



Karnöffel rhymes approximately with kerfuffle, with N replacing the first F. So, what exactly does Karnöffel mean? It's literal meaning is a scrotal hernia and, by extension in some contexts, the testicles. Karnöffel is one of the oldest identifiable European card games. It was referred to as early as 1426 and was the subject of a many sermons and satirical writings. One of its "evils" was the "anarchic" card order, taken as a symbolic a disruption of the status quo, with the king being beaten by low cards, the "Pope" (6 of trump) beaten by the "Under-knave" (jack of trump), and the power of the "Devil" (7 of trump). In some descriptions unlimited table-talk is allowed, and partners may advise each other on play during the hand.

The game can be played by 2, 4, 6 or 8 players with a 48-card pack either the German suited deck or a modern 52 card deck lacking Aces. Four or more players form two partnerships of two each and each player sits with an opponent on either side. The deal and play pass always to the left. In all suits except the trumps the cards rank in the standard order (Kings, Ober (Queen), Unter (Jack), 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2). The dealer gives five cards to each player. The first card is dealt face up to each player, the others face down. The lowest-ranking face-up card determines the trump suit for that hand. In case of ties, the card that was dealt first determines

the trump suit. Players may pick up their cards once they are all dealt. The player to the left of the dealer leads with any card for the first trick. Play is clockwise around the table. There is NO requirement to follow the suit. The player of the highest card of the suit led, or of the highest trump, wins the trick and leads off the next trick. Play continues until all cards have been played; the team winning the most tricks win the round. The player who led to the first trick then deals for the next hand.

The Trump Suit: Only some of the cards in the trump suit have trick-taking powers. And most of those cards only have power some of the time.

The special cards are:

- The Unter (Jack) of trump (Karnöffel): Beats all other cards.
- The 7 of trump (Devil): Beats all cards except Karnöffel, but only if it is led. Otherwise, it's just a seven and not the Devil. The Devil cannot be led on the first trick.
- The 6 of trump (Pope): Beats all cards (except the two above).
- The 2 of trump (Kaiser): Beats all cards (except the three above).
- The 3 of trump (Oberstecher): Doesn't beat a King, or the above trumps.
- The 4 of trump (Unterstecher): Doesn't beat a King, (Ober) Queen, or the above trumps.
- The 5 of trump (Farbenstecher): Doesn't beat King, (Ober) Queen, Unter (Jack) or the above trumps.