

Stars

This game is also known as **White Star** or **Two Hundred Stars**.

Players: 4 players, each playing for him- or herself

Playing Deck: 43-card Stars deck

The cards are arranged in four suits, Skulls (black), Shields (red), Wands (blue), and Leaves (green). Each suit contains eleven cards - Champion (highest), King, Queen, Scribe, Lady, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 (lowest) - except Skulls, which does not contain a Champion card.

When playing with a regular 52-card deck, Clubs should be used for the Skulls, Hearts for Shields, Diamonds for Wands, and Spades for Leaves. Remove the 8s, 9s, and the Ace of Clubs. The ranks of the cards will be Ace (highest; Champion), King, Queen, Jack (Scribe), 10 (Lady), 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 (lowest).

Trump: The trump suit is Skulls, except when a Star is played (see below).

Deal: Ten cards are dealt to each player and three to the widow using the following pattern: three to each player, then three into the widow, then four to each player, then three more to each player.

Bidding: Starting with the player to the left of the dealer, and moving to the left, each player bids in an effort to win the contract, declaring the number of points he or she believes he or she will score during play. Each bid must be higher than the one which precedes it; if the player is not willing to bid higher, he or she must pass. After passing, a player may not re-enter the bidding. Bidding continues around the circle until three of the four players have passed.

Widow: Upon winning the contract, the highest bidder picks up the three cards in the widow and adds them to his or her hand. He or she then discards (buries) three cards. Those cards are counted amongst the cards he or she wins during play.

Play: The winning bidder has the opening lead, after which the winner of each trick has the lead for the trick which follows. The leader may choose any card from his or her hand, and all players must follow suit if possible. If a player has no cards of the suit which is led, he or she may choose any other card in his or her hand (including a trump). The trick is won by the player who lays down the highest-ranked trump card or the highest-ranked card in the suit which was led, if no trump is played. The winning player gathers the cards and adds them to the stack of cards he or she has won.

Star/White Trump: The Star rule applies only when a trump card is played. If the other players at the table lay cards from all three other suits (that is, if the trick contains exactly one card from each of the four suits), then the trump card loses the trick, rather than winning it. The losing player gathers the cards, but keeps them separate from the stack of

cards which he or she has won - this second stack is called the Star pile. Note that it is possible for all of the players to have a Star pile at the end of a hand.

Scoring: When all of the tricks have been played (ten of them), each player counts the number of points he or she has won. The point values for the cards are:

- King: 5 points
- Queen: 4 points
- Scribe: 3 points
- Lady: 2 points
- Spot cards: 1 points

The Champion does not score any points, but it is the highest-ranking non-trump card. A total of 20 points are available in each suit, for a total of 80 in each hand.

After counting the points which have been won, each player counts the number of points in the Star pile which he or she is keeping for the other players. Cards have the same point values they do when they are won, except when all three of the colored-suit cards have the same rank (for example, three 3s played on a Skull of any rank). In that case, called a Perfect Star, or a White Star, the point values of the cards in the trick are tripled. Once a player has totaled the points in his or her Star pile, the result is added to the scores of the other players.

Totals: The points gained during the play of the hand are added to the cumulative total being kept for the game. Then the score of the contracting player is compared to his or her bid. If the score exceeds the bid, the player is allowed to add the amount of the bid to his or her cumulative total; if the score on that hand is lower than the number of points bid, the player must subtract that number.

Ending the Game: The game usually ends when one player reaches 200 points.

Example: A hand is dealt to four players. Player 1 wins the contract with a bid of 57 points. On the scoresheet, under the column for Player 1, the scorekeeper writes the number 57. The tricks are played and the totals are counted. Player 1 counts 54 points in the pile of tricks he won, Player 2 counts 6, Player 3 counts 10, and Player 4 did not win any tricks. In addition to the tricks which were won, Player 1 also lost a trick in which his opponents played a Star against his trump card. That trick contains 10 points - so that number is added to the point totals of Player 2, Player 3, and Player 4. Finally, the totals are written in their respective columns: 54 in the column for Player 1, 16 in the column for Player 2, 20 in the column for Player 3, and 10 in the column for Player 4. Since Player 1 did not meet his contract, a minus sign is put in front of the 57 which was written in the column when the contract was decided. The scores are now summed, giving -3 points to Player 1, 16 points to Player 2, 20 points to Player 3, and 10 points to Player 4.

Colored-Star Variation: Rather than assign points won under the Star Trump rule evenly, the colored-star variant gives those points to the trumping player who lays the highest non-Skull card. For this variant, the winning player may collect the trick and

place it with the other cards he or she has won. When two cards of the same rank are played, the first one laid wins the trick. When all three cards are of the same rank, the White Star rule applies, and all three participants are awarded points. The points are not tripled; it is just that all three trumping players receive the full value of the trick.