



RAMINO

How to Play Ramino

Ramino is a card game of Anglo-Saxon origin, believed to derive from Rummy, a Texan game. It developed in Italy during the 1920s–30s, but its spread was international. It became so popular that the standard 108-card deck (two French decks including Jokers) was even named the “Ramino deck.”

Over the years, many games and variants were born from Ramino, the most famous being Scala Quaranta. Despite its old origins, Ramino is still widely played today. The rules are simple and require no particular strategic skills, making it suitable for all ages and social contexts, from Christmas gatherings to evenings in taverns.

The game can be played by 2 to 7 players (no more, since the deck has only 108 cards), though more players are possible by using two Ramino decks.

The cards

To play Ramino, you need the “Ramino deck”: 108 cards (two standard French decks including all 4 Jokers).

Goal of the game

The goal of Ramino is to “*go out*”, meaning to get rid of all your cards by forming valid combinations. At the end of each hand, the points of the unplayed cards are counted. The game ends when a player reaches 101 points, and the winner is the one with the lowest score.

Dealing the Cards

The dealer is chosen at random (e.g., using the “*bàs fà màs*” rule). The role of dealer rotates among players in turn order.

The dealer gives 10 cards face down to each player, one at a time. Then one card is placed face up on the table — this begins the discard pile. The remaining cards form the stock.

Gameplay

Drawing

After the deal, the first player (sitting to the dealer's right, or to the left if playing clockwise) begins by drawing a card, either:

- from the stock (face down), or
- from the discard pile (the last card discarded).

The very first player after the deal may take the face-up starter card instead of drawing.

Combinations

After drawing, the player may try to arrange their cards into valid combinations. They may, but are not required to, place on the table any combinations they can form.

Valid combinations are:

- Run: three or more consecutive cards of the same suit.
 - Example: 3♠ + 4♠ + 5♠
- Set (Three of a Kind): three cards of the same rank in different suits.
 - Example: J♥ + J♣ + J♠
- Four of a Kind: four cards of the same rank in different suits.
 - Example: 8♥ + 8♦ + 8♣ + 8♠

Note: in Italian usage, all these combinations are often generically called tris, even four-of-a-kind or runs.

Special rules for the Ace:

- Low Run: Ace + 2 + 3 (e.g., A♠ + 2♠ + 3♠)
- High Run: Queen + King + Ace (e.g., Q♠ + K♠ + A♠)

Attaching

During their turn, after placing their own combinations, a player may attach one or more cards to combinations already on the table, provided those melds remain valid.

Example: Adding a 6♠ to an existing run 3♠-4♠-5♠.

Discarding

At the end of their turn, each player must discard one card face up onto the discard pile. This card may later be taken by the next player.

Jokers

A Joker may represent any card, both in rank and suit.

Examples:

- Set: 2♠ + 2♣ + Joker (counts as a 2♦ or 2♥).
- Run: 7♦ + Joker + 9♦ (the Joker counts as 8♦).

Going Out

When a player has no cards left in hand (either before or after discarding), they go out and the hand ends.

At that point, opponents count the value of the cards remaining in their hands:

- 2-10 = face value
- Face cards (J, Q, K) = 10 points
- Ace = 11 points
- Joker = 25 points

“Ramino” (Going Out in One Turn)

If a player goes out in a single turn without ever melding or attaching cards, they score Ramino. In this case, all points from the other players are doubled.

“Ramino with Suit”

Another variant rule: if a player holds all 10 cards of the same suit, they can declare Ramino, even if the cards do not form runs.

Re-Entry

In games with 3+ players, when someone is eliminated by exceeding 101 points, they may re-enter the game. Their score is reset to match the current lowest-score player.

Variant 1: Number of Cards

In some places, instead of 10 cards per player, hands are dealt with 7, 9, or 13 cards. The game-end threshold (101 points) may also vary.

Variant 2: Only Ramino

In this version, no one is allowed to meld combinations during play. The first player to score Ramino wins the hand.

Scoring in this variant still uses the same card values. Example:

- Hand = 2♠, 2♠, 2♠, 5♦, 6♦, 7♦, 8♦, Q♠, Q♥, K♦
- Unmeldable cards = 5♦ + Q♠ + Q♥ + K♦ = 35 points.