



# Mus

*Mus* is the most popular Spanish game, due to its attractiveness and characteristics. This game was born in Basque Country

- **Object of the game**

The winner of the game is the team who wins three sets. The first team who reaches 40 points wins each set. There is the option to make shorter the game by playing to the best of three sets (win two sets).

Generally several hands are needed to reach those 40 points, accumulated according to the further rules.

- **The pack**

For *Mus*, a Spanish deck of 40 cards is used.

- **Number of players**

*Mus* can be played individually from two up to six players, or four or six players, playing in groups of two and three people, respectively.

The most interesting and popular one is played by fours, playing in partnership, the one we are going to explain.

- **Rank and value of cards**

In this game, the suits have no significance. For all the suits, the rank of cards, from highest to lowest, is: king (12) or three, horse (11), jack (10), seven, six, five, four and two or ace.

The value of cards, in any of four suits, is: each king, three, horse or jack counts as 10 points; the rest of cards, their pip values, except for the twos, that, like the aces, count one point.

The threes are equivalent to kings and the twos are equivalent to aces. So for the purposes of *Mus*, the pack effectively consists of eight kings and eight aces. However, it can also be played just with 4 kings and 4 aces, conserving, in this case, the threes and twos their natural value.

- **The deal**

Each player draws one card. The two players with the highest cards play against the other two. The player who draws the highest card is the *leader*, his partner will sit in front of him and, to his right, the opponent who draws the next highest card.

The player to the leader's left, after the shuffle, will offer the pack to the player to his left to cut it. Next, he will deal four cards to each player, one at a time, anticlockwise.

- **Lances (Bet headings)**

Each player, with his four card, will compete to establish who has the best cards in each of four different categories:

- *High (Grande)*. The player who has the highest cards according to their rank wins the bet on *high*. The comparison is made between the highest card of each player. On equal values, the second cards are compared, and so on. The checking has to be made at the end of the hand, when the bets are made for all the four lances.

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- *Low (Pequeña)*. The concept is the same as *high*, but reversing the value of the cards. The winner is the player with the lowest cards.

- *Pairs (Pares)*. Before betting, players must say if they have pairs or not, using expressions like *pairs yes*, *pairs not*, or simply *yes*. The bets can be made when at least one player of each couple has pairs. If so, bets are made like before, but only between the players who have pairs. If all four players say "no", then there will be no score for *pairs* at all on that hand, and of course no betting.

The hierarchy between combinations, from highest to lowest, is:

- Double Pair (Duples): the four cards have the same value or they match doing two pairs. When two players have *duples*, the winner is the one with the highest cards, just like *high*.
- Trio (Medias): three of the four cards have the same value. When two players have *medias*, the winner is the one with the highest trio. If similar, the fourth card does not mark any difference and the winner will be the nearest to the leader in anticlockwise order.
- Pairs (Pares): two of the four cards have the same value and the other two cards have different values. When two players have *pairs*, the winner is the one with the highest pair. If similar, the other two cards do not mark any difference and the winner will be the nearest to the leader in anticlockwise order.

- *Game (Juego)*. Same as *pairs*. Before betting for *game*, players must announce if they have *game* or not. *Game* is made when, adding the value of the four cards, the sum is 31 or higher. The bets can be made when at least one player of each couple has *game*. If so, bets are made like for the other *categories*, but only between the players who have *game*.

The hierarchical order between different combinations of *game*, from best to worst, is: 31, 32, 40, 37, 36, 35, 34 and 33.

When nobody has got *game*, *point (punto)* is played. In this case, all players may bet. The winner is the one with the highest sum, counting the same as for *game*. The best possible combination is a sum of 30 going down until 4, which is the worst.

*Note.* - In *Mus*, there cannot be a tie. When two or more players have the same cards, the winner will be the leader or the nearest to the leader.

## • The play

*Mus* is a proposal that all four players should have a chance to improve their hands by discarding one or more cards. This can only happen if all four players agree. The players speak in turn starting with the leader. If all four agree to change cards by saying "Mus", the discard takes place as described below, but if any player disagrees by saying "No Mus", there is no opportunity to discard and the game proceeds immediately to the first round of betting.

If everyone say "Mus", each player in turn, starting with the leader, discards from one to four cards face down and is dealt an equal number of new cards. The players look at their new hands and there is another opportunity to propose "Mus" as before.

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If the players keep on agreeing to *Mus*, eventually the dealer will run out of cards. If this happens, while more than one player requires cards, all the discards are shuffled to form a new stock to deal from. If the cards run out while only one player is short, then, the cards excluding that player's discard are shuffled to make a new stock.

During the first hand, instead of saying "Mus", each player takes the pack of cards and leaves it on the right. If none of them *cut the Mus*, the player who was the leader, and so on makes the action of dealing the cards. Finally, the player who *cut the Mus* becomes the leader during the rest of the first hand.

Once the first hand is finished, the lead changes every hand, advancing anticlockwise.

If the dealer, when he is distributing the cards to each player, shows one card inadvertently, is *Seen Mus* forced. The players are able to remain *served* if they wish it, without going to the discard.

A hand finishes when the four bets have been made. At the end of this one, all the players must show their cards in order to score the played hand. A set finishes when, after the hands that are necessary, one of the teams reaches or exceeds the total of 40 stones or 8 amarrakos (Pack of 5 stones). Also, a set finishes, without scoring it, when a player accepts an *Ordago*. *Ordago* is a special bet, a proposal for an immediate showdown, staking the outcome of the whole game on the current category. During any of the four rounds, a player instead of betting or raising in the normal way may say *Ordago*. The opponents must then either *fold*, conceding the loss of that category, or *accept* it, in which case there the cards are shown and the game is decided.

## • The betting

There is a round of betting for each four category : *High, Low, Pairs, Game*, and they must be taken in strict order. The leader begins each round. The *leader* may announce each round so that the players know what they are currently betting on, but this is not really necessary as the four rounds always occur in sequence.

The leader begins each round of betting, who may either *pass* or *bet*. If the leader passes, the next player, in anticlockwise order, may pass or bet, and so on around the table. If all four players pass, there is no betting in that category, and the *leader* begins the round of betting for the next category.

A bet is a proposal to stake some number of stones, at least 2, on the outcome of the category. If no number is mentioned, 2 are assumed. It is also possible to bet a higher number by saying for example "I bet 5".

If someone bets, the opposing team must decide whether to *fold*, *accept* or *raise* the stake further.

If the opponents *fold* in response to the first bet of a round, the side that bet immediately wins one stone for "No". If the opponents see the bet, the scoring is deferred to the showdown at the end of the hand. Raising is a proposal to increase the stake further, by at least 2. If no number is stated, 2 are assumed, but it is possible to raise by any higher amount. After a raise, the other side now has to decide whether to *fold*, *see* or *raise* further, and so on.

The round of betting continues until one side or the other either folds, accepts or raises the last bet. If one side folds, the other side immediately takes the number of stones previously staked.

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## • The scoring

As *Mus* is played in partnership, for every category, the winner is the team to which belongs the player with the best combination, although that player did not participate actively in the betting. When nobody has betted for some of the categories, it is said to be *gone in pass* (in *pairs* and *game* this is applicable only when there is at least one player for each partnership who is able to bet).

After doing the bets all cards must be checked and score updated according to those bets. All the achieved stones must be accounted in the same order that categories are played: *high*, *low*, *pairs* and *game* or *point*. This is very important when both partnerships are near to the 40 stones needed to win the set. The pair who reaches the 40th stone, wins immediately the set, and subsequent bets in the same hand are ignored.

These are the rules to resolve who is the winner for each category:

- *High*: the winner is the player with the highest cards according to the explained hierarchy. The winner gets the betted number of stones or one stone if this category is *gone in pass*.
- *Low*: the same criteria are applied, using the reverse hierarchy.
- *Pairs and Game*: the checking is made according to the explained criteria about the hierarchy between different combinations.
- *Point*: the winner is the player with the highest sum. The partnership that wins the bet gets the agreed number of stones or one stone if this bet is *gone in pass*.

The score is counted with small stones (chips) or other convenient small objects and 22 stones are needed. They all start in a saucer in the middle of the table, and are taken and placed in front of the four players to represent the score. Each partnership decides who will keep the ones, *stones*, and who will keep the fives, *amarrakos*.

When a partnership wins one or more stones, the player keeping the ones simply takes the appropriate number from the saucer and places them in front of himself. When he has five, he gives one to his partner, who is keeping the fives, and puts the other four back in the saucer. When taking or moving stones you should always tell the opponents how many you are taking, and why.

When the player keeping the fives has collected seven *amarrakos*, representing 35 single stones, he must warn the opponents by saying "inside", to alert them to the fact that his team is within 5 stones to win. Then, the seven *amarrakos* are then put back into the saucer. After a team is *inside*, as soon as the partner keeping the stones has collected 5 stones (making a total score of 40), they win.

When collecting the bets for *pairs* and *game* or *point*, when nobody is able to play *game*, as well as the points won according to the bets, players may sum the stones corresponding to their tricks, according to the following rules:

- If the category is *gone in pass*, only the player with the best combination and his partner can count.
- If one of the partnership has declined a bet, only the other team can count and collect the won stones.
- If the bet has been accepted, only the winning pair can count.

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The combinations for *pairs* are paid with these values:

- **1 stone** for *pairs*
- **2 stones** for *trio* (*medias*).
- **3 stones** for *double pair* (*duples*).

The combinations for *game* are paid with these values:

- **2 stones** when the value is different than 31.
- **3 stones** when the value is 31.

In *punto* there is not any reward according to the combination, but the winner pair gets *1 stone* for this *lance*.

## • The signs

The players are not allowed to show their cards to their partners. However, certain signs are allowed, by which players can communicate to their partner what cards they hold. Naturally, they will try to do this while the opponents are not looking at. Signals relating to specific card holdings must be truthful. The signs in general use are:

- *To bite the lower lip*. It indicates that one has 2 kings for the play of *high*. In order to indicate 3 kings, the lower lip is bitten towards a side.
- *To show tip of the tongue*. It indicates that one player has 2 aces for the play of *low*. To indicate 3 aces, the tongue is shown towards a side.
- *To distort the mouth to one side*. In order to indicate that one player has *medias*.
- *To rise both eyebrows*. To indicate *duples*.
- *To wink*. To indicate that for the play of *game*, one player has 31.

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