

Popular Dart Games

'01 (501, 301, ...)

The classic dart game. This is the main dart game played throughout the world and the game played by the top professionals in the year end championships. Played as singles or doubles.

Object of the game: Start with an agreed upon number, usually 501, and subtract your score each turn from that number. Some games are played as double-in meaning a double must be hit to start the scoring but all '01 games are played as double-out.

Winning the game: The first one to get to exactly zero wins, but here's the catch the winning dart must be a double (the outer ring on the board). Therefore if you have 32 left you must hit a double 16 to win.

Start the game: Cork to see who goes first – closest to the Bull's-eye goes first.

Game play: If at any point during your turn you end up scoring more than you started that turn with your turn is over and your score remains as it was at the beginning of the turn i.e., if you start a turn with 35 and aim for a single 15 to get to 20 (double 10) but hit a triple 15 for a score of 45 you have "busted" and would start your next turn at 35 again. If you get to exactly zero without hitting a double the turn is over and you start the next turn with the score you had i.e., if you have 32 and shoot at the double 16 but hit a single 16 and then aim at the double 8 for the win but hit another single 16 - even though you got the score to zero this is considered a "bust" since the last dart was not a double.

The double and triple rings score double and triple value for that number, triple 20 scores 60 and is what most player aim for until getting close to a double. The Bull counts 25 and the Bull's-eye is considered a double and scores 50, if you have 50 remaining the Bull's-eye will win the game.

Strategy: Simply score a bunch of points and get to a double before your opponent. The advantage top players have is knowing what to shoot at and positioning themselves for the next turn. Studying a good out chart and not having to consult the one on the wall between darts will give you the upper hand in '01.

Variations: 501 is the main game played usually as straight-start as opposed to double-in, it is played as a single or double match. 301 and 601 are customarily played as double-in. 1001 is usually played as a four-player game especially as a tie-breaker after a match ends in a draw.

Cricket

Another popular game and probably the most popular game played in America - sometimes called "American" Cricket. Uses only the 20 through 15 and Bull segments on the board so accuracy comes in to play. Played as singles or doubles.

Object of the game: Hit three or more of each segment 20 through 15 and Bull before your opponent. If you have a number “opened” you can score the value of that number and cause your opponent to play catch-up.

Winning the game: The first one to close out all numbers 20 through 15 and the Bull before their opponent with either an equal or greater number of points is the winner.

Start the game: Cork to see who goes first – closest to the Bull’s-eye goes first. Winning the cork and going first can be a big advantage in Cricket.

Game play: Hit three of any number 20-15 or Bull and if you are the first to do so you have this number “opened” and can then score the value of that number for each additional hit, triples/doubles count as three/two times that number. When each player has hit three of a particular number that number is “closed” and there is no more scoring on that number (only the player who opened the number can score). Example: If you hit four twenties the first three “open” twenties and the forth scores 20 points, you can score on subsequent turns until your opponent “closes” the number. Continue to close all numbers 20-15 and Bull before your opponent and score if needed on open numbers.

Strategy: There are far too many opinions on Cricket strategy to get a comprehensive list but here are a few generally accepted strategies. It may be considered gentlemanly to play the game without scoring but to win on a regular basis you should look to score points. If your opponent is ahead on points do not waist darts trying to close out numbers until you have gotten the lead back, move on to the next available number if necessary. Although once you get to shooting at the Bull you may want to close out a number to two of your opponent to keep them from increasing their lead – tough call sometimes.

Variations: Play without scoring – first one to close all numbers and Bull wins. You can also vary the numbers that are in play.

Killer

Great game to play with a group does not require an even number of players. Usually a small wager is made to play the game, a buck or two, winner takes the pot.

Object of the game: This is a game of elimination, score more points than the player before you or you get a mark – three marks and you are out. Survive all other players and be the last one standing.

Winning the game: Simple – be the last one standing.

Stating the game: Order of play is determined by each player “splashing” – throw two darts at once with the same hand and add up the score, highest score goes first lowest goes last.

Game play: Tie or beat the score of the player before you or you get a mark after three marks you are eliminated. Score as many points as you can to force a mark on the player behind you. Some games are played with the understanding that no one will run up the score and this is generally known before the game starts – but hey this game is called “Killer” for a reason.

Strategy: Don’t get too cute! If you need 42 points and you already hit two twenties don’t throw back at the twenty and risk hitting a one. You just need to survive and avoid getting a mark as long as you can.

Even if playing a kinder gentler version of this game at some point you will need to pile on the points to eliminate opponents, come on it's called Killer for a reason.

Variations: You can play where you just have to tie the previous score or play where you have to beat the previous score.

Baseball

No - this is not the game on the back of the cheap dart boards! Nine innings with each player pitching and batting in their half of the inning. Usually played by two players.

Object of the game: Hit Bulls when pitching to strike out batters and hit the number of the current inning to score runs. Pitcher always throws at Bulls for strikeouts and batter throws at the number corresponding to the current inning.

Winning the game: Like in baseball have the highest score after nine innings or extra innings if needed.

Start the game: Cork to determine home team – home team pitches first, bats last in each inning.

Game play: In each half of the inning the pitcher throws first – for each Bull hit by the pitcher the batter gets one less dart to bat with, three Bulls and the batter is shut out that inning. Batter throws available darts at the number corresponding to the current inning and scores one run for each hit, triples/doubles count three/two. Each player pitches and bats every inning. Example: Home pitcher throws their three darts and hits a single Bull, the visiting batter throws next but only gets to throw two of their darts, because the pitcher struck out one of the *batters*, batter misses with one dart but hits a triple with the second and therefore scores three runs in their half of the inning. Now it's the visitors turn to pitch with the home team batting last in the inning - unless of course they get shutout or have the lead in the bottom of the ninth!

Strategy: Hit Bulls for strikeouts and make good use of your at bats. Win the cork so you are home team and get to bat last.

Variations: Usually played by only two players but could be two player teams with one pitching and the other batting each inning, pitching/batting by players could be alternated each inning.

Pie

Great game that tests skill and consistency. Like Killer this game can be played by any number of players and of course is more fun when everyone puts a small wager in the pot.

Object of the game. Throw a set number of rounds at specific targets accumulating points as you go but if you miss a specific target for the round your score gets cut in half.

Winning the game: The player with the most points at the end is the winner.

Start the game: The start order is not terribly important because all players will get the same number of turns but most prefer to go last so it may be best to “splash” to determine order of throw.

Game play: Each player starts with 20 points (so there is something to cut in half if you miss right off the bat) and all players throw at the same target each round. The order of targets in each round is as follows: 20, 19, any triple, 18, 17, any double, 16, 15, “Pie”, 14, 13, Bull. You must hit the target with at least one of your darts in each round (except ‘Pie’) to avoid cutting your score in half. The “Pie” round is a little different in that you must score with all three darts in any combination of single, double, triple, of the same number wedge, or Pie, to avoid cutting your score in half so whatever you hit with your first dart is what you need to aim for with the next two. Hitting three single ones for a score of only three is much better than cutting your score in half. Also, you must score with all three darts in the “Pie” round – a bounce out or a throw off the board will automatically cut your score in half this round. Example: the target is 15 and you have a score of 211 – if you hit a triple and a single for a score of 60 you now have a total of 271 but if you’ve missed with the first two and get so tense that you couldn’t pound tooth pick up your a-hole with a sledge hammer and miss with the third dart as well your score gets in half to 106 (always round up when cutting an odd score in half).

Strategy: Consistency is the name of the game – if you can hit the target in each round and never cut your score in half you will very likely win this game. Keep your score within half of the highest opponent and you will always have a chance, often this game comes down to who can hit one or more Bulls at the end. Score as many points as you can in each round but throwing at the triple when you missed with the first two can be risky (except in the ‘any triple’ round of course).

Variations: Any targets can be agreed upon to make the game longer or shorter or to suit the player’s skill level.

Shanghai

Another great game for any number of players and what do you say we all put a buck or two in the pot?

Object of the game: Shoot a set number of rounds with each player aiming at the same target each round, usually beginning with one and progressing up to seven. Score the value of the number hit for that round with your three darts, triples/doubles score three/two times the number.

Winning the game: Have the highest score at the end of seven rounds or hit a “Shanghai” in any round. Shanghai is hitting a single, double and triple of the target for that round i.e., single 3, double 3, and triple 3 in the third round. Hitting a Shanghai ends the game immediately and keeps everyone in the game with a chance of winning regardless of their score up to that point.

Start the game: Usually players “Splash” to determine order of play. First player throws all three darts at the “one” segment as does each player in the first round.

Game play: Players all throw at the number one in the first round and then at two in the second round and so on up to seven in the seventh round, unless of course someone hits a Shanghai for the automatic win. Throw all three darts at the target number in the round looking to score as many points as possible or hit a game ending “Shanghai”. Point values for each hit increase every round so hitting a seven-count

(two triples and a single) in round one only gets you seven points but do that in round five and you score 35. This can be a quick game to play since there are only seven, or fewer, rounds.

Strategy: Usually players only go for a “Shanghai” after they have hit a triple or slopped a double with one of the first two darts while also having hit a single. If far behind the Shanghai might be the only option to win late in the game, otherwise just score as many points as possible especially in the later rounds where point values increase. A lot of ground can be made up in rounds 5, 6, and 7.

Variations: The number of rounds and the targets of those rounds can be varied to suit the players. There are elimination rules that can be incorporated where if you miss with all three darts in a certain round, usually round five, you are eliminated from the game. This rule can apply to any or all of the rounds if you choose – just be sure this is clear at the start of the game *especially* if there is money on the line.