

Insidious Sevens



Rules of Play

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For 2 to 5 players

Age: 9 to adult

Playing time: 20-30 minutes



Insidious Sevens

A subtle and challenging card game for 2–5 players.

Contents

- ◆ 40 playing cards, numbered 0-7 in 5 colours
- ◆ 5 trump indicator cards
- ◆ Rule booklet

Introduction

The Daumakku are an ancient race of dwarves, who live in caverns deep below the world of humans. They are a peaceful race, with no enemies to speak of, and no knowledge of war.

They are, however, avid and cutthroat game players, and this is one of their favourites. They play it with stone tiles, but for practical reasons, this version of the game for humans uses a deck of cards.

It is our sincere hope that this game brings you many hours of pleasure, and that you approach it in the Daumakku spirit of amicable competition.

Objective

Insidious Sevens is a trick-taking game with some similarities to human card games such as Bridge and Whist. It is played in a series of seven rounds, each of which consists of seven tricks.

Before regular play commences, each player must make a guess as to how many tricks they will win. The objective is to be exactly right in this prediction — a correct guess gains points, while a guess that is too high or too low will lose points. The highest score at the end of seven rounds wins.

About the Cards

The deck consists of 40 cards, with one copy of each number 0–7 in each of five colours, 7 being highest. The colours have an order to them, similar to the rainbow: red is the lowest, followed by yellow, green, blue, and purple being the highest. The diamond-shaped markers on the cards will help you remember this order.

Number value takes precedence over colour. Thus, a Green 4 is higher than a Red 4, which is higher than a Purple 3.



Preparation

Choose one player to act as score-keeper. This person will need to take a blank sheet of paper and make a column for each player, divided into seven rows for the seven rounds. Mark these rows as follows:

0 1 ← 2 → 3 ← 2 → 1 ← 0

This will help you remember how many cards to pass each round, and which direction to pass them in (see below).

As well as players' scores, the score-keeper will also be responsible for keeping track of how many tricks each player predicted he or she would win. We recommend marking the number down in the corner of the players' scoring boxes for the current round, but do whatever works for you.

Unlike many card games, it doesn't matter who deals, so you may have the deal rotate, or elect one person to deal every round, as you please.

Be sure not to get the five trump indicator cards mixed in with the rest of the deck - they are easy to identify, as they have different backs.



How to Play

Each round is played in four phases: passing, bidding, playing and scoring. In the first and last rounds, there is no passing phase.

To start each round, the dealer deals out seven cards to each player.

Passing

In all rounds except the first and last, all players must look at their seven cards and pass some of them to the person next to them.

- ◆ In the second and sixth rounds, all players pass one card to the player on their left.
- ◆ In the third and fifth rounds, all players pass two cards to the player on their right.
- ◆ In the fourth round, all players pass three cards to the player on their left.

The cards are passed simultaneously, and face-down. Players may only look at the cards they have been passed after deciding which cards they are going to pass.



Bidding

In the bidding phase, all players choose a card from their hand and place it in front of themselves, face down. Once all players have committed to their bid, the cards are revealed simultaneously. The number on each card is the number of tricks that player will attempt to win in the current round. After the bidding, the cards are returned to the players' hands, to be reused in the Playing phase.

Furthermore, the highest card bid becomes the winning bid, and its player, the winning bidder. This has two effects:

Firstly, the colour of the winning bid becomes the trump colour for the current round. Trump cards automatically win any trick in which they're played, unless another player plays a higher trump.

Take the corresponding trump indicator card and place it in the centre of the table so all the players will remember which colour is trump.

Secondly, the winning bidder will be the one to play the first card in the playing phase.



Bidding Example

This is a four-player game, and the diagram shows the cards that the players used in the bidding phase.



Trump
Indicator

Charles' Yellow 3 is the high bid. Therefore, the yellow trump indicator is placed in the centre of the table, to indicate that Yellow cards are trump. Furthermore, Charles will play first.

Playing

The player with the lead plays any card from their hand. The other players then play in clockwise order. They **must** follow the lead if possible, by playing a card matching either the colour *or* the number of the lead card. If they have no matching cards, then they may play any card from their hand.

After all players have played a card, determine the trick's winner as follows:

If any trump cards were played, the highest trump wins automatically, even if it doesn't follow the lead.

If no trump cards were played, the highest card which follows the lead (in colour or number), wins. Recall that colour counts if two cards are tied for the highest number. Non-trump cards that fail to follow the lead can never win a trick.

Whoever wins the trick takes the cards and puts them face-down in front of them, then leads the next trick. This continues until all seven tricks have been played.

*Important: If a player can follow the lead, they **must** do so, even if they have a non-matching trump they would rather play!*



Gameplay Example 1

Continued from the previous example (page 6).

Charles
Wants 3
Has the lead



Dorothy
Wants 3



Arthur
Wants 2



Beatrice
Wants 0



Trump



Charles leads the Green 7. The other players' options are indicated by green borders. Arthur, with no matching cards, can play any card he wants, so he plays a trump (Yellow 2) and wins the trick.

Gameplay Example 2

Continued from the previous example (page 8)

Arthur
Wants 2
Taken 1
Has the lead



Beatrice
Wants 0
Taken 0



Charles
Wants 3
Taken 0



Dorothy
Wants 3
Taken 0



Trump



Arthur, having taken the last trick, leads the next one with the Red 6. Beatrice has no choice about her move. Charles has no matching cards, but chooses to save his trumps. Dorothy plays the Purple 6 and wins, as Purple beats Red.



Scoring

After all seven tricks have been played out, all players count the number of tricks that they have won, and compare it to the number that they bid.

Players who got their bid exactly right gain 2 points, plus the number that they bid.

Players who got their bid wrong get no points whatsoever, and lose one point for every trick too few or too many that they took. Note that taking too many tricks is just as bad as taking too few!

Scoring Example

Continuing from the previous examples, imagine that, in the end:

- ◆ Arthur bid 3 and took 4. He loses one point.
- ◆ Beatrice bid 0 and took 0. She gains two points.
- ◆ Charles bid 3 and took 1. He loses two points.
- ◆ Dorothy bid 2 and took 2. She gains four points (2+2).

Ending the Game

After seven rounds, the player with the highest score wins.

Piiko's Rule (Optional)

Named for the Daumakku gamesman who invented it, over 5000 years ago, this rule makes the game even more cutthroat.

If, during the bidding phase, the bids add up to exactly seven, it's a "Piiko." Rather than permitting the possibility that everyone gets what they want, a rebid is forced, as follows:

Firstly, whoever made the highest bid scores one point immediately. Secondly, the cards that were used in the bidding are set aside for the time being, and all players must bid again, using one of the remaining six cards in their hand. It is this new bid that counts. Players then reclaim all their cards.

It's possible to have several Piikos in a row: Players then continue bidding with whatever cards they have left, until the bids no longer add up to seven. In the rare occurrence that there are seven Piikos in a row, leaving the players no cards to bid with, then the deck is reshuffled and new hands are dealt (but players keep their Piiko points).

Two Players

Insidious Sevens is a surprisingly good in a one-on-one game, as well as in a group of 3-5. However, when played with only two players, Piiko's Rule (see page 11) *must* be used. Otherwise, if the players' bids added up to seven, then it would be guaranteed that if one player is right, then the other is too, and this would make the round considerably less interesting.

Strategy Tips

- ◆ When passing, try to leave yourself with as few colours as possible, and both high and low cards in the colours you have.
- ◆ Think ahead to the bidding phase when passing, and be sure not to leave yourself without the number you want to bid!
- ◆ Mid-range bids are a bit risky, as they leave you unsure of whether you'll get the trump colour you wanted.
- ◆ Don't lead with your sevens if you want to win with them, unless all higher sevens are gone.
- ◆ When trying to win tricks, leading a low trump as a sacrifice to force out others' trump cards is often a good ploy.