



Tricky-Tactics

Components

- 1 standard 40-card suit deck.
- 12 Location cards forming a 3×4 grid. Each Location belongs to one suit; there are 3 Locations per suit.
- Player markers: 4 colors of cubes. Provide **12 per color** in the box; use **10 per player** in play.
- First-lead marker.
- One-page player aid and a printable scoring sheet.

Objective

Win tricks, then immediately change control at the matching suit's Location by placing or removing cubes. Score frequently at the end of each phase, then earn small, capped district bonuses at round end. Highest total after the final round wins.

Core Concepts

- **Location:** one card space on the 3×4 grid. Three Locations per suit (♣ ♦ ♥ ♠) form a **district**.
- **Control:** you control a Location if you have strictly more of your cubes there than any single opponent. Ties control nothing.
- **Phase:** a short sequence of tricks using half your hand. Each round has two phases.
- **Round:** two phases back-to-back, then round-end scoring.
- **Trick:** each player plays one card; highest of the led suit wins.

Setup

1. Build the 3×4 grid of 12 Locations.
2. Each player chooses a color and takes **10** cubes. Keep **1** extra cube as a scoring counter and **1** spare nearby.
3. Shuffle the 40-card deck. Randomly choose the first leader and give them the first-lead marker.

Dealing and Phases

Markers remain on the board between phases and rounds.

- **2 players:** Deal **10** cards to each. Split secretly into **two 5-card hands**. Play Hand A (5 tricks), score; then Hand B (5 tricks), score. Play 2 rounds total.
- **3 players:** Deal **12** cards to each. Split secretly into **two 6-card hands**. Play Hand A (6 tricks), score; then Hand B (6 tricks), score. **No burn**. Play 3 rounds total.
- **4 players:** Deal **10** cards to each. Split secretly into **two 5-card hands**. Play Hand A (5 tricks), score; then Hand B (5 tricks), score. Play 4 rounds total.

Lead: Within a phase, the trick winner leads the next trick. At the start of each new round, rotate first lead clockwise.

Trick Play

1. Leader plays any card from hand.
2. In clockwise order, each player must follow suit if able; otherwise play any card.
3. Highest card of the led suit wins the trick. Keep won tricks face down for tie-breaks only.

Winner's Action

After you win a trick, take exactly **one** Action in the trick's suit:

- **Add**: place 1 of your cubes from supply onto that suit's Location.
- **Remove (opponent)**: remove 1 opponent cube from that suit's Location; return it to that opponent's supply.
- **Remove (self)**: remove 1 of your cubes from that suit's Location; return it to your supply.

If your chosen Action is illegal, you must attempt a different Action in the same suit. If none are legal, nothing happens.

Scoring

Phase end (after each half-hand)

- Score **+1** for each Location you **control**. Ties score zero.

Round end (after both phases)

- **District Bonus**: for each suit where you control **2 or more** of its 3 Locations, score **+1**.
Cap +2 per player per round.

End of Game

After the final round, highest score wins.

Ties: most of your cubes on the map, then most tricks won in the final phase, then share the victory.

Examples

- **Illegal first choice**: You win a ♥ trick and declare Remove (opponent), but there is no opponent cube at the ♥ Location. You must try a different ♥ Action (Add or Remove self). If neither is legal, nothing happens.
- **Remove self as tempo**: You hold few cubes in supply. You win a ♣ trick at a Location you already control and choose Remove (self) to pull a cube back to supply for a later Add.
- **District planning**: Near round end, you control 2 of the 3 ♦ Locations but are tied at many others. Securing any ♦ Location keeps your **+1** district bonus even if you fall behind elsewhere.

FAQ

Q: Do cubes reset between phases or rounds? A: No. Cubes stay on the board until moved by Actions or removed by scoring-neutral choices.

Q: Can I pass instead of acting? A: Only if **no** Action in the trick's suit is legal.

Q: Does Remove (self) really matter? A: Yes. With low supply and frequent scoring, reclaiming a cube is a real tempo tool.

Q: Is there trump or powers? A: No. Tricky-Tactics is pure trick-taking plus visible area control.

Glossary

- **Add:** place one of your supply cubes onto the trick's suit Location.
- **Control:** strictly more of your cubes than any single opponent at a Location.
- **District:** the 3 Locations of a suit; used only for the round-end bonus.
- **Phase:** half-hand of tricks followed by scoring.
- **Remove (opponent/self):** take a cube off a Location and return it to the appropriate supply.
- **Round:** two phases back-to-back, then round-end scoring.
- **Suit:** ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠; each maps to exactly three Locations on the grid.

Two Player Automa

- 2 Player games can benefit from a 3 player game play. [See these rules to add automa to game play.](#)

One-Page Player Aid

Deal & Phases 2P: 5+5. 3P: 6+6. 4P: 5+5. Score at phase end. Rotate first lead each round.

Trick Follow suit if able. Highest of led suit wins.

After you win Take **one** Action in the trick's suit: **Add** | **Remove (opponent)** | **Remove (self)**.

Scoring Phase end: **+1 per controlled Location** (ties zero). Round end: **District Bonus +1 per suit with 2+ of 3, cap +2/player.**

Printable Scoring Sheet

Use one row per player. One box per Location per phase. Circle controlled Locations, then sum.

Player: _____

Round 1 — Phase A ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 1 — Phase B ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 1 District Bonus (cap +2): _____

Round 2 — Phase A ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 2 — Phase B ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 2 District Bonus (cap +2): _____

Round 3 — Phase A ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 3 — Phase B ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 3 District Bonus (cap +2): _____

Round 4 — Phase A ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 4 — Phase B ♣♣♣ ♦♦♦ ♥♥♥ ♠♠♠ Total: _____

Round 4 District Bonus (cap +2): _____

Final score (sum of all phases + district bonuses): _____

Tie 1: cubes on map _____ Tie 2: tricks won in final phase _____

Notes: _____