

STRATEGY GUIDE

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

The most obvious strategy is to play low cards, which is all well and good if you have them, but somewhat more difficult when you do not. In fact, high cards are just as important as low cards in winning the game (particularly in a standard game in which the [jack of diamonds is -10](#)). The most dangerous cards to have in your hand are the seven through jack of any suit. These are the cards that will end up bringing you the least strategic advantage and, therefore, the most unwanted points.

A good rule to follow when beginning is to play your high cards on the first lead of a suit and move to your lower cards when the suit is led again. With each play of a suit it is increasingly likely that one of the other players will be out of that suit and thus able to discard points (either hearts or, far worse, the [queen of spades](#).)

There are a few instances in which high cards will prove extremely useful. The first is Shooting the Moon. [Shooting the Moon](#) is when one player takes all the points in a round, every heart (1 point each) and the [queen of spades](#) (13) if she's being used. When this happens, the player who has shot the moon receives -26 points, (or -36 with the [jack of diamonds](#),) which is quite an incentive to try this risky play. When [Shooting the Moon](#), the longer you can hide your intention to do so from your opponents, the better. When shooting, the more high cards you've got, the better off you are. The most dangerous cards to have in your hand when attempting to shoot are low hearts in a run of very few hearts. When these are led they will tend to be picked up (accidentally or on purpose -- depending on how smart the other players are), thereby costing you your shot. Whenever you see a run of face cards (ace, king, and queen in any suit or more than two aces), it's worth examining your hand for shoot potential.

Another reason for holding onto high cards is to stop other people from [Shooting the Moon](#). It is particularly dangerous to give up the ace or king of hearts early in the game, especially if one player seems to be maintaining the lead. With the ace of hearts in your hand you can almost always stop an attempt to Shoot the Moon by another player.

Finally, high cards are useful for capturing the [jack of diamonds](#). High diamonds are, of course, the most useful, but as the jack is often discarded in the last two tricks, it is often easier to take the jack with a high card in some other suit. Save a few high cards -- they aren't as dangerous as you might think, most of the time!

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

When playing with the [queen of spades](#), the number of points in each round doubles from thirteen to twenty-six (the queen being worth thirteen points). Therefore, the danger of taking any trick is decidedly increased.

Rules For Avoiding The Queen:

The best way to avoid taking the queen is to have a run of spades from the jack downwards and to lead those cards at every opportunity. If you have led a spade lower than the queen, you can be assured of not taking the [Black Maria](#) in that trick. To avoid the queen it is usually a good idea to lead a low spade whenever you have the opportunity. This will draw out the queen (suck out the poison) and ensure that someone else will get stuck with her and a whole lot of points. Other than that, avoiding the queen is much like avoiding hearts. Beware of taking tricks in suits that have been played more than twice and beware of mid-range cards.

Everybody takes the queen sometimes, so don't worry about it too much. The trick is simply to take the queen less.

PASSING

Passing cards at the beginning of each hand is the perhaps the most important aspect of your game.

There are two basic passing strategies. The first, and most obvious, is to simply rid your hand of the dangerous cards: High hearts; the ace, king, or queen of spades; or any other high card. A second strategy is to try to empty your hand of a single suit by passing only one suit to your opponent. Once you have no cards of a particular suit left, you can discard your dangerous cards every time that suit is led.

Remember, though, that your opponents will be passing too, and they will be looking at your pass to see patterns. If you always pass three clubs, it doesn't take a genius of an opponent to realize your habit. It is a good policy to keep your passes flexible and tailored to each hand.

When [Shooting the Moon](#), your pass is particularly crucial and can also be the first tip to your opponents of your intentions. Get rid of low hearts. These will get you every time.

Ultimately your strategy will grow as you learn the game and it becomes a reflection of yourself. Conservative, bold, unpredictable or not -- [HEARTS DELUXE](#) will reveal the very heart of your nature.