

EUCHRE

GAME PROGRAM™

INSTRUCTIONS



ATARI®

The Atari logo, consisting of a stylized 'A' shape formed by two vertical lines and a horizontal line at the top, with the word 'ATARI' in a bold, sans-serif font below it, followed by a registered trademark symbol (®).

EUCHRE

Use your Joystick
Controllers with with
ATARI® Game Program.™

Be sure the Controllers are
firmly plugged into the
LEFT and RIGHT
CONTROLLER jacks at the
rear of your ATARI Video Computer
System.™ Hold the Controller with the red
button to your upper left toward the television
screen.



Use the joystick plugged into the LEFT
CONTROLLER jack for one-player games.

Note: Always turn the console power switch
OFF when inserting or removing an ATARI
Game Program. This will protect the
electronic components and prolong the life of
your ATARI Video Computer System.

There are two versions of the Euchre game
program cartridge, one for North American
televisions (NTSC) and one for European sets
(PAL). Use the version of the cartridge
appropriate to your television. If using a
version not compatible with your area, try
adjusting the vertical hold on your television,
although some colors might not be correctly
displayed.

HOW TO PLAY

Note: while this manual does describe how to play Euchre, it is assumed that you are familiar with basic card game concepts, such as a hand, trick, and trump.

Euchre (pronounced "yoo-ker") is a card game for four players divided into two teams. With this cartridge, the computer acts as your partner and two opponents.

The objective in each hand is to win at least three of the five tricks in the hand, earning your team points. The team that scores ten or more points wins the game.

At the start of the game, the computer randomly selects a dealer. That player deals five cards to each player and turns over the top of the remaining four cards. The suit of this turned-up card is the proposed trump suit for the hand.

Each player examines his or her hand to determine if their team is likely to take at least three tricks, taking into account the suit designated as trump. The player then chooses to pass to the next player, order up the trump card, or go alone. The dealer picks up the turned-up card and exchanges it for one from his hand, keeping the discarded card face down. The suit of the turned-up card becomes trump. If the choice was to go alone, that player's partner does not play in this hand.

If the three non-dealers and the dealer pass, the dealer turns over the proposed trump card. Each player then may choose to pass, call a trump suit, or go alone and call a trump suit. The trump suit named may not be the suit that was turned down. If everyone passes a second time, the hand is thrown in and the deal goes to the player at the dealer's left.

Whichever player chose to order up trump, call trump, or go alone is called the maker.

The player to the left of the dealer leads to the first trick. Play continues with each successive player to the left. Each player must follow suit when possible; if it is not possible, any card of any suit may be played. After all players have laid down a card, the trick is complete. The trick is won by the player who played the highest card of the led suit if no trump was played or the highest trump card if trump was used. The player who won the trick leads to the next trick.

When all five tricks have been played, the hand is over. If the maker's team won at least three tricks, that team scores at least one point; otherwise, that team is euchred and their opponents score two points. For winning five tricks (a march), the maker's team scores two points if both players were in the hand or four points if the maker went alone.

If one team has ten or more points, that team wins. Otherwise, the player to the dealer's left becomes the new dealer, and play continues.

THE EUCHRE DECK

A Euchre deck has only 24 cards from a standard pack of 52: the nine, ten, jack, queen, king, and ace of each suit.

The rank of each card depends on the trump suit. In the trump suit, the highest card is the jack, called the right bower. ("Bower" rhymes with "hour.") The second-highest card, the left bower, is the jack of the other suit of the same color. For example, if spades is trump, then the jack of spades is the right bower and the jack of clubs is the left bower. The remaining cards have their standard order, from ace down to nine.

Note that for purposes of following suit, the left bower is considered to be of the same suit as trump; in the previous example, the jack of clubs is treated as a spade during play.

In the other two non-trump suits, the ace is the highest rank, followed by the king, and so on, down to the nine.

CONSOLE CONTROLS

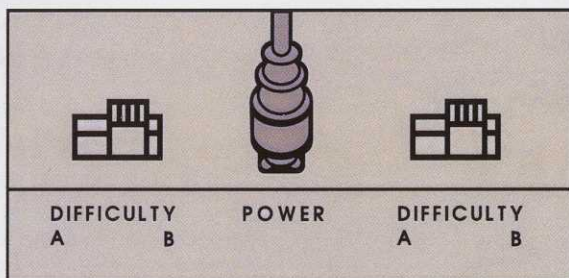
GAME SELECT SWITCH: not used.

GAME RESET SWITCH: use this switch to start a new game at any time.

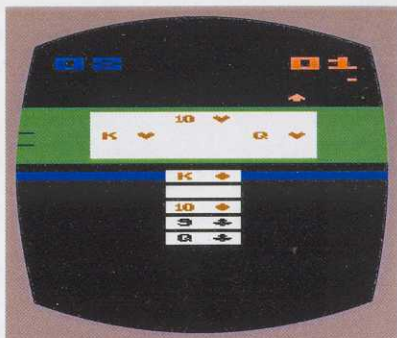
LEFT DIFFICULTY SWITCH: In the "A" position, the dealer must name a trump suit if the initial trump suit is turned down and all the other players have passed twice. This is the commonly used "stick-the-dealer" variation. In the "B" position, the dealer is free to pass a second time, in which case the hand is thrown in.

RIGHT DIFFICULTY SWITCH: not used.

COLOR/BLACK & WHITE SWITCH: not used.



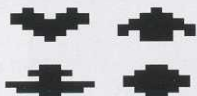
GAME DISPLAY



The large numbers at the top of the screen are the scores of the two teams. Your team's score is on the left; the opposing team's score is on the right.

During a hand, the tricks taken by each team are shown directly beneath their scores. One block is displayed per trick.

The region beneath the tricks is used for displaying either information or instructions. The symbols that can appear here are listed below:



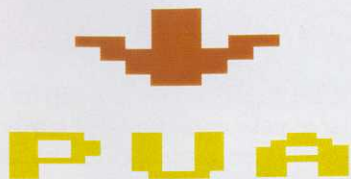
The current trump suit, which is shown beneath the score and tricks of the maker's team.



"Deal", instructing you to press the joystick button to start the next deal.



"Swap", instructing you to swap a card in your hand for the turned-up card



The arrow points to the player making a decision and the letter indicates the decision itself: P for "pass," U for "order Up" or "call trUmp," or A for "go Alone".

The large white area is the card table. Cards are played here during a trick. The top portion is for your partner's card, the left and right sides are for your opponents' cards, and the bottom portion is where your play is shown. Consider the four sides of the table as a compass, with north at the top; this puts you at the south side, with your partner at north, and the opposing team at west and east.

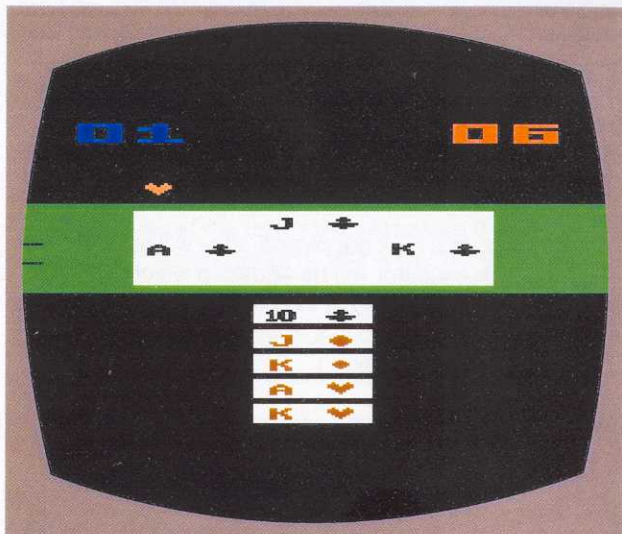
After all the cards in a trick are played, they will automatically vanish and a trick indicator will be added to whichever team won the trick. Note that when one of the players is a lone maker, only three cards will be displayed in a completed trick, since the maker's partner is not in play.

The five white boxes below the card table are the cards in your hand. A blank box indicates a card that has already been played.

The bottom region is used when you are deciding whether to pass or accept trump and choosing a suit to name as trump. When it is your turn, the letters "PUA" are shown, with the same meanings as given above. If you select U or A and the turned-up suit was turned down, all four suit symbols are shown so you can name a trump suit.

CONTROLLER ACTION

Use the joystick controller to select a card to play or swap for the turned-up card, choose whether to pass or become the maker, and to pick a suit to name a trump. Press the trigger to play the card or confirm your decision.



When it is your turn to play or swap a card, a cursor in the shape of a blue bar appears among the cards of your hand. Move the joystick up and down to move the cursor to the card of your choice. Press the button to play or swap the selected card. If you make an illegal selection, such as not following suit when you are able, you will hear a warning sound and must make another selection.



When you are deciding whether to pass or become maker, the letters "PUA" are shown in the bottom region of the screen. A cursor in the shape of a dot is below one of these letters. Move the joystick left and right to move the cursor underneath the letter corresponding to your decision. If you make an illegal selection, choosing to pass a second time when you are the dealer and the "stick-the-dealer" rule is active (see Difficulty), you will hear a warning sound and must make another selection.



When you are picking a suit to name as trump, the four suit symbols are shown in the the bottom region of the screen. A cursor in the shape of a dot is below one of these symbols. Move the joystick left and right to move the cursor underneath the suit which you want to name as trump. If you choose the same suit as the turned-down card, you will hear a warning sound and must make another selection.

Press the joystick button to start a new deal after a hand is finished and points have been awarded. The screen will go blank for a fraction of a second while the cards are shuffled and dealt.

If a game has ended, you can either press the Game Reset switch (see Console Controls) or the joystick button to start a new game.

SCORING

When a hand is over, points are awarded to one of the teams depending on which team won the majority of the tricks, how many tricks were won, and if the maker went alone.

Maker's team took less than three tricks:
opponents get two points

Maker's team took three or four tricks:
maker's team gets one point

Maker's team took all five tricks (march):
maker's team gets two points

Maker went alone and took five tricks:
maker's team gets four points

The team that reaches ten or more points wins the game.

STRATEGY

Here are a few tips to help you get started playing Euchre:

Do not become maker unless you are reasonably certain you can take three tricks yourself. A common Euchre adage is "count on your partner for one trick." This is often not the case, as the strength your partner may have is likely from a different trump suit, or your partner may have passed because he or she has a weak hand. However, taking a risk is occasionally worthwhile.

In most situations, it is not a good idea to play trump on a trick your partner is winning with an ace of a non-trump suit. Since the ace is the highest card in a non-trump suit, only a trump can beat it, so your partner is likely to win the trick. There are exceptions to this, notably when the ace is of a suit that was led before, or several cards of that suit are in your hand or have been used in tricks. In this case, playing trump is a good idea, since with so many cards of the led suit already gone, your opponents will probably be able to trump as well.

If you are going to play trump on a trick, and you are not the last person to play in that trick, be careful about playing too low a trump. The next player may be able to beat it. This does not necessarily mean you should use a bower immediately; just be careful about using a nine or ten unless the led suit was the first appearance of that suit in the hand.

Draining the other players of trump by leading the highest trump left in the hand is useful, but only if you have a couple of additional trump cards or some off-trump aces to follow up with. Otherwise, you may find that your opponents can take your remaining cards, and your partner may also be out of trump.

You can probably be a lone maker if you have the right bower, either the left bower or the ace, and a mix of low trump and high non-trump, preferably aces. It is easiest if you lead to the first trick, as you this will give you an opportunity to immediately drain your opponents' trump.

No hint or tip applies to all scenarios. As you play more often, you will learn to recognize situations in which you should pass or become maker, trump or play off, and whether to go alone or keep your partner. Do not be afraid to take measured risks as it is the only way you will learn what choices can be successful. Also, be patient; Euchre is a game of both skill and luck, and there are times in which your hand has no cards that can affect play. Just wait for the next hand.

Books that provide the rules of Euchre usually have a section on strategy. For a more thorough examination of strategy, please consult a book at your local book store or library, or search for "Euchre strategy" with your favorite Internet search engine.

Most importantly, have fun!

EUCHRE WITH OTHERS

When playing Euchre with real cards and real people, there are some conventions to consider and variations to explore.

The deal is usually completed in two rounds, traditionally by giving a player two cards in the first round and three cards in the second, or three in the first and two in the second, and not giving two adjacent players the same number of cards in the same round.

Partners should sit across from each other, or if not possible, should at least be separated by a player from the opposing team.

Scoring is normally done by using cards from a standard deck that are not part of a Euchre deck. Two fives are given to each team. One five is placed face down on top of another, which is face up. As points are awarded, a corresponding number of pips are revealed on the bottom card. When a team reaches five points, the top card is turned over. This means that at all times, the number of pips showing is the score for the team.

Besides the "stick-the-dealer" variation provided in the game program, other variants allow a player to have the hand thrown in when his or her hand is weak: a "farmer's hand" (all nines and tens) or "ace-no-face" (all nines and tens except for one ace). There are also variations for three players, who are temporarily partners, and for six players, in which the maker's team plays

against the other two teams. In the six-player version, sevens and eights are added to the deck so that every player can still be dealt five cards.

CREDITS

The Euchre game software and this instruction manual were written by Erik Eid. The label artwork and manual cover page were designed by David Exton. This manual was created as a team effort between Erik Eid, Mike Mika and Dale Crum.

It would not have been possible to create Euchre without the help of the members of the Stella mailing list. Stella is a community of Atari 2600 programmers and enthusiasts who create new games and provide suggestions on both gameplay and development. If you are interested in learning more, go to www.biglist.com/lists/stella to subscribe or www.biglist.com/lists/stella/archives to browse archived messages.

Special thanks go to Stella members Andrew Davie and Thomas Jentsch, who gave critical advice on optimization on several occasions. Without their help, Euchre would not fit into a standard 4 KB cartridge and definitely would not be finished at this time.

Readers of the AtariAge 2600 forum also offered advice and play testing services, both of which are greatly appreciated. AtariAge is an excellent resource for information and discussion about Atari game systems and computers; go to www.atariage.com to see more.

Lastly, this game is dedicated to two groups of people: first, to all those who supported my dream, whatever it was at the time, and second, to all those who are dreamers. May you find the way to yours.

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NOTES

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CARTRIDGE INSTRUCTION MANUAL**

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