



Free Game # 40 from Invisible City Productions, Inc.

**A game for three to four (five?) players and a Pinochle deck.  
by Jonathan A. Leistiko**

**Object:**

Make 200 or more points in bid. You do this by taking enough tricks to make your bid. Alternately, you can force the Gnome to make 350 or more points (thereby ending the game) and you'll win if you have more points than any other player.

**Card Rank:**

The **rank** of a card determines its value relative to other cards in the same trick. The highest-ranked Trump card played on a trick takes the trick. If no Trump is played on a trick, then the highest-ranking card of the suit led on a trick takes the trick.

- (High to Low) - A,K,Q,J,10,9
- Jokers have a rank one greater than the card underneath them.

**Card Values:**

The **value** of a card determines how many points you get for it once you've taken it in a trick. These are the points that you're tallying at the end of each hand. When you're bidding, you're trying to predict how many points you'll take at the end of the hand.

- A,K = 1 point each
- Q,J,10,9 = 0 points each
- Jokers = 2 points each
- All cards in Trump are worth one point more than their normal value (making Jokers that are played as Trump worth 3 points).

## Setting Up:

- The game is played with a Pinochle deck, so you'd better have one.
- You'll also need a piece of paper and a pencil to keep track of score. Make one column for each player and one column for the Gnome.
- Before the game begins, remove one 9 from each suit and both Jokers. These 6 cards are called the **Blanket** and are used at the beginning of each hand.
- Shuffle the deck and deal the remaining cards out to all players. Players may look at their hands and arrange them as they see fit.

## The Bid :

- The Dealer shuffles the Blanket and offers it to the player on their right, who must pick out one card from the Blanket and place it face-down in the middle of the table. This lone card is called the **Gnome** . The Gnome is not revealed to all players until bidding is finished.
- The suit of the Gnome will determine the Trump suit for that hand. If the Gnome is a Red Joker, then the player who takes the bid gets to make either Diamonds or Hearts Trump. If the Gnome is the black Joker, then the player who takes the bid may make either Spades or Clubs Trump.
- The Dealer deals one card from the Blanket to each player, which they must add to their hand. Any cards that are not left in the Blanket are set aside for the next hand.
- Starting with the player on the Dealer's left and proceeding clockwise, each player must bid (declare a number), indicating the number of points that they think they can take in the coming hand, or declare, "pass." If a player passes, then they may not bid until the next hand begins. Each bid must be higher than any previous bids for that hand.
- Before bidding or passing, a player may look at the Gnome. If a player looks at the Gnome then they will only score half of their points at the end of the hand, with the other half of the points going to the Gnome. See Tallying Points , below, for more details.
- Once all players but one have passed, the player with the highest bid wins the bid for that hand and must turn the Gnome over for everyone to see. The suit of the Gnome is Trump for this hand. If the Gnome is a Joker, then the player who took the bid must declare Trump as described above..
- A player who takes the bid without looking at the Gnome scores twice as many points if they make their bid.
- Each player must keep track of their top bid made during this round because **a player who does not take the bid can not make more points on a hand than their bid** , regardless of whether they win the bid or how many points they take. If a player does not bid at all, then they can not make any points in the upcoming hand.

## Play:

Play is very similar to Pinochle, without counting meld.

- The player who took the bid begins the first trick by playing a card from their hand face-up on the table. Continuing clockwise, each player must play a card on the card led in accord with the following rules.
- Trump does not have to be led on the first trick of a hand, but may be led if desired.
- If possible, you must play a card of the same suit as the card that started the trick. This is called, "playing in suit." If it is impossible to play in the suit that is led, then any card may be played.
- If Trump is led on a trick, and you are capable of playing Trump, then you must play a higher Trump card (overtrump) if possible. If Trump is played "out of suit" (that is, is the suit led was not Trump, but another player has played Trump on the trick), you still need to play in suit if you can; if you can not play in suit, then you must overtrump if you have Trump.
- Jokers count as either suit of their color, and count as Trump if played as the correct suit. The suit of a Joker is declared when it is revealed, so you are never be "forced" to play a Joker in order to play in suit or to beat Trump.
  - ◇ If your Joker is the last red card left in your hand and a red suit is led, then you must play your Red Joker in order to play in suit.
  - ◇ If Hearts are led, the next player Trumps them with Clubs, and you only have Spades and a black Joker, then you may play the Joker and overtrump or you can play a Spade.
- Once all players have played one card on a trick, then the player who played the highest card within the suit lead on a trick takes the trick *unless* one or more players have played Trump. In this case, the player who played the highest Trump card takes the trick.
- The player who takes the trick begins the next trick.

## Tallying Points:

Once all tricks have been taken in a hand, each player tallies their points and compares that total to their highest bid.

- Any player who did not take the bid may not make more points than their bid for that hand. Give any excess points to the Gnome. Note that a player who takes and makes bid may count all the points that they take, even if the points taken exceed their bid.
- If the player who took the bid failed to make their bid, then they must give all of the points they took this hand to the Gnome. The player also loses points equal to the amount they bid.
- Any player who looked at the Gnome before it was revealed to everyone must give half of the points they made to the Gnome. Note that this applies to the player who took the bid as well.
- If the player who took the bid looked at the Gnome and failed to make their bid, then the Gnome gains twice the number of points that they took in the hand. The player also loses points equal to the amount they bid.

If the game is not over at the end of a hand, then deal passes to the left and a new hand is set up.

## Ending The Game:

The game ends when:

- A player has 200 or more points at the end of a hand or,
- The Gnome has 350 or more points at the end of a hand.

## Winning:

The player with the most points at the end of the game wins *unless* the player who most recently took the bid has more than 200 points. If this is the case, then they win.

## Origin and Credits:

I had three goals when making up this game:

1. Make a game that uses a Pinochle deck. Think about it: How many games use a Pinochle deck (other than Pinochle)? Not many.
2. Make a game that has randomly-chosen Trump. I don't know why I wanted this. I just did, that's all.
3. Reward risk-taking. All too often in a card game like Pinochle, I'll play too conservatively and regret it, or I'll risk it all and not feel adequately compensated for it (the gain fails to outweigh the risk). Trumplestiltskin is designed to punish conservative play and reward those who are willing to risk and those who are extremely lucky.

All in all, it's just a card game. I'm not over-impressed with Trumplestiltskin, but if any of you have suggestions to make it better, then I'd love to hear them! My favorite part of the game is the Blanket Gnome. That's a big inside joke between a few friends and myself. About eight years ago I know this guy named "Rico". I walked in on him one day when he was feeling especially wierd; he was huddled in the corner of a dimly-lit room wrapped in a baby-blue blanket with just his head poking out. I looked at him quizzically and he turned to me. "I'm the blanket gnome!" he declared in an appropriately gnomish voice. I thought that this was *hilarious*, and I've "regressed to a blanket gnomish state" more than few times since then.



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