# Card Game 31

**Introduction**

Thirty One is one of the card world's oldest games, dating back to the 1440's. Considered a gentleman's gambling game, Thirty One was mentioned in one of Bernadine of Sienne's anti-gambling sermons.

This is a simple draw and discard game. Players have a three card hand and the aim is to collect cards in a single suit worth 31 points or as near as possible to that total.

**Players**

From 2 to 9 or more people can play. Each player begins with three tokens or coins.

**Cards and Their Value**

A standard 52 card deck is used. For scoring hands, the ace is worth 11 points, the kings, queens, and jacks are worth 10, and all other cards are worth their pip (number) value.

The value of a three card hand is calculated by adding up the value of the cards held in **any one suit**. So if you have three cards of the same suit, you can add up all three. If only two cards are in the same suit you can add those, or use the value of the odd card if it is higher than the sum of the other two. If you have three different suits the value of your hand is the value of the highest card in it. The maximum hand value is 31, consisting of the ace and two ten-point cards in the same suit.

**Examples:**

**♥K-♥8-♥5**: value 23 (sum of all 3 cards)

**♠Q-♦9-♦8**: value 17 (9 + 8)

**♣A-♠6-♠4**: value 11 (the ace is worth more than the spades)

**♣J-♥7-♠4**: value 10 (the jack)

**Hand Value Changing as You Play:**

Suppose you had this hand: **♣J-♠5-♠3** after drawing and discarding.

Its Value is 10, the value of the **♣J**.

But on your next turn you draw or take off the top of the discard pile the **♠Q**

In this case, if you keep the **♠Q** and discard the **♣J** your hand value (**♠Q-♠5-♠3**) has gone from 10 (in clubs) to 18 (in spades).

**Deal**

Determine the first dealer in any manner you desire. The deal rotates clockwise with each hand. The cards are shuffled and the dealer deals the cards singly, starting with the player to dealer's left and continuing clockwise until everyone has a hand of three cards.

The next card is turned face up on the table to start the discard pile, and the remaining undealt cards are placed face down next to it to form the stock. During play, the discard pile is always kept "squared up" so that only the top card is visible and available to be taken.

**Play**

The player to dealer's left begins and the turn passes clockwise around the table. A normal turn consists of:

1. drawing the top card either from the stack or from the discard pile;
2. discarding one card on top of the discard pile.

Note that if you choose to take the top card from the discard pile, it is illegal to discard the same card, leaving the position unchanged. You must keep the card you took and discard one of the cards that were previously in your hand. However, if you draw the top card of the stock, you are free to discard the card that you drew onto the discard pile, leaving your hand unchanged.

**Knocking**

If at the start of your turn, you believe that your hand value is at least as high as your opponents can achieve with one more turn, you can **knock** at the end of your turn. *Local rule: You must have at least 21 to knock.* Knocking ends your turn; you must keep the hand you had at the start of that turn, but each other player, in turn, gets one final turn to draw and discard. After the player to the knocker's right has discarded, all players reveal their cards, Knocker first. Each player decides which suit is their point suit, and totals up his or her cards in that suit.

The player with the **lowest** hand value **loses a life** (a token). If there is a tie involving the knocker, the other player(s) lose a life as well as the knocker. The knocker loses if his or her score is lower than that of every other player, and in that case the knocker loses **two** lives. If there is a tie for lowest between two or more players other than the knocker, then both (all) of those players lose a life.

There is just one case where it is possible to pick up **your own** discard. This happens when there are only two players left in the game and your opponent knocks. The card you discarded just before the knock is still on top of the pile, so it is now available for you to take back if you want it - for example if you had just broken up a suit for tactical reasons you can now restore it.

**Declaring 31**

If after drawing and discarding, or with the cards originally dealt, a player achieves a hand value of 31, that player shows his or her cards immediately and claims victory. In this case **all** the other players lose. A player who gets 31 can declare it even after another player has knocked; victory is immediate and all the other players lose. If it happens that two or more players get 31 on the initial deal then all the players other than those with 31 lose.

**Scoring**

The normal way of scoring in **31** is that each player begins the game with three coins or tokens. When you lose a life, you have to put one of your coins into the kitty in the center of the table. If you knock and lose, having the sole lowest hand, you pay two coins (if you have that many).

If someone declares 31, all the other players have to put a coin in the kitty. If someone declares 31 after another player has knocked, the knocker just pays one coin, like everyone else.

If you have no money left, having lost all three of your coins, you are said to be "on probation." If you lose while on probation, you are out of the game. The game continues until only one player has not been eliminated, and that player is the winner. If you are playing with coins, you can decide that the winner also keeps the pot, in which case use quarters for tokens.