

I'm not a robot



from another player in which no tricks have previously been played (even if you hold other cards of that suit). You can play the joker on a lead of a suit in which you have no cards of the suit led, if the contract is a Misere or Open Misere, you must play the joker if you have no cards of the suit led, but in a No Trump contract you are not obliged to play the joker in this situation - you may discard from another suit instead if you wish, and play the joker on a later lead of this suit or another suit in which you are void; you may lead the joker and nominate a suit which the others must play if they can, provided that this suit has not previously been led, once all four suits have been led, it is illegal to lead the joker, except to the last trick. Note that if you are the contractor in a Misere, it is possible to keep the joker in your hand and nominate it as belonging to a suit. You may then be able to dispose of the joker by discarding it on a lead of a suit in which you hold no card at the time. If you bid a Misere, keep the joker in your hand and forget to nominate a suit, your Misere automatically fails, since your joker wins the trick to which you play it. Note that in some games the rules for playing the joker in No Trumps are different from the above - see the variations section. ScoringA cumulative score is kept for each team, to which the score for each hand is added or subtracted. The scores for the various contracts are as follows: Tricks Spades Clubs Diamonds Hearts No Trumps Misere Six 40 60 80 100 120 Seven 140 160 180 200 220 Misere 250 Eight 240 260 280 300 320 Nine 340 360 380 400 420 Ten 440 460 480 Open Misere 500 Ten 500 520 In a suit or no trump contract, the contractors win if they take at least as many tricks as they bid. The contractors then score the appropriate amount from the above table, and their opponents score 10 points for each trick they manage to win. There is no extra score for any additional tricks the contractors may make in excess of their bid, except when they win every trick, which is called a slam. If the contractors make a slam, and their bid was worth less than 250 points, they score 250 instead of their bid. If the bid was worth more than 250 (8 clubs or more) there is no special score for a slam - if the contractors win every trick they just win the value of their bid as normal.If the contractors do not take enough tricks for their suit or no trump contract, they score minus the value of the contract, and their opponents still score 10 points for each trick they won.If the contract was Misere or Open Misere, the contractors score the appropriate amount (250 or 500) if the contractor succeeds in losing every trick, and minus that amount if the contractor wins a trick. The opponents score nothing in either case. End of the GameThe game ends when a team wins by reaching a score of 500 points or more as a result of winning a contract. The game also ends if a team reaches minus 500 points or worse, and thus loses the game. This is called "going out backwards" or "going out the back door".Reaching 500 points or more as a result of odd tricks won while the other side are playing a contract is not sufficient to win the game. If this happens, further hands are played until one team wins or loses as described above. VariationsAs far as I know, there is no official and universally accepted set of rules for Australian 500. There are four major areas of dispute that I know of: the play of the joker, the bidding process, Misere and the scoring by contractor's opponents. There are several other variations which will occasionally be encountered. If you are starting a serious game with unfamiliar players, it would be advisable to discuss and agree on their interpretation these rules in advance, to avoid arguments during the game.1. Play of the Joker in No TrumpsSome play that in No Trumps, the joker cannot be nominated in advance as belonging to a suit. In this case the rules under point 2 of play of the joker apply. A nomination of the suit of the joker is, however, still possible in Misere. Many people play that in No Trump contracts the Joker cannot be played on a lead of a suit on which you have previously reneged (shown void). For example, if you have previously thrown away a spade on a lead of a diamond, you cannot subsequently "trump" a diamond lead with the joker. If you are left with the joker as your last card, and a suit is led on which you have previously thrown away, your joker loses its power and the trick is won by the highest card of the suit led.Some people play that you can lead the Joker to any trick and call for any suit on which you have not previously reneged. It does not matter whether this suit has been led before. Matthew McNabb reports a version where in No Trumps, the joker can never be led, except to the last trick. It can only be used to "trump" a suit led by another player when you have no cards of the suit. Roger Gadd reports a version where in No Trumps and Misere you play the joker (without previous announcement) as either the first or last card you play of any suit. The consequences of this are that: You can lead the joker and nominate a suit in which no tricks have previously been played, and the other players must then follow in that suit. You can use the joker to follow to a suit led by another player in which no tricks have previously been played (even if you hold other cards of that suit). You can play the joker on a lead of a suit of which you have no cards provided that you have not previously reneged (shown void) in that suit. 2. The bidding processIn the rules above I said that a player who has passed cannot bid again. Some play that you are permitted to bid after passing, and that the auction continues with all four players speaking in turn until there are three passes in succession. In the rules above I said that when all players except one have passed, that one player is the contractor, playing the contract of the final bid. I believe that the most widespread rule is that as soon as the other three players have passed, the contract is fixed as your last bid and cannot be altered. However, some people play that after the other three players have passed, the contractor can bid again, naming a higher contract (higher suit or more tricks in any suit). There are some further variations around this:Most play that if no one else has bid in the auction at all, you cannot increase your bid after everyone has passed. Raising your own bid when the others have all passed is only allowed if more than one player took part in the bidding.If you raise your final bid after everyone has passed, there is the question of whether the other players should now be allowed another chance to bid. A common ruling is that if in raising the bid, the contractor changes the suit (or no trump), the other players have another chance to bid. If the contractor simply raises the bid to a greater number of tricks in the same suit (or no trumps) the other players cannot speak again.3. Variations in the ranking and scoring of Misere contracts Some players do not allow Misere bids at all.Some people allow Misere to be bid even though no one has yet bid seven tricks. On the other hand, some play that Open Misere can not be bid until someone has bid at least eight tricks.Some play that Open Misere ranks between 9 No Trumps and 10 Spades in the bidding; others play with Open Misere as the highest bid of all, sometimes giving it a score of 520 rather than 500. Some play that it ranks and scores equally to either 10 Hearts or 10 No Trumps in the bidding - whichever is bid first excludes the other.Paul Finn reports a variation in which Misere ranks in the bidding above 9 spades and below 8 clubs - that is in the place you would expect, according to its score. Roger Knights recommends a schedule in which ordinary misere scores 150 (ranking between 7 spades and 7 clubs) and open misere scores 250 (ranking between 8 spades and 8 clubs). In both these contracts the bidder can pick up the kitty as usual, but there is also a higher contract of misere without pickup scoring 350 and ranking between 9 spades and 9 clubs, in which the bidder has to play with the cards as dealt, and the kitty is not used or looked at.4. Variations in scoringEveryone agrees that you cannot win the game as a result of the points scored for winning odd tricks against the contractors - to win you have to win a bid which makes your total score 500 or more (or you can win if the opponents go out the back door). Some play that when your score reaches 490, you actually score nothing for tricks taken against the contractors - you just stay at 490 until you bid. Some reduce this threshold to 460 - which makes no difference to the fact that any successful bid will win you the game, but does make a difference if having hit 460 you then lose some points for an unsuccessful contract. One player reported a variation in which the 10 points per trick cannot be counted by a team whose score is 400 or more.A few players have dispensed with the score of 10 points per trick for the opponents altogether - only the contractors' team scores. Others allow the score of 10 per trick only if the contractors lose; if the contractors win their contract the opponents score nothing for the tricks they take. I think these versions are uncommon - most people give 10 points per trick to the opponents always.Robert Reid reports a variation played by the Tasmanian police, in which the bid value is scored by the contractors if they win and by the opponents if the contractors lose. There are no negative scores in this version of the game, and nothing extra is scored for tricks taken by the contractors' opponents. The first team to reach a score of 1000 or more wins the game. In this version Misere can only be bid after someone has bid 7 tricks, and Open Misere counts 520 and is equal in rank to 10 No Trumps.5. Other VariationsSome players do not award any extra score for winning all 10 tricks when fewer than 10 were bid. The bidding team simply score for their contract, even if it is worth less than 250. New Zealand Five HundredIn some previous editions of this page I tried to identify some of the variations above as specific to New Zealand rather than Australia. From information I have since received, it seems that by and large the same versions of 500 are played in both New Zealand and Australia. Variations - other numbers of playersThe deal is always 10 cards to each player and 3 in the kitty. Therefore the size of pack varies with the number of players. Three playersA 33 card pack is used, the lowest card in each suit being the seven. The highest bidder plays alone, with the other two players forming a temporary partnership.Each player's score is kept separately. The game is won by a player whose score reaches 500 or more as a result of winning a contract, or lost by a player whose score reaches minus 500 or worse. Five playersUse a full standard pack plus a joker - 53 cards in all. If the contract is a suit or no trumps, the contractor may choose either to play alone (one against four) or to play with a partner (two against three). When playing with a partner, after discarding the kitty the contractor nominates any specific card other than the joker or a bower. The player who holds that card is the contractor's partner but must not say anything to reveal who they are. The identity of the partner becomes clear when the nominated card is played.A contractor who wishes to play alone should say so, instead of nominating a card. If the contractor calls a partner, they each win or lose half the value of the contract. A contractor who chooses to play alone wins or loses the full contract value alone. Misere and Open Misere are always played alone against the other four players.The winning and losing conditions are as in the three and four player games. If two players simultaneously reach 500 or more by winning a contract they both win. Similarly, two players could lose at the same time.In the books, I have seen two other variations as to how the partner is chosen - I do not know whether either of these methods is commonly used:The contractor nominates a specific player as a partner.After discarding the kitty, the contractor nominates a card, and the holder of the card immediately says who they are. There are also variations in the restrictions as to which card can be nominated. Some do not allow any trump to be nominated; on the other hand, some allow any card to be nominated except the joker. In some circles, if you wish to play alone, rather than announcing this you are allowed to do this secretly by nominating a card which you hold yourself or have discarded. In this case your opponents may not realise that you are playing alone until you play the nominated card, or until the end of the play if you have discarded it.It is a problem with 500 that Misere is too easy to win, compared to its scoring value. This problem is worse in five-handed 500. Brent Easton recommends the following house rules:Misere - BannedOpen Misere - Worth 230 points.Super Open Misere - (If you're really desperate!) - Worth 430 points. The opponents not only get to see your cards, but they get to play them for you as well! Six playersThere are two partnerships of three players, with partners sitting alternately. A special pack of 63 cards is used, having 11's and 12's of all suits and 13's of the red suits, ranking above the 10 and below the pictures. I have been told that in Australia it is normal to use this pack for 500 (leaving out the extra cards), even when the game is played by fewer than six people. The rules are as in the four player game. In a Misere or Open Misere, both partners of the contractor put down their cards and take no part in the play.63-card packs are available from several suppliers. For example the Bicycle Six Handed 500 Card Deck is available from amazon.com, and Piatnik 500 Playing-Cards from Mind Games in Australia, and the Realm 500 Playing Cards distributed in New Zealand for example by stationeryonline.co.nz. If you want to play six handed but don't have the special pack, you can add the 2's, 3's and red 4's from a second deck. If two of the same card are played on the same trick, the first played beats the second. Two playersThis version was contributed independently by Megan Corino and Barry RigalThe two player game is played with the standard 43 card deck as used for 4 players. Each player is dealt a hand of ten cards, plus five separate piles of two cards on the table, each pile consisting of a face down card with a face up card on top of it. The dealing procedure is as follows. First place 3 cards in front of your opponent to start 3 piles (each with 1 card face down), then the same for yourself, then a packet of 3 cards to the opponent's hand and 3 to your own hand and 1 in the kitty. Next deal 4 cards to your opponent's hand and 4 to your own hand and 1 in the kitty. Next deal 4 cards to your opponent's hand and 4 to your own hand and 1 in the kitty. Finally, place 3 face up cards to complete your opponent's remaining piles, do the same for yourself, and then deal a packet of 3 cards to your opponent's hand, 3 to your own hand, and the last card goes in the kitty. The bidding is as in normal 500, except that Open Misere can not be played. In practice, No Trump and Misere contracts are rarely bid. There is no rule that a 7 call must be made before you call Misere. (In Barry Rigal's version, Misere calls are not allowed at all).Each trick consists of four cards: one hand card and one face up card from each player (this applies also in Misere). As usual a trick is won by the highest trump in it, or the highest card of the suit led. For the first trick, the contractor always begins by leading a card from hand, the opponent follows from hand, then contractor plays one of their face up cards (following suit if possible) and finally the opponent plays one of their face up cards (following suit). Where the trick is won determines the lead of the next card.If the trick is won by one of the face up cards, the player who won the trick leads a face up card to the next trick and the other player follows with a face up card, then the leader plays a card from hand and finally the other player plays from hand. If the trick was won by a card from one of the players' hands, the winner of the trick leads to the next trick from their hand, then the other player plays from hand, then the player who led plays a face up card from the table, and finally the other player plays from the table.Each time a face up card is played, if there is a face down card under it, it is turned over at the end of the trick and can be used in a future trick. The scoring is as in normal four handed Five Hundred. American Five HundredThe standard version of American 500, as promulgated by the US Playing Card Company and described in various books, differs from the Australian game in a number of ways.The book descriptions always start with the three player version, which might suggest that in America, 500 is more often played by three players than by four, but this does not seem to be true. The descriptions I have received from players in Minnesota and Ohio, agree that 500 is normally played by four players. The kitty is called the widow. The deal is 3-widow-4-3. There is only one round of bidding - each player has just one opportunity to bid.The Misere contract is called Nullo. Some do not allow it at all. If it is allowed, it ranks in the bidding above 8 spades and below 8 clubs.In No Trump and Nullo contracts the joker cannot be announced as belonging to a suit. It is in a suit by itself and always wins the trick to which it is played. The joker can only be played to a trick when the holder is void of the suit led, but it is not compulsory to play it if then. In these contracts the joker can be led to any trick, and when leading the joker, you nominate a suit which the other players must follow. You are not allowed to nominate a suit in which you have previously shown void - for example if you have previously discarded a diamond on a spade lead by someone else, you cannot later lead the joker and call it a spade.Irrespective of whether or not the contractors make their contract, the opponents score 10 points for each trick taken. In the three- and five-handed games, each individual opponent scores 10 points for each trick taken. In a Nullo, all the opponents of the contractor score 10 points for each trick taken by the contractor.The game is won by the first player (or team) to reach 500 points or more. A game can be won by an opponent of the contractor by means of the 10 points scored for each trick taken. If the contractor and an opponent reach 500 or more in the same deal the contractor wins. In the three or five player game if two opponents of the contractor reach 500 in the same deal but the contractor does not, the first opponent who reached 500 wins (considering the opponents' tricks to be scored as they are taken). A player or team who reaches minus 500 points or worse loses the game.When five people play, many people play that the bidder chooses a partner by naming a specific player, not by calling a card.It may be agreed that if everyone passes, the cards are not thrown in, but the hand is played in no trumps, with each player (or team) scoring 10 tricks for each trick taken.It is possible to play without the joker, in which case there are only two cards in the widow. Four Handed Five Hundred - West Seventh Street RulesBen Butzer has contributed the following version of American 500, played in St Paul, Minnesota. West Seventh Street in St. Paul contains the old ethnic neighborhoods where Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Irish, and Italian peoples settled around their respective Catholic Parishes. The Players and DeckThere are 4 players, in partnerships, partners sitting opposite. A 45 card pack is used - a standard pack without the twos and threes but including a joker. The DealPlayers take turns drawing from the top of the deck until one draws a jack. That player becomes the dealer. Each player is dealt 10 cards as usual, and the 5 remaining cards are called the middle (rather than the widow or kitty). Dealing goes 3 each - 3 to the middle - 2 each - 2 to the middle - 3 each - 2 each. BiddingIf you have exactly one ace, but no jacks, queens, kings or joker, then at your turn to bid you may announce "Ace - no face", which is a proposal to abandon the deal. Partner may agree or disagree. If partner agrees, the cards are thrown in and the cards are re-dealt - the bidder's opponents have no say in the matter. If partner disagrees, the bidding and play continue, but the team which said "Ace - no face" are not allowed to play Nullo or Grand Nullo.A bid of 6 is called an inkle. For example "inkle diamonds" is a bid of 6 diamonds. Only the first two bidders are allowed to inkle (i.e. bid 6) to their partners. The inkler's partner must either bid higher than 6, or pass. If no one bids, or no one bids higher than 6, the cards are thrown in and re-dealt by the same dealer. The first two bidders have two alternative ways of bidding no trump, thus conveying extra information to their partners. They can either bid a number of "No Trump" or just a number of "No" - for example "Seven No Trump" or just "Seven No". Using the full expression "No Trump" is the standard no trump bid. Bidding a number of "No" indicates in addition that the bidder has either the joker or split bowers. Having "split bowers" means that you have two jacks of opposite colours, which guarantees that you have a high trump, whatever the trump suit may be. Combining the above rules, either of the first two bidders could bid "inkle No", a bid of 6 No Trumps including the joker or split bowers."Nullo" is only allowed if agreed before the game commences. In the four handed game it is played such that the bidder plays alone. The bidder's partner places his hand face down upon the table and does not play. The bidders opponents play two versus one. The 250 score of the Nullo bidder is still shared by the team."Grand Nullo" (or "Granola") is a team variation of Nullo. For bidding purposes it is worth 510 points. So it beats a ten heart bid, but is beaten by a ten no-trump bid. Grand Nullo can only be bid if the bidder's partner had opened with Nullo. In Grand Nullo, the bid winner picks up the middle, adds it to his hand and discards any five of his 15 cards. The bidder's partner (the original Nullo bidder) then picks up the five discards, adds them to his hand, and discards any five cards. The Granola bidder leads to the first trick. The bidders win if neither of them takes a trick. If either of them wins a trick they lose and their opponents score ten points for each trick taken by the bidders. GameThe usual American rules apply. A team which loses the game because their point total has reached minus 500 or worse is said to have "gone out the back door". Grand Slam variantJefferey McQuston describes a variant in which after winning the bidding with any suit or no trump bid, after picking up the middle 5 cards the contractor may announce a "Grand Slam", which is an undertaking to win all 10 tricks playing alone against the two opponents, with the trump suit (or no trump) named in the final bid. It is worth 500 points with any trump suit or 520 points with no trump. The contractor's partner gives one card to the contractor, discards the other 9 face down and takes no part in the play. The contractor now has 16 cards and must discard 6 of them. The contractor leads to the first trick as usual. If the opponents win any tricks, the contractor's team loses 500 and the opponents score 10 for each trick they win.Tournament Play - St. Paul Midway rulesFive Hundred Tournaments are held in the St. Paul Midway area. They use the West Seventh street rules except for the following:Nullo and Grand Nullo are not permitted.Six to Ten rounds of 500 are played. The number of rounds played is the number of participants in the tournament divided by 4. Thus forty players will play ten rounds. A round consists of four hands, with each player at the table dealing one time. There is no game target of 500. The total score for a team can be larger than 500 or less than minus 500 for the four hands.After four hands, the low scoring team gets up and sits at the next table. The former partners must now oppose each other. The high scoring team remains at the same table, but now those players must also oppose each other.Each player keeps a record of the number of points scored. At the end of the tournament, the player with the highest point total is the overall winner. Youngstown, Ohio RulesCarol Bott contributed this description of the version played in Youngstown, Ohio.It is similar to the St Paul Midway tournament style described above. A session consists of 10 rounds of 4 hands each. During a round you can score any number of points more or less than 500. The total is than added after all ten rounds. The winner usually has between 5000 and 6000. A session usually involves 5 or 6 tables of 4 people each. There are no Nullo bids and the Ace - No Face rule is not used. The scoring is standard except for one thing. If you bid anything less then 10 tricks, but make 10, then you score an extra 100 points. For example, if you bid 8 clubs(which is 260), but took all ten tricks, then you would get 360 (260 + the bonus 100). This means there is generally no point in bidding ten tricks (except to outbid an opponent); you would get the same score with less risk by bidding 9 and making 10.Six-bids are used as description bids for your partner. If you bid "6 no trump", it means you have the Joker. If you bid "6 no", it means you have 2 aces. A six bid in a suit means you have the bower of that suit. A bid of "7 no" means you've got better then 2 aces, but don't want the bid (for example you might have 3 aces but no bowers). "7 no trump" means that you want to be contractor at no trump. The bidding is competitive - it usually takes a bid of 8 red or 9 black to get the contract. This is why the 6-bid is used as a description bid. As in Minnesota, in the unlikely event that no one bids, or no one bids higher than 6, the cards would be thrown in and re-dealt by the same dealer. Bids of 7 or higher are played, so for example if you bid "7 no" and everyone else passes, you have to play the 7 no trump contract. Canadian Five Hundred 500 is played, under the name Cinc Cents, in French Canada, especially Montreal. It is played with a 46-card pack, made by throwing out the twos and threes from a 52-card pack and adding two distinguishable jokers, which are the highest trumps. There are four players in fixed partnerships, each of whom receive 10 cards; the high bidder takes the kitty of six cards and discards six. Other Five Hundred WWW pages, software and on line games Australian 500Bryce Francis's 500 site contains rules and extensive advice on bidding tactics for his preferred version of the Australian 4 handed game. Here is an archive copy of Andrew Blucher's How to Play 500 page, providing advice on bidding an play for a version of 500 in which you cannot change your bid after the other three players have passed.You can play Australian 500 online at cardzmania.A 500 online game is available at Nidink. X500 from Paradise software is free 500 program, with one human and three computer players.At Pieter Meijer's CardGames.club you can play 500 online against the computer.North American 500 You can play North American 500 online at cardzmania.Special K Software has software to play the card game of 500. This software is available at www.specialksoftware.com.Other VersionsThe 500 page from the British site Card Game Heaven is devoted to the nowadays rarely played 3-player game.

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