

New Player Cheat Sheet / Play Suggestions

There are exceptions to these suggestions, but these will help you get started.

Three-player sheepshead reduces the emphasis on trump and shifts some of it to the fail aces. With only three cards per trick an ace has a good chance of taking a trick. Quantity of trump and aces becomes almost as important as quality. With ten tricks to play, stamina becomes a factor. It's quite possible to lose a three-handed game despite holding all four queens. One rule of thumb is to pick when you have seven or more trump and aces combined.

It has been said that "there is no mauering in three handed." If you pass with too much power, you will lose in a leaster. Pickers can lose with 8, 9, or all trump; it all depends on how the cards sit.

You will also hear that it is better to pay a quarter than pick and lose a dollar and pay a bump. The downside is that if you play super conservative, your chances of a good score are diminished.

As a defender, you want to set up a crossfire between you and your teammate. Try to keep the lead in front of the picker.

Lead long into the picker. When you are not the picker, you never lead trump unless (1) you have to; or (2) you are in the happy situation of having the boss trump.

A good example of leading short: You lead a bare 10 of Spades into your partner. This indicates to them that it is your only Spade allowing them to base their play on the Spades they hold. If the partner is holding the Ace and a fail, it indicates that the picker has three Spades and they should play the fail (the 10 is boss). If the partner gets on the lead, they should play their Ace of Spades. If the picker buried the other two Spades they have and trumps the Ace, your partner will have the opportunity to trump the trick if the picker trumps it. If the trump is too big, it allows you to throw off to clear your hand of a suit and keep your trump for a future trick. If you have a Spade other than the Ace, it will force the picker to trump or throw off, allowing the partner to smear, trump over, or throw off.