The Tarot Rules

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1. The Cards.

The deck consists of **78 cards**:

• 56 cards divided into **4 suits** each composed by 14 cards which are in descending order the King, the Queen, the Knight (a particular Tarot honor), the Jack then 10 - 9 - 8 - 7 - 6 - 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - Ace.

• **21 Trumps** (or Tarots). The figure on each card indicates the strength of each Trump: the 21 is the most powerful, the Ace is the less. The Ace of Trumps is called in French "**le Petit**" ("the Small"). A Trump is always a higher card than any card of a suit.

• The **Excuse** (or Joker) is the card with a star representing a music player. This card can be played instead of any other card of any suit (even Trump), but it cannot win the trick. The Excuse cannot change of side except if it is played at the last trick: in this case it changes automatically of side (excepted in one case, see the Slam).

The most important cards are the three **Oudlers**: the 21 of Trumps, the Ace of Trumps and the Excuse. The 21 can never change of side, as being the highest card of the deck. On the other hand the Ace of Trumps is vulnerable.

2. The values of the Cards.

Each of the 78 cards has a specific value as shown below (to avoid any half point, the cards are counted together two by two):

an Oudler + a minor card	5 points
a King + a minor card	5 points
a Queen + a minor card	4 points
a Knight + a minor card	3 points
a Jack + a minor card	2 points
two minor cards	1 point
Total of the pack	**91 points**

3. The goal of the game.

The Tarot is at the same time an individual and a team game. Indeed, during a deal, one of the players (the **Taker**) is matched against the three other players (the **Defenders**) who form a team. But this situation lasts only during each single deal.

The Taker contracts during the bids that he will reach with his tricks a minimum amount of points. This minimum amount is determined only by the number of Oudler(s) that the Taker will have among his tricks at the end of the game:

Number of Oudler(s)	Min. points to reach
0	56
1	51
2	41
3	36

The minimum amount of points to reach does not depend on the bid taken.

4. The choice of the Dealer.

Before the first deal, all the cards are laid down backside and each player chooses one up.

The lowest card designates the first Dealer. A Trump is higher than any suit card. If there is equality, the following priority order between the suits is applied: Spades - Hearts - Diamonds - Clubs. Therefore the Ace of Clubs always designates the first Dealer. The player who takes the Excuse must choose another card.

For the next deals, the player placed on the right side of the previous Dealer becomes the new one.

5. The split and the deal.

The player facing the Dealer shuffles the cards. The pack face down is split in two parts by the player placed on the left side of the Dealer. The smallest part of the pack must contain at least 4 cards.

The cards are dealt counter-clockwise three by three. The Talon, or "**Dog**" ("le Chien" in French), is composed of 6 cards. It is made during the dealing at the will of the Dealer one by one but without the first and the last card of the pack.

If the Ace of Trumps is the only Trump (including the Excuse) into one of the hands, this player must show his cards and that deal is not played.

6. The bids.

After having seen their hands, each player bids, beginning by the player placed on the right side of the Dealer.

Each player can only bid one time. He can pass or he must bid at a higher level than the players before. The possible bids are as following:

• **Pass**.
If all the players are passing, the deal is not played and the player placed on the right side of the dealer makes another deal.
• **Take**.
• **Guard**.
For these two bids, only the computation of the scores differs. After the bids, the Dog is turned up and showed to the all the players. Then its cards are included into the Taker's hand. In return, he must discard six cards, without showing them, but these cards will be included into the amount of his tricks at the end of the deal.
• **Guard Without**.
The Dog is not showed up but is included downside into the tricks of the Taker.
• **Guard Against**.
The Dog is not showed up but is included downside into the tricks of the Defenders.

7. The Discard.

The player who bade a Take or a Guard includes to his hand the 6 cards of the Dog. Then he discards 6 of his 24 cards. This **Discard** stays secret but will be included into the tricks of the Taker.

The Taker cannot discard neither Oudlers nor Kings. He can discard a Trump only if he has nothing else than Oudlers, Kings and Trumps. In this case, he must show to all the Defenders the discarded Trumps.

8. Playing the cards.

The opening is made by the player placed on the right side of the Dealer. The order of the play is counter-clockwise. Each trick is won by the highest Trump played, or the highest card of the suit if no Trumps were played. The player who wins the trick opens the next one.

If a card of a **suit** opens a trick, each player has to follow the same suit. If a player has no cards of the requested suit, he must play a Trump. When a player has neither cards of the requested suit, nor any Trumps, he plays any other card he wants.

If a **Trump** opens a trick, each player has to play a Trump, except when he has none, in which case he is free to play any card he wants. Whenever a Trump has to be played, either after a Trump opening or instead of a missing suit, a Trump higher than the highest played so far in the same trick is requested. If the player cannot play a higher Trump, he has to play any other Trump. But he has to play a Trump, except if he has none, in which case he is free to play any other card he wants.

If the opening of a trick is the **Excuse**, then the second player of this trick determines the played suit (or Trumps).

9. The bonus.

•The **Ace of Trumps at the end** (in French: "le Petit au bout").
If the Ace of Trumps is in the 18th and last trick, the side who wins this trick gains a bonus of 10, multiplied according to the contract (see the Score section), whatever the winning side of the deal.

• The **Handful** (in French: "la Poignée").
A player which has 10 or more trumps into his hand can **at his own choice** declare a Handfull, either Simple, Double, or Triple. Before he plays his first card in the first trick, he has to show the right number of trumps as following:

Simple Handful, or 10 Trumps, for a bonus of 20.
Double Handful, or 13 Trumps for a bonus of 30.
Triple Handful, or 15 Trumps for a bonus of 40.

This bonus cannot be multiplied (see the Score section) but is **added to the score of the winning side** of the deal. The Excuse shown inside a Handful indicates that the player has no other Trumps in his hand.

10. The Slam.

The Slam consists to win **all the 18 tricks** of a deal...

The Slam can be declared by the Taker in addition to the contract he bade. An extra bonus (not multiplied, see the Score section) is added to the score of the deal:

• Slam declared and made: a bonus of 400 points.
• Slam not declared but made: a bonus of 200 points.
• Slam declared but not made: a forfeit of minus 200 points.

The Slam can be declared after the Discard. In any case, the player who declares a Slam makes the opening. If the player who is trying to complete a Slam has the Excuse, he can play it at the last trick and he wins this trick if he has already gained all the other tricks. In this case, the Ace of Trumps is considered to have been played "**at the end**" if it was played at the trick before the last one.

11. The Score.

To win the bid he has contracted, the Taker must reach a minimum amount of points according to the number of Oudler(s) he has in his tricks at the end of the played deal (see the goal of the game section). If the amount of the points in the tricks of the Taker is less than the required one, the Taker loses his bid.

A bid is worth **25 points** to which are added to (or substracted from) the points of the tricks that are above (or under) the required amount of the points. This number is **multiplied** by 2 with a Guard, by 4 with a Guard Without or by 6 with a Guard Against. The same figure is substracted from (or added to in the case of a lost bid) the score of the three Defenders, and added 3 times to (or substracted 3 times from in the case of a lost bid) the score of the Taker. Therefore, before each new deal, the sum of all the scores is always 0.

An example of scoring: the Taker wins a Guard with 43 points, 2 Oudlers and the Ace of Trumps at the end. Because he has two Oudlers, he had to make 41 points to win his bid. Therefore, his gain is 43 - 41 = 2 pts. The computation for an successfull Guard is then (25 + 2 + 10 (for the Ace of Trumps at the end)) x 2 (for the Guard) = + 74 pts. The result gives - 74 pts for each of the three Defenders and + 74 x 3 = + 222 pts for the Taker.