

# Barnga:

**BARNGA** is so easy to use that its procedure is a joy for both the experienced and the inexperienced game facilitator. The game almost immediately involves all its players and supplies are easily procurable. Careful planning of the follow-up debriefing period helps assure that all participants will become aware of and reflect on the learning's of the exercise.

## **The game works like this:**

Players form small groups of, say, four-six players each. Each group sits separated from the others. They receive a modified deck of cards (each deck containing only the same few cards) and a sheet of rules for playing a new card game called "Five Tricks." They have a few minutes to study the rules and practice playing the game. Once everyone has the hang of it, the facilitator collects the rule sheets and at the same time imposes a strict command of "no *verbal* communication." This means that players may gesture or draw pictures if they wish, but may neither speak (orally or by signing) nor write words. Clearly, communication, should it be needed, is going to be more difficult henceforth. Since the game is so simple and so short, this artificial barrier to communication forces the players, within the simulated setting, to be as creative and alert as possible.

Frequently at this point there is a little nervous laughter, some stifled last words, and finally a settling in to playing "Five Tricks" without the written rules and in silence. The facilitator then announces a tournament. As in any tournament, some players leave their home table and move to another, some from that other table have moved to yet another, and so on. They sit down at their new table, look around, and begin at once playing "Five Tricks." Shortly thereafter an almost imperceptible change is felt in the room, then expressions of uncertainty. . . murmurs of frustration. .. chuckles... fists banging on tables. The tournament, with more movement to other tables, continues for another ten minutes or so amidst growing uncertainty, frustration, laughter, banging on tables. Sometimes someone is all ready to claim a "trick" when someone else reaches out and takes it. Sometimes someone makes an effort to draw a picture clarifying an uncertainty. Sometimes whoever was at the table first prevails, sometimes the more aggressive.

When, during the debriefing, the facilitator probes for what might have been going on, someone takes another player to task for not learning the rules correctly. Someone else confesses that she never was very good at cards. Someone else speaks about others trying to cheat.

And several suggest that each table originally had been given a different set of rules. Some are sure of this; others think it might be true; others hadn't considered it.

In fact, at the beginning of the game each group had received a slightly different version of a basic set of rules to "Five Tricks." In one set, for example, Ace is high; in another, Ace low. In one set diamonds are trump, in another spades, in another there is no trump at all. Variations on these few differences are the only differences, no matter how many groups are playing. This means that virtually everything except one or two aspects is the same for everyone.

Here is the beauty of BARNGA--everything appears to be the same, and in fact almost everything is the same, yet great confusion, uncertainty, misunderstanding and misjudgments fill the room because of just a few differences. Even those who understand that the rules are different (and many do) are not necessarily clear about how they are different. And even those who understand how they are different have difficulty bridging the communication barriers to work out a solution. These concepts spark the energy generated by the game and provide the starting point for a group follow-up discussion rich in observations of how what happened can be seen as metaphors for what happens in real life.

## **Reflection:**

- ◆ What happened during the game/tournament?
- ◆ What are the ways 4-H is like playing Barnga?
- ◆ What does the game suggest about what to do when you are in a similar situation in the real world?
- ◆ How does this game focus our attention on the hidden aspects of culture?

## TOURNAMENT GUIDESHEET

You will have about 5 minutes to study the rules for and practice playing "Five Tricks."

Then the rules will be taken away and *no verbal communication will be allowed.*

From then on, you may gesture or draw pictures (not words!), but you may not speak or write or use sign language.

### Then the Tournament will begin.

You will have a few more minutes to play at your home table (in silence).

**SCORING** begins at the start of the Tournament.

**Game Winner:** The player taking the most tricks in the *Game* (one "hand"). If a game is not complete when the Round ends, the player winning the most tricks so far in that game wins that game.

**Round Winner:** The player winning the most games in the *Round*. (Ordinarily, several *games* will be played during a *Round*.)

**Each Round lasts a few minutes.**

### PLAYERS MOVE like this at the end of each Round:

- The player who has won the most games during a Round moves up to the next highest numbered table. If there are more than four players at a table,
- the *two* players who have won the most games during a Round move up to the next highest numbered table.
- The player who has won the fewest games during a Round moves down to the next lowest numbered table. If there are more than four players at a table,
- the *two* players who have won the fewest games during a Round move down to the next lowest numbered table.
- The other players remain at the table.
- Winning players at the highest table remain at that table,
- as do losing players at the lowest table.

**Ties** are resolved by alphabetical order.

# Five Tricks

A Card Game Easy to Learn and Easy to Play

<b>Cards</b>	Only 28 cards are used--Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 in each suit. Ace is the lowest card.
<b>Players</b>	Usually 4-6; sometimes varies.
<b>Deal</b>	The dealer shuffles the cards and deals them one at a time. Each player receives 4-7 cards, (or some other amount, depending on the number of players).
<b>Start</b>	The player to the left of the dealer starts by leading (playing) any card. Other players take turns playing a card. The cards played (one from each player) constitute a trick. For the last trick, there may not be enough cards for everyone to play.
<b>Winning Tricks</b>	When each player has played a card, the highest card wins the trick. The one who played this card gathers up the trick and puts it face down in a pile.
<b>Continuation</b>	The winner of the trick leads the next round which is played as before. The procedure is repeated until all cards have been played.
<b>Following Suit</b>	The first player for each round may play any suit. All other players must follow suit. (This means that you have to play a card of the same suit as the first card.) If you do not have a card of the first suit, play a card of any other suit. The trick is won by the highest card of the original lead suit.
<b>Trumps</b>	In this game, spades are trumps. If you do not have a card of the first suit, you may play a spade. This is called trumping. You win the trick even if the spade you played is a low card. However, some other player may also play a trump (because s/he does not have a card of the first suit). In this case, the highest trump wins the trick.
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ace ♥ 8 ♠ ♣ 5 ♦ ace

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2 ♠ 3 ♦ ace ♥ ♣ 2

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3 ♥ ♣ ace ♦ 5 ♠ 3

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4 ♠ ace ♥ ♣ 6 ♦ 4

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9 ♠ ace ♥ ♣ 7 ♦ 9

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10 ♦ ace ♥ ♣ 9 ♠ 10