



APEX

FUNDAMENTALS

Welcome to APEX, a modern and streamlined evolution of Jass, Switzerland's national card game. This booklet is a tribute to its many variations and the rich strategic heritage of Swiss card traditions.

By simplifying point calculations and focusing on the core essence of the game, I wanted to create a system that is accessible to everyone.

Whether you are a seasoned expert or a complete beginner, APEX allows you to dive instantly into the tactical world of Alpine card gaming.

GLOSSARY

Trump: The "master" suit that beats all other suits.

Trick: A single round of play where every player contributes one card.

Deal: The distribution of cards to players.

Sweep: Winning every trick in a round (+5 bonus).

Cut: To play a trump card on a different led suit.

COMPONENTS

The game uses a specific 36-card deck, divided into 4 suits:

Blue  Yellow  Red  Green 

Two cards in each suit feature special double-markings:
the 3 / 9 and the 5 / 10

These cards change in value and power whenever their suit is designated as "Trump".

CARD HIERARCHY

In a normal Suit

The order follows the natural sequence, from lowest to highest:

$0 < 1 < 2 < 3 < 4 < 5 < 6 < 7 < 8$

In a trump Suit

In this suit, the 3 and 5 are promoted to become the two strongest cards in the game

$0 < 1 < 2 < 4 < 6 < 7 < 8 < 9 < 10$

SCORING SYSTEM

Only the following cards carry points:

0 (Any suit) 1 point

8 (Any suit) 1 point

9 (In Trump only) 2 points

10 (In Trump only) 2 points

A standard round total is 12 points.

If a player or team wins every single trick in a round, they earn a +5 point bonus, bringing the total to 17 points.

TRICK-TAKING MECHANICS

APEX is a game of "tricks." One player leads, and the others respond.

The first player plays any card from their hand. The suit of this card becomes the "Led Suit."

You have two options when it is your turn to play:

Follow Suit: You must play a card of the Led Suit if you have one.

Cut: At any time - even if you hold cards of the Led Suit - you may choose to play a Trump card instead.

Once everyone has played one card, the trick is won by the strongest Trump card. If no Trump cards were played, the strongest card of the Led Suit wins.

The winner of the trick collects the cards and leads the next trick.

GAME VARIANT

Depending on the version, a round can be played in different modes:

TRUMP variant

One suit is chosen as Trump (e.g., Red).

The Trump order and points apply to the Red suit.

All other suits remain "normal".

Total: 12 points (17 with Sweep).

NO TRUMP variant

There is no superior suit.

All suits follow the order: $0 < 1 < 2 < 3 < 4 < 5 < 6 < 7 < 8$.

To compensate for the loss of trump points, the **4s** are also worth **1 point**.

Total: 12 points (17 with Sweep).

ALL TRUMP variant

Every suit becomes a trump suit simultaneously!

In every suit, the 3 becomes 9 and the 5 becomes 10.

All suits follow the order: $0 < 1 < 2 < 4 < 6 < 7 < 8 < 9 < 10$.

Every 0, 8, 3/9, and 5/10 in the deck is worth points.

Total: 24 points (29 with Sweep).

MISERY variant

The goal is the opposite: score zero points.

Usually starts in "No Trump" mode. The Trump suit can be decided during the trick phase.

You will score the opposite to your score, for example, if you get 3 points, you actually score 9.

If you win no tricks you score 17 points.

COMMON CONVENTIONS

SUIT SIGNAL

A Suit Signal is a convention used in team-based games. It occurs when you cannot follow trump, led by your partner. In this case you should discard a card to indicate to your partner where your strength lies.

Suits are paired 2 by 2: the cold suits (Green and Blue) and the hot suits (Yellow and Red).

Discarding a card (ideally a 0) from one "temperature" signals strength in the other suit of that same category.

Example: If you have no Trump but are strong in Green, discard a small Blue card while your partner opens with Trump.

It's more important to do this signal than saving a point and misleading your partner.

SECURING TRUMP POINTS

If you have the 8 of trump with only one other trump card, you should always play it on your partner's 10. Because you don't know where the 9 is, and you could lose a point on the second trick, that you could have won on the first one.

INDEX OF VERSIONS

APEX OPEN	👤👤	-7-
APEX MISERY	👤👤👤	-8-
APEX SOLO	👤	-10-
APEX TWIST	👤👤	-12-
APEX BALANCE	👤👤👤	-14-
APEX EDGE	👤👤👤	-16-
APEX GAP	👤👤👤	-18-
APEX TEAM	👤👤👤👤	-20-
APEX GALA	👤👤👤👤👤	-22-
APEX MENU	👤👤👤👤👤👤	-24-
APEX COVERT	👤👤👤👤	-26-

APEX OPEN



Player count

Complexity

OVERVIEW

A beginner version of APEX for two players where all cards are visible. Strategy lies in remembering what has been played and anticipating the hidden cards.

Ideal for kids and beginners as all cards are visible. A more experienced player can help a beginner to make better choices.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 30 points.

SETUP

Deal 9 cards face-down in front of each player (in 9 columns).

Deal 9 cards face-up, placing one on top of each face-down card.

Each player now has 9 playable cards visible, each covering a hidden card.

The player who did not deal the cards looks at their visible cards and chooses Trump suit for the round.

A ROUND

The player who chose Trump leads the first trick.

You can only play a card that is currently face up.

As soon as a face-up card is played, the card beneath it is immediately turned over and becomes playable for the next trick.

SCORING

At the end of the 18 tricks, players count their points:

Sum the points of all cards won in tricks.

If a player wins every trick (Sweep), they score a total of 17 points (+5 bonus).

For the next round, the other player becomes the dealer and the previous dealer chooses the Trump.

APEX MISERY



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

A "cut-throat" version for three players where the goal is to score as few points as possible.

The Trump suit is not chosen—it is triggered by the first player who cannot follow suit.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 30 points.

SETUP

Deal 12 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

The game begins in No Trump variant.

Card hierarchy: $0 < 1 < 2 < 3 < 4 < 5 < 6 < 7 < 8$

SHIFT TO TRUMP MODE

The player to the left of the dealer leads the first trick.

Phase 1, No Trump variant: Players must follow the led suit.

The first player who is unable to follow the led suit must play a card from another suit. This card's suit immediately becomes Trump for the rest of the round.

From this moment on, the "Must Follow, May Cut" rules apply. The 3/9 and 5/10 of the new Trump suit are now the strongest cards and worth 2 points each.

SCORING

At the end of the 12 tricks, calculate your card points. Your game score is the inverse of your performance:

Score = 12 - (Your card points). If you took 2 points in tricks, you score 10 points.

If a player takes no tricks at all, they earn a +5 bonus and score 17 points.

If a player manages to win all 12 tricks, they immediately win the entire game!

If no player has reached 30 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

APEX SOLO



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

APEX SOLO is a tactical puzzle where your only opponent is the deck. Your objective is to completely empty your hand before the Draw Pile runs out.

Every decision to "beat" a card or "take" a penalty will determine your survival.

Objective: Get rid of all cards in your hand.

SETUP

Deal 9 cards to yourself.

Place 3 cards face down nearby. That's the Reserve.

Discard 3 cards face down (out of play).

The remaining 21 cards form the Draw Pile.

Look at your 9 cards and declare the Trump suit for the game.

You may exchange 3 cards from your hand with the 3 cards in the Reserve. If you choose not to, the Reserve cards are discarded.

A ROUND

The game consists of successive duels against the Draw Pile:

Flip the top card of the Draw Pile.

You have two options:

Beat the card from the pile by playing a card from your hand. If you do so, both cards are discarded.

Take the card. If you cannot (or choose not to) beat the card, add the flipped card to your hand AND draw a second card from the Draw Pile as a penalty.

At any time, you may discard one card from your hand in exchange for drawing 2 penalty cards from the Draw Pile.

SCORING

If the Draw Pile is exhausted and you still have cards in your hand, you lose.

Otherwise, if you empty your hand by beating the last card of the Draw Pile or earlier, you win the game.

APEX TWIST



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

APEX TWIST is a fast-paced duel where the laws of the game are in constant flux.

A winning hand can become a burden in seconds as the Trump suit twists every three tricks.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 30 points.

SETUP

Deal 9 cards to each player.

Place 4 cards face down in a stack. It's the Trump pile

Place 6 cards face down in a stack. It's the Draw pile

The remaining 8 cards are set aside and remain out of play for the round.

TRUMP PILE

Flip the top card of the Trump Pile. This defines the rules for the first 3 tricks.

If the flipped card is an 8, play with the No Trump variant.

Hierarchy: $0 < 1 < 2 < 3 < 4 < 5 < 6 < 7 < 8$

If the flipped card is a 0, play with the No Trump variant.

Hierarchy: $8 < 7 < 6 < 5 < 4 < 3 < 2 < 1 < 0$

Otherwise, play with Trump variant, based on the suit of the card turned up.

A ROUND

The player who did not deal leads the first trick.

After each of the first 3 tricks, both players draw one card from the Draw Pile.

Every 3 tricks, discard the active Trump card and flip the next card from the Trump Pile.

SCORING

Once all 12 tricks are played, players count the points in their won tricks:

0s and 8s are worth 1 point each.

3/9s and 5/10s are worth 2 points each.

If no player has reached 30 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

APEX BALANCE



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

In APEX BALANCE, the goal is not to be the best, nor the worst, but to find the perfect middle ground.

You must constantly monitor your opponents' scores to ensure you stay between them. It is a game of shifting alliances and calculated generosity.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 11 points.

SETUP

Deal 12 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

Flip the last card of the deck to set the trump suit; the dealer then takes this card into their hand.

A ROUND

The player to the left of the dealer leads the first trick.

Trump variant rules apply.

SCORING

At the end of the round, compare the point totals of the three players:

If a player wins all points, they have failed the "Balance" and score 0. The other two players each score 2 points.

If two players tie for the same score (and it is 1 or more), the third player wins the round. They score their cards points.

Otherwise, the player who finished with the middle score wins the round. They score their cards points.

If no player has reached 11 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

APEX EDGE



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

APEX EDGE is a high-tension "push-your-luck" version. You must walk the razor's edge: strive to be the most successful or the most modest player at the table, but never find yourself caught in the middle.

If you get too greedy and cross the "Bust" limit, you lose everything.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 30 points.

SETUP

Deal 12 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

Every player chooses one card from their hand and places it face down in front of them. This card is not played during the tricks, but its point value is added to your total at the end of the round.

Flip the last card of the deck to set the trump suit; the dealer then takes this card into their hand.

If the flipped card is an 8, the round is played with the No Trump variant.

Hierarchy: $0 < 1 < 2 < 3 < 4 < 5 < 6 < 7 < 8$

If the flipped card is a 0, the round is played with the No Trump variant.

Hierarchy: $8 < 7 < 6 < 5 < 4 < 3 < 2 < 1 < 0$

Otherwise, the round is played with Trump variant, based on the suit of the card turned up.

A ROUND

The player to the left of the dealer leads the first trick.

Follow the corresponding variant rules.

SCORING

After all tricks are played, players count their points. Their Secret Stash counts as points.

Sweep

Your paragraph text

If a player wins every single trick, they score 17 points regardless of the card count.

Tie

If two players have the exact same score (and it is 1 or more), they both score their points.

Bust

If a player's total is 9 points or more, they "Bust" and score 0 points for the round. The other two players score their respective points.

All below 9

Highest Score: Scores their points.

Lowest Score: Scores their points.

Middle Score: Scores 0 points.

If no player has reached 30 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

STRATEGIC TIPS

Your hidden card is your secret weapon. But it's a double-edged sword. It can make you score one or two easy points, but it can also push you over the edge and end up second or make you bust.

APEX GAP



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

APEX GAP is a game of mastery and mathematical foresight. Winning tricks is easy, but winning the exact amount of points you announced is the true challenge.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 40 points.

SETUP

Deal 12 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

Flip the last card of the deck to set the trump suit; the dealer then takes this card into their hand.

Simultaneously, each player writes down their Target Score (0 to 12 points) on a paper that remains hidden in front of them.

A ROUND

The player to the left of the dealer leads the first trick.

Use Trump Variant rules.

SCORING

Calculate the absolute difference between your Target and your Actual Score. That's your gap for the round. If your target was 6 and you scored 8, gap is 2.

Score = 12 - (Your gap). If your gap was 3, you score 9 points

If no player has reached 40 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.



APEX TEAM



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

APEX TEAM is a strategic battle for 4 players divided into two teams of two.

You must communicate with your partner through your bids to set the right target and outsmart your opponents.

Objective: Be the first team to reach 60 points.

SETUP

Deal 9 cards to each player.

TARGET PHASE

Before each round, players must determine the round's trump through a bidding process.

A target consists of a Trump Suit and a Point Value (the number of card points your team intends to reach or exceed).

Teams can bid from 4 to 12 card points, or bid 17 (Sweep). It means the team commits to winning all 9 tricks.

The player to the dealer's left starts the auction.

Each player in turn may either announce a higher target or pass. There is no hard pass.

When three consecutive players pass, the target is set, and trump is determined.

If all four players pass initially, the round is cancelled and the next player becomes the dealer.

COUNTER

Immediately after a target is bid, an opponent may declare "Counter". That's ending the Target Phase instantly.

The Target points are doubled for the scoring phase.

A ROUND

The player who set the target leads the first trick.

Trump variant rules apply.

SCORING

After all tricks are played, each team totals the points from cards won (Total of 12 available, or 17 for a Sweep).

Bidding team reaches or exceeds their target

They score the target points. Both teams also score their card points.

Bidding team fails

The opposing team scores the target points. Both teams also score their card points.

If no team has reached 60 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

STRATEGIC TIPS

Starting the bidding phase with "5" signals you hold the 5/10. Bidding "4" signals you do not.

If your partner bids a suit and you hold the 5/10, raise the last bid by 2 points.

APEX GALA



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

In APEX GALA, the table becomes a ballroom. One player will step up as the Lead Dancer and must find a Partner among the guests.

The remaining three players form the Orchestra, working together to set the rhythm and try to outshine the duo.

Objective: Be the first player to reach 40 points.

SETUP

Deal 7 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

The last card is placed face down on the table.

DEMONSTRATION PHASE

Starting from the dealer's left:

The player can either make a demonstration, by placing one or more cards face up on the table, or pass.

These cards remain part of the hand of the player but are now visible to all "spectators."

Going forward, a player can either overtake the last demonstration or pass.

To overtake, you must reveal at least the same number of cards with a higher total value, or more cards.

The player who shows the most/strongest cards is named the Lead Dancer.

CHOREOGRAPHY

The Lead Dancer chooses one of their visible cards to define the Trump suit. This card is put aside and won't give any points. As a replacement, the Lead Dancer gets the card that was face down on the table.

All other players must now place one card face up.

The Lead Dancer calls a card they cannot see. The holder becomes the Partner, but they must not reveal themselves. The partner only reveals their identity by playing the called card.

SCORING

Every player scores the card points won by their team. Bonuses are awarded based on the Lead Dancer's performance:

Success (Duo scores 7+ points):

Lead Dancer scores: Team Points + 4 bonus points.

Partner scores: Team Points + 2 bonus points.

Orchestra scores: Only their Team Points.

Failure (Duo scores 6 or less):

Lead Dancer scores: Only their Team Points.

Partner scores: Only their Team Points.

Orchestra scores: Team Points + 2 bonus points.

If no player has reached 40 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

STRATEGIC TIPS

After the trump is announced, you can try to avoid getting called if you think the lead dancer is going to fail by revealing a card they might need, or send a signal by revealing a surprising card.

APEX MENU



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

APEX MENU is a high-stakes "Attack vs. Defense" mode. Teams must complete a 3-course menu over 6 rounds.

The twist? Only the team that "orders" the dish scores points. The other team plays strictly as Defenders, trying to "steal" and waste points.

Objective: Have the highest total after 6 rounds.

SETUP

Deal 6 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

Players are in 2 teams, sitting alternatively. (ABABAB).

ORDER PHASE

The dealer rotates clockwise. The right to order a course follows these rules:

The player to the left of the dealer can either order a course for their team or pass.

If they pass, the option moves to the next player. This continues until someone orders a course for their own team.

If all 6 players pass, the player to the left of the dealer is forced to order a course for their team.

Once a team has completed their 3 courses, they no longer participate in the order.

A ROUND

The player who orders leads the first trick.

In Starter and Dessert use the No Trump variant. For Main, use the Trump variant.

3-COURSE MENU

Each team must order each of these three courses, in any order, exactly once:

Starter **High-to-Low** or **Low-to-High**.

Main **Trump** (choose a suit).

Dessert **1 by 1** or **3 by 3**.

COURSES PRESENTATION

Starter

For the starter, when ordering you can choose to play low to high or high to low. High to low is a standard no trump mode, in low to high, 0 is the strongest card and 8 is the weakest.

Main

In main, you can choose trump when ordering, you don't have to choose the same trump as the other team.

Dessert

In dessert the direction flips either every trick (HLHLHL) or after 3 tricks (HHHLLL). In either case, you can choose what is the starting direction.

SCORING

The ordering Team counts every point-card they win in their tricks. This is their score for the round (Max 12, or 17 for a Sweep).

The other Team don't score anything.

The team with the highest cumulative score after all 6 rounds (when both menus are empty) wins.

STRATEGIC TIPS

As a Defender, be aggressive.

Every point you "steal" is a point deducted from your opponent's final score.

And always focus on avoiding giving the sweep bonus.

	Team A	Team B
Starter		
Main		
Dessert		
Total		

APEX COVERT



Player count
Complexity

OVERVIEW

In this expert mode, you don't just call a partner; you must first win the right to do so by outbidding your opponents.

You play for yourself, but you win as a team... once you find out who your partner is. But alliances are only lasting one round!

Objective: Be the first player to reach 60 points.

SETUP

Deal 9 cards to each player (the entire deck is used).

TARGET PHASE

During this phase, everyone plays for themselves. Starting from the left of the dealer, players announce how many points they can make with a partner.

Targets can be announced from 4 to 12 points and then Sweep (17)

Players raise the stakes until three people pass.

The highest announcer sets the target. They now name the trump suit and call a card they do not possess. (e.g. "Trump is green and I call the 8 of red")

The player holding the called card becomes the Announcer's partner, but they must not reveal themselves. The partner only reveals their identity by playing the called card.

A ROUND

The Announcer leads the first trick.

Use Trump Variant rules.

The Announcer must try to reach their bid without knowing exactly who is helping them for the first few tricks.

SCORING

Points are calculated for the two teams (Announcer/Partner vs Opponents). Each player scores the points of his team

If the Announcer's team reaches or exceeds the target, both the Announcer and the Partner add the total card points won + the target value to their scores.

The Opponents add their card points to their scores

If the Announcer's team fail to reach the target, both the Announcer and the Partner add only the card points won to their scores.

The Opponents add their card points + the bid value to their scores

If no player has reached 60 points, proceed to a new round.

For the next round, the player who led the first trick becomes the dealer.

STRATEGIC TIPS

If you are the called partner, don't play the called card too early. Take advantage that you are the only one knowing who is playing with who.

TRIBUTE

This project is a tribute to the countless generations of players across Switzerland who have shaped, twisted, and evolved Jass over the centuries. Their ingenuity has birthed a staggering variety of memorable rules and traditions that continue to bring people together.

This system is a humble homage to those who came before - my own small stone added to the majestic mountain of the Swiss card tradition.

CREDITS

Game and Graphic Design : Valou Leuba

