

# TIGHTROPE

## (Drahtseilakt)

**For Winners and Losers**

**A Tactical Card Game  
by Reiner Knizia**

Players: 3-5

Age: 8 and up

Duration: c. 30 minutes.

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*“He who always wins, loses.”*

### **GAME IDEA and OBJECTIVE**

Is this familiar? One moment everything is in perfect harmony; then out of the blue come a mad bird, and you're in danger of losing your balance. In real life, as in this game, you need nerves of steel to keep going along the tightrope.

In this game, the winner of each trick gets points, as does the loser. This can be good or bad: if you always win or always lose, you'll get out of balance. Keeping your balance is what this game is all about.

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*“The stuff of winners and losers.”*

## GAME MATERIALS

- 50 number cards, from 1 to 50
  - 11 scoring cards, with values from 1 to 9, one blue 0 and one red 0
  - 50 balancing-sticks, 25 each of red and blue
  - These game rules
  - In addition, you will need pen and paper to record the individual scores over several rounds
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*“Getting ready to win - or to lose.”*

## PREPARATION

A game of TIGHTROPE is played over several rounds, as many as there are players. Each player is the dealer once. After the first dealer, the dealership goes round in clockwise order. The dealer does the following:

- Shuffle the scoring cards and place them as a face-down deck in the middle
  - Place the balancing-sticks in the middle
  - Shuffle all the number cards, then deal nine cards to each player’s hand
  - The remaining number cards are put aside unseen - they will not be used until the next round
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*“You win some - and you lose some.”*

## PLAY

The player to the left of the dealer begins. He reveals the top card from the scoring card deck. Then he selects one of his own number cards and places it face-up in front of him. In clockwise order, the other players follow in the same manner, selecting and displaying one of their number cards. This concludes the trick.

The player who played the highest card takes as many blue sticks as indicated on the scoring card. Whoever played the lowest card takes the corresponding number of red sticks. All sticks are kept in front of the players, visible to all.

**Example:** *The scoring card shows value 3. The number cards played are 7, 28 and 36. The player with the 36 receives three blue sticks; the player with the 7 gets three red sticks.*

After the trick is concluded, all involved number cards are discarded face-down. The player who played the highest card begins the next trick: he reveals the new scoring card, places it next to the previous scoring card and then plays one of his remaining number cards.

When a scoring card with value 0 is turned up, the player immediately reveals a second scoring card. The zero scoring card is then used to obscure the value of the corresponding colour on the second scoring card. This means that, in the following trick, sticks of only one colour will be distributed.

**Example:** *The blue zero scoring card covers the 4-value scoring card. The player with the lowest number receives four red sticks, whereas the player with the highest number receives nothing.*

If both zero scoring cards are turned up one after another, then they have no effect and are discarded. In this case, a third scoring card is revealed and the trick is played normally.

During the round, all revealed scoring cards remain open so that players can keep in mind which scoring cards are still to come.

As soon as a player possesses sticks of both colours, he returns pairs of one red stick and one blue stick until he only has sticks of one colour remaining. His remaining sticks indicate by how much he is out of balance.

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*“Winners and losers.”*

## **GAME END**

A round is over when all nine tricks have been concluded. Then for each player, the number of his remaining sticks is recorded, ignoring colour - the fewer the better. If a player succeeds in finishing the round in perfect balance, with no sticks, he may delete his highest score from one of the previous rounds. Then all balancing sticks are returned to the middle. The next round now starts.

After the appropriate number of rounds the game concludes. Each player totals his scores from all the rounds. The player with the lowest total wins.

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*“Tactics and luck.”*

## **GAME VARIANTS**

1. If you prefer a more tactical game, then play TIGHTROPE with the exact number of cards needed for the participating players. Leave the higher value number cards out of the game. For example, with three players only use the number cards from 1 to 27.
2. If you prefer luck to tactics, then do not play the cards in a trick in clockwise order, but reveal them simultaneously. Then no one can see what cards have already been played; the last player loses his advantage.

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*“Thanks to...”*

The designer thanks Chris Bowyer, Dave Farquhar, Martin Higham, Ross Inglis, Kevin Jacklin and Chris Lawson for their contributions to the development of the game.

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*“We give answers to winners and losers.”*

Is there anything you don't understand? Then ask us! Send your question to:

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We won't delay in responding!

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