



# THE RULES OF SCOPA



(Provided by Dante Alighieri Society of Washington)

Scopa is the most popular card game in Italy. It requires the ability to count and add up to the number 40. The game is taught to children by older family members. In addition to social value, the game also teaches addition.

There are 40 cards in the deck. Although there are four suits [(denari (coins), spade (swords), bastoni (clubs), & coppe (cups)], cards from various regions of Italy look slightly different. Generally, each suit contains cards numbered one through seven together with three face cards. The type of face cards also vary from region to region. In the Neapolitan deck, there is a page (fantino), a knight (cavaliere), and a king, (re) worth 8, 9, and 10, respectively.

Scopa is played by two players or by four players in teams of two. The two players of a team sit across from each other. Scopa cards are too thick to be shuffled against a table and are, instead, shuffled in hand. The team or player to deal the cards first is determined by cutting the deck. The highest card deals first, then the play moves counterclockwise.

Each player is dealt three cards face down and four cards are placed face up in the center of the table. At each player's turn, he can either pick up a card or cards in the center by matching them to the value of a card from his hand (i.e., three picks up a three, nine picks up a four and five). When this is done, the player shows the card he is using and removes the played card together with the picked up card or cards to the team pile. A player cannot use a single card to pick up a multiple of cards if there is a card of equivalent value facing up. If a player is unable to pick up any cards, he must add a card from his hand face up to the center of the table. Once no one has any more cards in their hands, the dealer deals three more cards to each player and play resumes. If there are any cards on the table after the last card of the last hand, the team or player that picked up the last card gets the remaining cards.

Points are counted after the last cards are played, as follows:

1. One point for the team or player with 21 or more cards.
2. One point for the card known as "settebello," the sette di denari (seven of coins).
3. One point for 6 or more denari cards, including the settebello.
4. One point for La settanta. This point is made by obtaining the highest total using four cards, each from a different suit, but face cards are not counted. Four sevens makes the point easily. Three sevens and a six also makes the point.
5. One point for each scopa. Scopa, which means to sweep, is made by picking up, or sweeping up, the last card or cards on the table so that there are none left. When a player does this, he yells "scopa!" Scopa is the only point that can be made more than once in a round. The scopa is recorded by keeping the card that made scopa face up in the team pile. The last play of the last hand is not counted as a scopa.

The game continues until one team or player reaches 11 or 15 points, the winning score to be agreed upon between the players prior to the start of the game.