

Bidding

Yielded game

A: 3, B: 2, A: pass => A holds the XX (rule) and has 5+ trumps (convention)

Invitations

With the XIX:

- **A: 3, B: 1, A: Hold (or Solo), B: Pass => B is making the invitation.** If **A** plays right after **B**, i.e. **A** has the first lead, Solo should be preferred to Hold to ensure **B** gets 2 cards from the kitty. If a third player bids Solo after **B**, **A** can (and should) hold to accept the invitation. In this case the invitation is still successful, the third bidder intervenes only to ensure more cards for the opposing side at **A**'s expense. The rules allow **A** to pass and let the third bidder accept the invitation instead, but there are no circumstances in which this is a good idea.
- **A: 2, B: 1 (or Solo), A: Pass => A is making the invitation.** The same considerations apply: **B** should bid solo when playing right after **A**; if a third player bids, **B** can hold (after **A** has passed) and the invitation is still successful.

With the XVIII:

- **A: 3, B: Solo, A: Hold => Invitation made by B and accepted by A.**
- **A: 1, B: Solo, A: Pass => Invitation made by A and accepted by B.**
- **A: 3, B: 2, A: 1, B: Solo => Same result as in the previous case, thus usually better to go for this option (if nobody else bids, A gets 3 cards, not one).**

To make an invitation, a strong hand is required: 6+ trumps, a good suit (K + another), high trumps alongside the honour and the inviting card. The latter requirement can be relaxed slightly with 7 trumps or moderately with 8 or 9.

If the first player to bid needs less than 3 cards from the kitty and/or wants to play a more valuable game, they have the right to bid two or one (or even solo) right away even if they do not hold the card required for an invitation. However, if another player attempts to accept what seems like an invitation, they then must bid on (usually by holding) to cancel it.

When bidding with the pagat, a stronger hand is required (6+ trumps, including 2 or 3 high). The only exception is bidding two right after three: this is safe to do even with a weak hand and makes it harder for the two high honours to get together by means of a yielded game or an invitation. It also ensures we get two cards from the kitty (possibly even by the game being yielded to us). When holding the XX and the pagat but no high honour, it is almost always a bad idea to bid, except when two others have bid already (to try to get away from the player holding the XXI in case the catch is on). It is legal to yield or invite with the pagat and no high honour, but (1) by convention, we must only team up with the player right before us, to avoid the possibility of our partner having a weak XXI and forcing it to get caught, and (2) in both cases, announcing ultimo is compulsory. Thus, this requires very careful consideration.

When holding a high honour, bidding and not passing is almost always the correct choice. The exceptions are:

- If we also hold the XX but do not have the 5+ trumps to yield the game, it is better to pass and wait for our XX to be called.

- When holding the XX with a hand that isn't particularly strong, and sitting opposite or before the first bidder, it is better not to bid two (it will be held, the net result being one card less for our partner and a game that's harder to win).
- When holding the skiz and the XX and having two other players that have bid (this can create catch situations that the player with the XXI is not expecting).
- When holding a weak XXI (5- trumps) or an extremely weak skiz (3- trumps) and, being the last to speak, having the opportunity to annul the hand by passing.

An invitation must not be made holding a weak XXI in order to avoid getting caught. A player who does this is going to lose more in the long run because their future invitations will no longer be accepted.

It is possible to make an invitation with the XVIII after two other players have bid, but such bidding sequences are extremely rare. (**A: 3, B: 2, C: Solo**; or **A: 3, B: 2, C: 1, A: Solo**.)

Catch situations

The catch is on when the player holding the skiz is right after the player holding the XXI and neither has the XX.

When holding the skiz and playing after another bidder that holds 2:

- If holding 4+ trumps, bid one
- If that is held and holding 7+ trumps, bid solo
- With 6 trumps, bidding solo is a possibility, but passing at 1 is usually better

Conversely, when holding the XXI and the player after us bids:

- We hold a bid of one with 6- trumps
- We hold solo with 4-, sometimes with 5 (this depends on suits, the specific trumps in hand, and the position of the first lead).

When sitting opposite the other bidder, the risk (or opportunity) for a catch is much smaller, thus with the XXI, we only need to bid (or hold) 1 if holding less than five trumps, and with the skiz, we only bid one with 7+ trumps.

Exchange

Priorities

1. Number of different suits (we usually want to minimize this, see exceptions below)
2. Value of discard (high for ourselves, low if we expect to become the declarer's partner, i.e. holding XX or inviting)
3. Tiebreakers based on traditional sayings: "Declarer's partner avoids singleton diamonds", "The pagat escapes on spades", "Black suits to prevent ultimo".

When to keep suits we could get rid of

- When we expect to be called by the XXI needing saving suits. In this situation, we should even discard trumps if required for having three different suits; or, if we have three kings, even in order to keep a card of the fourth suit.
- When we have the skiz and are trying to catch the XXI, we try to keep two different suits. This is to reduce the likelihood of winning tricks, and also to give us something to lead if we do nonetheless win some (so that, if the player with the XXI has the same suit, they cannot play the XXI). With 6

trumps including only one or two small ones, even holding on to three different suits is a good idea. Of course the XXI could, and often will, escape on one of these, but nonetheless this is still the best long-term strategy.

- When holding 6 or 7 trumps as a defender and suspecting that the declarers could go for ultimo.
- When having the first lead as a defender, it could be vital to lead a headless suit (one we haven't got the king of) and holding on to one is therefore a good idea even if we could discard it to reduce the total number of suits.
- When holding extremely few trumps (1 or 2) as a defender and the first lead is known to be on the declarers' side, reducing the number of different suits in our hand is useless because, by the time a suit is led, we will be out of trumps anyway. In such cases point 2 becomes a higher priority than 1. However, if the first lead is (or could be) with the other defender, this is no longer true, as they might lead the suit that we discard, letting us trump it in the first trick.

Announcements

- Trull (2)
- Four kings (2)
- High game (*4)
- Volat (*6)
- Ultimo (10)
- XXI-catch (42)

As a declarer, when holding both high honours and a total of 6+ trumps (or perhaps 5 high ones with a long suit) we announce trull. As the declarer's partner, when holding a high honour and a total of 5+ trumps, we announce trull. If the declarer announced 8 trumps or 9 trumps, we announce trull already with 4+ or 3+ trumps, respectively. In either case, if all we are missing is the requisite number of trumps, we make sure to clarify this to our partner at the earliest opportunity during gameplay.

If the declarer announces 8/9 trumps and trull, we respond (with four kings or high game) if holding 5+/4+ trumps (possibly even one fewer depending on a number of factors such as (1) our relative positions and that of the first lead – the most advantageous being sitting next to each other, and having the first lead; (2) whether we have high trumps; and (3) whether the declarer discarded trumps, as they no longer have these but neither do our opponents).

When trull has been announced in a game of three and we have a choice between four kings and high game, we only announce four kings if we have the king in all of our suits.

In a yielded game or invitation, the declarer announces trull with a single high honour and a total of 5+ trumps (or perhaps 4 but with extras). If such is not the case, they pass instead. If this occurs, the player making the invitation / yielding must only announce trull if holding two honours (since otherwise they cannot be sure whether the declarer had too few trumps or no high honour). If they do have two honours and can also announce a trump count, the declarer then has the option of announcing ultimo for the inviting player – this is usually feasible with 4+ trumps. In the case when the inviting player does not have two honours but can announce a trump count, the declarer can announce trull in the next round with 4+/3+ trumps including a high honour. If they still don't, then it is almost certain (~95%) that they bid on the pagat (the other 5% being a hand with 1 or 2 trumps).

When inviting, once trull has been announced, a four kings announcement always signals holding the XX. High game means the same thing plus an extremely strong hand. (This is because the XX is very important, high game and volat are virtually impossible without it, and it is often held by the defenders when inviting.)

Announcements must always end in “pass”. Gameplay starts when three consecutive players only say “pass”, thus if someone announces something after us, we will have to say (at least) “pass” once again. When announcing multiple things, we do so “in one breath”, i.e. we make our decisions before starting to speak and do not pause in between announcements. The same player cannot announce high game and volat at once (this is a rule). It is illegal to announce trull, four kings, or high game after volat (but this could only happen anyway if someone made a mistake).

Playing the hand

When the catch is on, and it is not otherwise obvious (see below), the players holding the XXI and skiz can both indicate that they prefer trump leads by playing X or higher when a high trump is led. Conversely, playing IX or lower means the player prefers suit leads. Sometimes they cannot do this due to a lack of such a trump in their hand (or because they only have one which they have good reason to hold on to); in such cases, keep an eye out for subsequent trumps played: a decreasing series means “lead trumps” while an increasing one means “lead suits”.

“Otherwise obvious” cases where the above doesn’t apply: if the player with the XXI is declarer in solo or the player with the skiz has doubled the game (which they are expected to do with 6+ trumps), the latter expects the partner to lead the highest trump available, and the player with the XXI is looking for a “saving suit” – i.e. one without the king, or else the king itself.

When we become declarer holding only the pagat and our partner announces trull, the way we indicate that we do not hold the other high honour is by leading a high trump (which is otherwise usually not a good idea). If we are lucky and our partner is holding the skiz but not the XXI, this is also the best play towards forcing a XXI-catch. A partner with both high honours is expected to announce both trull and four kings (which nonetheless does not guarantee both high honours). However, if the declarer was able to announce 8 or 9 trumps, the partner can announce ultimo, thus clarifying without a doubt that they hold both high honours (since otherwise they could not be sure of the declarer holding the pagat).

When holding a series of (at least two) consecutive trumps, it is generally best to play the lowest of these first unless leading, although there are many exceptions to this rule of thumb. We lead the lowest when our purpose is to drive out something higher (e.g. the XXI), so that our partner, seeing a much higher trump overtake ours, can deduce that we probably hold those in between. Conversely, when playing before our partner, if we decide to go for it based on “fewer trumps go for it”, it is sometimes a good idea to use our top trump, to avoid our partner thinking that it is too low and overtaking it. When seated opposite our partner, it could help to play such trumps at random to try to prevent a successful finesse by our opponents. (Finesse = when sitting opposite, trying to win a trick with something lower than the guaranteed winners in the hope that the trump(s) that could overtake it are in the hand of the opponent that has already played.) This is also a rare exception to the rule that giving information to our partner is more important than withholding it from our opponents, given that the opponents can often work things out accurately based on their own hands even if we try to confuse them, leaving only our partner at a disadvantage.