

Rules of Ulti

(Modified 4M standard)

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Ulti is a card game for 3 players, played with a 32-card Hungarian deck. The three players deal one after the other: the dealing goes around the table counterclockwise. This direction is general in the game, so the order of dealing, playing and bidding are all counterclockwise.

The dealer gives 10-10 cards for each player, except for the first one, who receives 12 cards. It is a good idea to deal the cards in small packages so that the card distributions are better randomized.

The player with 12 cards starts the game with bidding. He makes a bid, and then he puts down two cards face down to the table. These two cards form the talon. The next player has the option of passing or bidding. If he passes, he says “pass”; this means he does not bid in this round. If he bids, then he picks up the talon, makes a bid that is stronger than the previous one, then he put down two cars to form the new talon. The bidding goes around until all 3 players pass. (Including the one who made the last bid; he had the right to overbid himself.)

During bidding, the players make a claim about the type of game they want to play. Every game has a point value, which determines the rank (strength) of the bid: more points means stronger bid. The possible games are the following:

game	point value
pass (party)	1 p
40-100 (forty-hundred)	4 p
ulti(mo)	4 p
betli	5 p
durchmarsch	7 p
20-100	8 p

The player will bid one of these games. It is possible to combine some games; in this case we say the name of each game one after the other. The point values of these games will be added together. Rules of combinations are somewhat sophisticated, but very logical. These are the following:

- Pass can not be combined with anything, except for the lone ulti, and the lone ulti always has to be combined with a pass. Therefore, when we bid pass-ulti, we don't even say the pass, we just say ulti, and it is interpreted as "ulti-pass". If ulti is combined with anything else (not pass), then it is not allowed to include pass in the combination.
- It is not allowed to combine a betli with anything.
- 40-100 and 20-100 cannot be combined with each other.

Most games have a special suit, this is called trump. This will be determined by the bidder, however, during bidding, he doesn't disclose his trump, except if it is hearts. In this case, he must disclose it, because these bids are doubled in value. If one bids hearts trump, he must attach the words "in hearts" after his bid, e.g. "ulti-40-100 in hearts". So this bid is worth 16 points.

There is another bid modifier word: this is "open". It can only be used with durchmarsch or betli, and it quadruples the value of them. These values however are not doubled any more with the hearts trump, so "open durchmarsch-ulti in hearts" is only worth $4 \cdot 7 + 2 \cdot 4 = 36$ points.

One can overbid another bid with one that is worth more points, or with one that is worth equal number of points, but it is combination of fewer games. Therefore betli (5 points) is stronger than ulti (=ulti-pass, $4+1=5$ points), because it is one game, not a combination of two. Similarly, 20-100 is stronger than ulti-40-100, just like 40-100 in hearts is stronger than that, but 20-100 and 40-100 in hearts are equal, so neither can overbid the other.

The player that makes the last bid is the declarer: he plays alone against the other two players, who will form a team for the round. They are called the defense. The declarer discloses the trump after the bidding (if there is one and it is not hearts), he declares his possible 20's and 40 if a party is being played, then he plays the first card. He can declare 20, if he has a **K** and a **O** of the same suit in his hand, and he can declare 40, if that suit is the trump. Then the following defensive player can also declare his 20's and 40, if he has any (and party is being played), then he has the opportunity

to kontra. This means he has doubts that the declarer will fulfill his goal in some of his games. A kontra doubles the value of the game that is kontra'd, which will matter at the end when counting the scores. The player can kontra any or all of the games that were in the winning bid. If he kontra a betli or a durchmarsch, he only does it for himself, so if his partner agrees with the kontra, he has to declare it separately. All other games are kontra'd together. Then the defensive player plays a card. The second defensive player has the same options.

Before the 3 cards on the table collected by a player, if there was a kontra, the declarer has the opportunity to rekontra some or all of the kontra'd games. Rekontra quadruples the value of the games. Further doubling declarations can be made before the cards are collected. Any player who misses an opportunity to double cannot change his mind later, even if the other players are not done with their doubles. The other of doubling declarations are: kontra, rekontra, szubkontra, hirskontra, mordkontra.

After the doubling, the player who has the strongest card among the first three wins the trick, he collects the cards, then he plays the next lead. All three players always play a card each, and the trick is always won by the strongest card in the trick, then the winner of the trick plays the next lead. The player who wins a trick collects the cards of the trick, which he places on the table in front of himself, face down. After the next lead is played, these cards can not be viewed by any player until the end of the game. The game ends after the tenth trick is played.

During play, following suits is mandatory whenever possible. If the player cannot follow suit, he has to play a trump, if he has one. If he has no cards in the suit of lead and he has no trumps, he can play any of his cards. If, while keeping these rules, he can beat the current strongest card in the trick, he must do so.

The rank of the cards from the weakest to the strongest in a game with trumps: **VII**, **VIII**, **IX**, **U**, **O**, **K**, **X**, **A**, with no trumps: **VII**, **VIII**, **IX**, **X**, **U**, **O**, **K**, **A**. A card that is not trump is beaten by every card that is stronger in its own suit and by every trump. A trump card is only beaten by stronger trumps. E.g. if the trump is hearts, then **A** of bells does not beat **VII** of acorns, but **VII** of hearts beats **A** of bells.

In the following, we will describe the goal of the specific games.

The goal the game pass to collect more grease than the opponent. Every **A** and **X** is one piece of grease, the last trick is one grease, 20 counts as 2 greases and 40 counts as 4 greases. If a player (or team) doesn't win at least

one trick, they considered to have 0 greases, even if they had 20's or 40.

In the game of 40-100, one must have the trump **O** and **K** in his hand, and he must collect at least 6 greases. Since party is not being played, it is forbidden to declare any 20's.

In ulti, one has to play the trump **VII** in the last trick, and he must win the trick.

In betli, one must not win any tricks.

In durchmarsch, one has to win every trick.

In 20-100, one must have a **O** and a **K** of the same suit in his hand, and he must collect at least 8 greases. It is forbidden to declare 20's and 40.

In party, 20-100 and 40-100, every grease left in the talon at the end bidding counts for the defensive players.

It is not illegal to bid a game whose goal is impossible to achieve. It is legal to bid an ulti without the trump **VII**, similarly, it is legal to bid 20-100 without 20 or 40-100 without 40. Of course these game are automatically lost, but maybe one can get away with them without kontra.

Betli is always played with no trumps, even if betli in hearts was bid. The only difference between a betli and a betli in hearts is that betli in hearts is worth twice the points. Open betli in hearts is synonym for open betli.

A durchmarsch game has trumps only if it is combined with something else, so simple durchmarsch in hearts has no trumps.

If the declarer plays an open game, then he must lay down his cards face up on the table after the first trick is collected, and he continues playing so that everyone can see his cards.

After the game ends, the players count the scores. First they find out which of the bid games were made and which ones were failed. The declarer receives the point value of each made game from both defensive players (possibly multiplied by doubling), and he pays the point value of each failed game to both defensive players. The game ulti is an exception under this rule: if it fails, the declarer pays an extra 4 points (8 points if the trump is hearts) to both defensive players.

It may happen that a player (declarer or defensive player) makes a game that was not bid. This is called a silent game. The rules of silent games are not simple, so we describe them in details.

Silent durchmarsch can be made by the declarer or by the defensive players together. It is worth 4 points.

If a party is being played, then the declarer or the defense can make a silent 100: this means collecting 10 greases.

In the previous case, if a team only declared one 20, then they made a silent 20-100, and it is worth 4 points.

If a player winds the last trick the **VII** of trumps, then he (alone) made a silent ulti, so he receives 2 points from the other two players. However, if a player plays the **VII** of trumps in the last trick, but he loses the trick, we say he failed the silent ulti, and he pays 4 points to the other two players.

In every silent game, if the trump is hearts, then the value of the silent game is doubled, except for *durchmarsch*: a silent *durchmarsch* in hearts is worth 7 points.

It may happen that the won and lost points of each player are equal. A typical example that the declarer bids ulti, the defense declares a 20 and a 40, and they *kontra* the party. The ulti is made, but the party is failed, and the defense makes a silent 100. The declarer receives $4 - 2 \cdot 1 - 2 = 0$ points, just like the defense. In this case we say “money goes to the window”, which means that every player pays the value of the made games (or the failed games, which is the same) to the virtual player called “Window”; in the case above, 4 points. After this, if a player bids and makes an ulti of hearts, then he will get the Window’s money as a bonus. If money is left in the Window when the session ends, then the players will share the money of the Window evenly. If that amount is not divisible by the number of players, then the biggest losers will receive more.

After bidding, if the declarer thinks that winning the contract is hopeless, then he can fold. In this case, he loses all his contracts with a *kontra*’d value, but he can avoid silent games made by the defense. The exception is the game of uncombined pass, in which case nobody pays to anyone (not even to the Window).

Violation of the rules are called “*renonsz*”. Intelligent people only penalize it if it not possible to correct it.

If the dealer makes a mistake in dealing, he pays 5 points to the Window.

If somebody declares 20 or 40 illegally, fails to follow suit, fails to beat a trick, or gives information about his hand as defense, the game is aborted, and the player pays doubled value of the game to both other players. If the two defensive players made different levels of *kontras*, always the highest level counts.

The ugliest violation of the rules, if two players cooperate against the third one. This is penalized by not playing with these people ever again.