The Rules of Thieving Stink*

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1 Description

Thieving Stink is a simple, trick-based card game similar to Spades or Bridge. Like them, Thieving Stink is played with partners, has a trump suit, and allows for bidding. Unlike other games, however, the trump suit may change during the course of play.

2 Preparation

Thieving Stink uses a standard 52 card deck. As in Bridge, the suits are ordered $\clubsuit$, $\diamondsuit$, $\heartsuit$, and $\spadesuit$. The cards within each suit are ordered as usual with Aces high.

Partners sit opposite each other at the table. The dealer shuffles the cards and deals each player 13 cards.

3 Bidding and Exchange

To determine the lead and the starting trump suit, each player selects one card from his hand and places the card *face down* on the table in front of him. This is the player's **bid-card**. When each player has decided on his or her bid, all of the bid-cards are turned face up and the player with the highest card takes the lead. The bid-cards are collected into a pile called the **trump-stack**. The lead player's bid card goes on top, and the pile goes in front of him to indicate that he "has the trump".

4 Game Play

The game consists of 12 tricks. At the beginning of each trick, the lead player has the option of leading a card or changing trump (as described below). If he leads a card, play continues to his left. Each player must follow suit if possible. If it is not possible to follow suit, the player *must* play trump. If the player does not have the correct suit and does not have trump, he may play any card. Whoever plays the highest card takes the trick and becomes the lead player for the next round.

The key rule that sets Thieving Stink apart from other trump based games is this: *At all times during the game, the trump suit is the suit of the top card on the trump-stack.* A player may opt

*The name "Thieving Stink" came about during play-testing when Adam Florence's fiancée Annette Piepenhagen called him one after he grabbed the trump pile as his last turn twice in two games!

to change the trump during his lead instead of playing a card. To do so, the player announces that he is changing trump and places a card on top of the trump-stack. He moves the trump-stack in front of him to indicate that he possesses the trump. Play for that trick then continues as usual to the left. The card placed on the trump-stack *is not* counted as part of the trick. Thus the trick for that round consists of just three cards and the person to the lead's left effectively gains control of the game. (He does not, however, have the option to change the trump this trick.)

The card placed on top of the trump-stack must be of higher value than the one currently on top of the trump stack, except that a 2 of any suit beats any other card. Thus if the top of the trump-stack were $\diamondsuit$9, the lead could change it to $\heartsuit$9 or higher, but *not* $\clubsuit$9 or lower (except 2's). Similarly, if the top of the trump-stack were $\clubsuit$A, any other Ace or any 2 would be a valid change of trump.

5 Scoring

Points are totaled at the end of play. Each face card (J, Q, K or A) taken during a trick is worth 10 points to the team who collected it. The team in control of trump at the end of the game also receives 5 points for each card (no matter what its rank) in the trump-stack.

The game is played until a score of 500 or more points is reached by some team. If both teams pass 500 points in the same hand, the team with the highest score wins.