



The Rules of Shut The Box

Shut the Box is also known as Canoga. Being a traditional pub game without any national governing body, variations of equipment and rules abound. Where there is doubt, locally played rules should always apply.

Description of equipment

The "box" is an open tray with a baize interior. A row numbers one to ten also appear along the top length. Each number has a corresponding square panel cover which can either slide or swing to cover the number. Two dice are the only other requirement, although a dice cup may be used if desired.

The Play

Shut the Box can be played by any number of players although it is most enjoyable with two, three or four. Some people even play the game solo as a pastime akin to patience. As played traditionally in English pubs, Shut the Box is a gambling pastime with each of the players paying an agreed amount into the "pool" at the beginning and the winner collecting the pool at the end of each round. However, it isn't necessary to gamble in order to play the game.

A round of the game consists of each player taking one turn. A player's takes a turn by repeatedly throwing the dice until the player cannot continue. Each throw of the dice is taken as follows:

If 7, 8 and 9 are all covered, the player decides whether to throw one die or two. If any of these 3 numbers are still uncovered, the player must use both dice. The player throws the die or dice into the box and adds up the pips. The player must then cover up a set of unique uncovered numbers that add up to the sum thrown. So for instance, if the total pips is 8, the player may choose one of the following sets of numbers as long as all of the numbers in the set are available to be covered:

8
7 & 1
6 & 2
5 & 3
5 & 2 & 1
4 & 3 & 1

The player then does exactly the same thing with a second throw and so on.

Once a number is covered up, it stays covered so, eventually, the player will throw a total for which it is not possible to find a set of uncovered numbers. When this happens, the player scores the sum of the numbers that are still uncovered. So if the

numbers 1, 5 and 9 are uncovered and the player throws a 4, with options 4 or 3 & 1, the turn finishes and the player's score is 15.

If anyone succeeds in shutting the box i.e. closing all the numbers, that player wins outright immediately and receives double the stake from all players. Otherwise, after each player has taken one turn, the winner of the round is the player with the lowest score.

Variants

1. A popular variant for two players is called the 'long game'. The player who goes first attempts to shut the box exactly as above. When the turn ends, the other player takes over the board as it is and attempts to uncover all the covered numbers using exactly the same rules. When a double is thrown, the player gets an extra turn. The player who shuts the box or uncovers the box first, wins.

2. Another way of playing is to add the number of points each round to a player's score. A player has to drop out when that player's score reaches 45 and the last player remaining wins the game.

3. Some people play that the single die option comes into force once the total of the remaining numbers is less than six.

4. An alternative way of calculating the score is occasionally used whereby the number read directly from the available digits on the box is the score for the player. E.g. if the numbers 1, 5 and 9 are uncovered, the score is 159.

