

How to Play English Whist: A Favorite Card Game of the Regency



The game is easy to learn, but takes skill to master.



Brought to you by [Linore Rose Burkard](#)
Author of Romance to Warm the Heart, Fiction to Stir the Soul

Whist was a popular card game of the Georgian and Regency eras and is still popular today. But the game (by other names) goes back even further than the 18th century. In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the card game "Trump" is thought to be an ancestor of whist. During the Regency, it was often played with stakes (wagers). But many parlors saw card parties where the goal was strictly for fun. Here you can learn for yourself why the game has lasted for centuries and is enjoyed by so many.

Whist is for either 2 players or 2 teams with 2 players each. If playing in teams, the team members should sit across from each other, not side by side.

The winner is the first to accumulate 5 points by taking "tricks."

Use: a standard 52-card deck.

Aces are high, 2s are low.

The trump suit changes with each deal.

To Start:

Choose a dealer. Shuffle the deck and allow each player to draw a card. The one with the lowest card is the dealer. The dealer re-shuffles the deck and distributes all the cards to the players save one, which is reserved. That card determines the trump suit for the round and is given to the dealer.

To Play:

The player to the left of the dealer lays down a starter card of his or her choice. Going clockwise, players must follow suit if possible, trying to beat the played card with a higher one. If they cannot follow suit, they lay down any of their other cards, but these are forfeits, and cannot win a round unless it's a trump card. Each player can play one card per round. The highest card played (or the highest trump card) wins the round or "takes the trick." The winner lays down the starter card for the next round.

To Score:

No points are scored until after 6 tricks are won. For example, if 7 are won, the player or team gets 1 point.

If nine are won, 3 points are scored.

If four are won, no points are scored.

The first to win 5 points wins the game.

For a quick YouTube demonstration of how to play whist, [click here](#). (Links change over time. If this link doesn't work, simply do a search on YouTube or Rumble for how to play.)

Fun Note: Whist is often enjoyed by the characters in my first Regency trilogy, starting with, [Before the Season Ends](#). The Prince Regent himself was fond of it, though reportedly his favorite was ecarté.

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