player at the table. According to the result of the play, the payments are handled as follows:

- *Juego sacado*. The declarer wins the contents of the pot plus one chip from each of the other players.
- *Puesta*. The declarer pays the “amount in play” to the pot.
- *Codillo*. The declarer plays the “amount in play” to the pot, and pays the same amount to the winning *Defender*.

- *Puesta in the pot*. This is the case where the pot contains an amount paid in by an unsuccessful *Player*. As with the *first puesta*, the “amount in play” is whatever is in the pot plus one chip for each player at the table. The payments are handled similarly to the *first puesta*, except that no further chips are put in the pot. Instead, any further *puestas* are recorded on the scoresheet as debts; these *reserved puestas* are played for after the contents of the pot have been won.

- *Juego sacado*. The *Player* wins the contents of the pot plus one chip from each of the other players.
- *Puesta*. The amount in play is written on the scoresheet in the row belonging to the *Player*. This is a debt that the *Player* will have to pay later.
- *Codillo*. The amount in play is written on the scoresheet in the row belonging to the *Player*, and the *Player* pays the same amount to the winning opponent.

- *Reserved puesta*. This is the case where the scoresheet has one or more debts on it that has not been cancelled, but the pot does not contain the amount paid in by a previous unsuccessful *Player*. In this case, the pot will only contain the single chips put in by the players who have dealt since the contents of the pot were last won. The “amount in play” is the largest debt, reserved *puesta*, recorded on the scoresheet, plus the amount of chips in the pot. The payments are handled as follows:

- *Juego sacado*. The *Player* wins the contents of the pot and the reserved *puesta* that was being played for. Therefore, the player against whom the reserved *puesta* was written has to pay that amount to the successful *Player*, and the corresponding number on the scoresheet is crossed out, because the debt has been paid. If the successful *Player* is the same player whose reserved *puesta* is being played for, then the *Player* simply wins the contents of the pot and the debt is crossed out.

The *Player* wins the contents of the pot plus one chip from each of the other players.

- *Puesta*. The amount in play is written on the scoresheet in the row belonging to the *Player*. This is a debt that the *Player* will have to pay later.
- *Codillo*. The amount in play is written on the scoresheet in the row belonging to the *Player*, and the *Player* pays the same amount to the winning opponent.

When the original and new *Player* are both unsuccessful, both have to pay the amount in play to the pot.

If this is the *first puesta*, in that, the scoresheet has no outstanding debts (*reserved puestas*) and the pot does not contain any previous *Player*'s losses, then both *Players* pay the amount in play into the pot, which will make the “amount in play” in the next hand larger than usual.

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If it is not the *first puesta*, but there is already a *puesta* in the pot or a *reserved puesta* on the scoresheet, then two new *reserved puestas* are generated: each of the *Players* has a new debt equal to the amount in play written in their row on the scoresheet. When the time comes, these two equal *reserved puestas* will be played for separately, the order does not matter.

In general, when a *Tresillo* game finishes, there may be chips remaining in the pot and *reserved puestas* remaining on the paper. Normally, the chips would be distributed equally among the players, so that they can settle up in money corresponding to the quantity of chips they have won or lost in the game.

This paper with the *reserved puestas* will be kept to use in next *Tresillo* session between the same players. At the start of this new session, the dealer will put one chip into the pot and the first hand will be played for the largest *reserved puesta* on the paper. If the same group of players are not expecting to play again in the near future, then each of the players should pay the money equivalent of their debt recorded on the paper into a common fund, which is then distributed equally among the players.

• The conditions

Conditions are additional payments, paid either to the *Player* from each of the other players or from the *Player* to each of the other players.

Conditions score	
Play	0 points
Flip	2 points
No change	20 points
Bola	100 points
For each estuche	1 point
Contraestuche (For each missing estuche)	1 point
For winning the first five tricks	1 point

Opponents cannot score for *estuche* or *primeras*. If the *Player* gives up, the declarer still has to pay *conditions* as though the result was *puesta*. This is not affected if another player takes over as *Player*, the original *Player* has to pay, and *conditions* do not apply to the new *Player*.

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