

The Rules to Jacks (source: Paige Turner, www.eHow.com)

Jacks is an age-old game predating both the internet and television, keeping kids busy on local porches, sidewalks and smooth alleyways. This simple game, still available in toy shops, requires a set of 10 jacks, one ball and two or more players. Hand-eye coordination and a good sense of timing are the keys to winning this classic childhood game.



Picking the First Player

Traditionally, choosing the first player starts with one player at a time cupping all 10 jacks in their hands, tossing the jacks in the air, then flipping their hands over, catching as many jacks as possible on the backs of both hands. The winner -- the person that catches the most -- becomes the first player. Players can agree on any other method to choose who goes first.



Getting Started

Pick a smooth surface, such as a porch or level driveway, as the game playfield. Sit across from the other player, if playing with only one other person, or sit in a circle. If playing alone just to practice, sit wherever you like. Toss all ten jacks in front of you, within the circle or between you and the other player. Aim to keep the jacks fairly close to you, yet spread apart enough to grab them individually.

Perfecting the Play

Toss the ball up in the air, then pick up one jack and catch the ball with the same hand before it hits the ground. Repeat the process, again picking up just one jack and catching the ball in the same hand. Continue doing so until all ten jacks have been picked up to complete



"onesies," then move on to "twosies," picking up two jacks at a time and catching the ball. Keep playing all the way through "tensies" -- as long as you remove the designated number of jacks and catch the ball successfully, it's still your turn. If you fail to remove the right number of jacks or catch

the ball, it's the next player's turn. Your next turn happens after all other players get a chance, picking up where you left off, such as "foursies." The winner is the first person to successfully complete "tensies" or whomever collects the largest number of jacks at once after a predetermined number of rounds.

Basic Variations

Some play the game by bouncing the ball instead of throwing it up in the air, catching it before it hits the ground. Bouncing adds a slight amount of uncertainty, as the ball may bounce at an angle, making it harder to catch. Another basic variation calls for throwing the ball up in the air and allowing it to bounce once before catching it. Alter the number of bounces allowed, such as two, to make the game a little easier when collecting high numbers of jacks. To play alone, the game ends when you fail to collect the correct number of jacks, or if you do not catch the ball.

Safety Concerns

Keep the jacks away from young children or animals, as both the ball and jacks may be choking hazards. Stash the jacks safely out of reach of youngsters and pets after playing to prevent potential harm.

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