



CARRY ON THE FLAME

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The rules of “Durnius” – from Lithuania

Setup

The game is typically played with two to five people, using a deck of 36 cards, for example, a standard 52-card deck from which the numerical cards 2 through 5 have been removed. The game can be played with six people if desired.

In theory, the limit for a game with one deck of 36 cards is six players, but this gives a considerable advantage to the player who attacks first and a considerable disadvantage to the player who defends first. Variants exist that use more than one deck.

The deck is shuffled, and each player receives six cards.

The bottom card of the remaining deck is laid open on the table. This determines the trump suit. The remainder of the deck is then placed on top of the revealed card at a 90 degree angle, so that it remains visible, forming a draw pile called the talon. The revealed card remains part of the talon and is drawn as the last card. Cards discarded due to successful defenses are placed in a discard pile next to the talon.

Gameplay

The player with the lowest trump is the first attacker. The player to the attacker's left is always the defender. After each turn play proceeds clockwise. If the attack succeeds (see below), the defender loses his/her turn and the attack passes to the player on the defender's left. If the attack fails, the defender becomes the next attacker.



Attack

The attacker opens the turn by playing one card face up on the table as an attacking card. The player to the attacker's left is the defender.

In the basic, throw-in variant, and in most other variants of “durnius”, the defender has to immediately attempt defense in response to the initial attack. In the passing variant, the defender may choose to either attempt defense or to pass the attack on clockwise around the table. In this case, the defender may only pass the attack if they have a card of the same rank as the attacking card or cards. To pass the attack, they add this card to the attacking cards. The defender now becomes the new attacker, and the player to their left becomes the new defender and must beat all cards. Passing is not allowed if the new defender has fewer cards in their hand than would be in the past attack. In games involving four or fewer players, it is possible for the attack to pass all the way around the table, so that the original attacker ends up defending against their own attack.



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Ace is the highest rank and six is the lowest. Trumps always beat non-trump cards regardless of rank. A trump six beats a non-trump ace.

One variation of passing called travel document allows a defender who holds the trump of the same rank to simply show the card to pass the attack on and become the new attacker. The holder of the trump card of the same rank may play it at any time during the attack. If playing with fewer than 4 players, it is possible for the attack to be passed all the way around and come back to the holder of the trump card again. In this case the trump card may not be shown or played in order to pass the attack a second time.

Defense

The defender attempts to beat the attacking cards by playing higher-valued defending cards from their hand. One card is played to defend against each attacking card, and it must be in the attacking card's suit or the trump suit. The defending cards are placed on top of the attacking cards so that players can keep track of which card is defending against which.

At any point during a defense, all players other than the defender can add extra attacking cards, provided that for each new attacking card, there is already a card of the same rank on the table (either defending or attacking), and the total number of attacking cards does not exceed the number of cards in the defender's hand. The defender must also defend against these new cards. If at any point multiple players wish to add cards simultaneously, the first attacker has first priority, then the player to defender's left, and so forth clockwise. Some variants only allow cards to be added to the attack once the first defending card has been played.

At any point during the turn, a defender unwilling or unable to beat all attacking cards may abandon the defense by picking up all the cards on the table. This ends the turn. The failed defender loses their turn to attack; hence the player to the defender's left attacks next.

If, however, the defender has beaten all attacking cards, and no other players are willing or able to add more, the defender has triumphed. The turn ends, all cards on the table are placed in the discard pile, and play passes to the left: the successful defender opens the next turn as the new attacker.

No players may examine the discard pile at any point.

End of turn

At the end of each turn, whether or not the defense was successful, each player draws until they have six cards in their hand or the talon is exhausted. The main attacker draws as many cards as necessary first, followed by any other attackers in clockwise order, and finally the defender. Once the talon is empty, play continues without further drawing. Players who exhaust their hands leave the game.

Winning and losing



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The last person left with cards in their hand is the loser the fool or durak. In some variants, this player becomes the dealer for the next round. The player to the fool's right may become the first attacker for the next round.

Some variants declare the winner of the round to be the first player to exhaust their hand and leave. In others, there are no winners, only the loser.

Team play

With four (2 vs. 2) or six players (2 vs. 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3), it is possible to play in teams. The members of each team sit opposite one another (with two players on each team), or alternating (with three). In some variants, the team with the lowest trump starts the first round, but in subsequent rounds the winning team from the previous round begins.

When playing in teams, players may not add to attacks on their teammates.

If the last card played by an attacker is a six, and the defender loses, the defender is cheerfully pronounced, a fool with an epaulette, and the six may be placed on the shoulder of the loser. This is more insulting than simply declaring the loser durnius, because of the handicap of keeping a low-value six card through the final part of the game. If the attacker plays two sixes, it is an even more cheerful occasion of "epaulettes on both shoulders".

Some variants use the epaulettes as scoring points. If someone has a six as an epaulette, the opponents must next score against them using a seven, and so on until someone receives an ace as an epaulette. To score, the winning individual or team must not only end with the correct epaulette value, but must include at least one non-trump card in the final attack.