

Metamorphosis

For Two or Three Players

Rules from the 1963 copy of Robert Abbott's New Card Games

This game is called Metamorphosis because, like the caterpillar that becomes a butterfly, it changes as you play it. What is more, unlike the caterpillar and the butterfly, Metamorphosis changes three times, not just once. So, if you are the sort of person whose interest flags when he plays the same game all evening, try Metamorphosis; all you have to do is wait a few minutes and you'll be playing another game.

General Description

A set in Metamorphosis consists of four hands of play, each of which involves a different type of trick-taking. The cards a player wins in one hand are used by him to play the next hand.

The play in each of these four hands is simple. But multiple strategies are open to a player who considers the game as a whole. For example, while playing Hand 1, he will be concerned, of course, with scoring high on that hand. But, at the same time, he will be building up good cards with which to play Hand 2. And he may even be tempering these strategies with considerations of what sort of cards he can expect in Hand 3 or 4.

The Deal

Two decks of cards are needed to play Metamorphosis. A standard deck of fifty-two cards is used. In addition, each player takes the ace, 2, 3, and 4 of any one suit out of the second deck. The remaining cards of the second deck are not used in the game.

The four cards taken by each player are his "indicator" cards; their purpose is explained later. These cards are kept separate from the hand the player is dealt.

The deck of fifty-two cards is cut for deal, and the player drawing the highest card is dealer (ace is high). If more than one person draws the same high card, there is another drawing for those who tie.

Each player is dealt twelve cards, and the rest of the deck is placed face down to form the stock pile.

Using the Indicator Cards

The table below lists the way each of the four hands is played. Readers who aren't familiar with this sort of trick-taking will find it described on page 50. *(Go to the end of this document to see the applicable excerpt from this page.)*

Hand 1. No trump - every club taken counts minus 4.

Hand 2. Diamonds trump - every heart counts plus 3.

Hand 3. No trump - every card taken counts minus 1.

Hand 4. No trump - every spade counts plus 4.

After a player has examined his cards, he chooses the one hand of the four he thinks he has a good chance of winning. He then picks from his indicator cards the one that corresponds to the hand number he chose and places it face down in front of him. For instance, if he thinks he can

win Hand 1, he places the ace in front of him, or if he thinks we can win Hand 2, he puts down the deuce.

After every person has placed a card on the table, the cards are turned face up to reveal the choices. The indicator cards are then put aside, but with the card of each player's choice still visible.

Later, a bonus of ten points is given to anyone who actually wins in the hand he indicated. If a player only ties for winner in his chosen hand, he does not receive the ten-point bonus.

Hand 1

The first lead is made by the player to the left of the dealer. As the table shows, this hand is played no-trump, and four points are scored *against* a player for every club he takes in. After the scores are recorded, each player picks up *every* card he took in and uses them for Hand 2.

Hand 2

At this point one player may have more cards than another. Before the hand can be played, everyone must have twelve cards again.

If a player has less than twelve, he draws from the stock until he has twelve. The cards drawn are not shown to the other players.

If a player has more than twelve, he discards his excess. Deciding what cards to discard is an important part of the strategy. The discards must not be seen by the other players; they are placed on a separate pile.

The player who led first in Hand 1 leads first in Hand 2. Diamonds are trump, and a player scores three points for every heart he takes in. The cards a player wins are used to play Hand 3.

Hand 3

If the amount of cards in each hand is not twelve at the start of this hand, the hands must be equalized again. But the method of equalization differs from that used in Hand 2. The method used in this hand resembles the game of Old Maid. A player who has more than twelve cards holds his hand up with the backs of the cards facing his opponents. An opponent with less than twelve then picks enough cards so that each will again have twelve. There is of course no strategy in this process, as a player does not know what he is picking.

The first lead is made by the player to the left of the one who led first in Hands 1 and 2. There is no trump, and *every* card a player takes scores one point *against* him. The cards taken in this hand are used to play Hand 4.

Hand 4

The method of equalizing the amounts of cards before Hand 4 is the same as that used before Hand 2. Everyone either draws or discards until the total amount of cards each has is twelve

If the stock pile becomes depleted, the cards of the discard pile are shuffled and used as a new stock. This is done before any new discards are added; that is, a player who needs to draw cards does so before another player makes any discards. (If, in the three-player game,

players need to draw more cards than are in both piles, they first take as many as they can and then take more after the other player has discarded.)

The first lead is made by the same player who led first in Hand 3. The play is no-trump, and every spade taken scores four points.

Sets

These four hands of play make up a set. After Hand 4 is finished, all fifty-two cards are shuffled together and dealt for the next set. The dealer is the player to the left of the dealer of the previous set.

Four sets (sixteen hands of play) make a game when two play. Three sets (twelve hands of play) constitute a game when three play. Whoever ends up with the highest score wins.

The following is an example of the scoring of one set during a three-player game:

	Smith	Jones	Robinson
Hand 1	-32	0*	0
Hand 2	+15*	+3	+9
Hand 3	-24	-9	-3*
Hand 4	+44	+4	0
Bonus	+10		+10
Total	13	-2	16

The asterisks here indicate the hand each player chose by his indicator card. Although Smith did much better in Hand 4 than in Hand 2, he received the bonus for picking Hand 2, because he did beat both his opponents in that hand. Jones picked Hand 1 and got a perfect score in that Hand, because he avoided taking in any clubs. But he did not receive a bonus, since Robinson tied his score. Robinson picked Hand 3 and received a bonus for getting the best score in that hand.

Excerpt from Page 50

Trick-Taking

To start a trick, the person who plays first picks any card from his hand and lays it face up in the center of the table. The player on the left plays a card next; after each player has laid down one card, the trick is complete.

A player must “follow suit” if he can, that is he must play a card of the same suit as the first card played. If he has no cards of the suit that was led, he may then play any card he wishes.

Whoever plays the highest card of the suit led wins the trick. However, if one suit is designated as trump and if any cards of the trump suit have been played, then the highest trump wins the trick.

A player is not forced to trump. For example, suppose hearts are trump and the first card led is a spade. You have no spades in your hand, but you do have hearts. You have the choice of playing a heart and possibly winning the trick or, if it is advantageous to you, of playing a diamond or club and losing the trick.

The player who wins a trick leads the first card to the next trick.

In winning a trick, a player wins the cards in the trick. Partners combine the tricks each of them wins. And, depending on the game, scoring is determined by the number of tricks won or by certain of the cards taken in the tricks.