

## What is Bunko / Bunco / Bonko?

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### **bun·ko also bun·co** (bung' ko)

n. Al. bun·kos, also bun·cos

1. A swindle in which an unsuspecting person is cheated; a confidence game.
2. A parlor game played in teams with three dice.
3. A winning throw in the above game, achieved by throwing three of a kind of a specified number.

[Probably alteration of Spanish banca, card game, from Italian banca, bank, of Germanic origin.].

### **Tracing the Roots**

When my wife first asked me about Bunko, about six years ago, I knew almost nothing of the game. I knew my mother, an Air Force wife, had played the game, but I'd never stuck around to find out how, or why.

At my wife's prompting, I started researching the rules for her new group, and the amount of information I could find publicly was minimal to say the least. I did find two internet sites back then, Dave Holloway's Bunko site had the most information available, and the larger site, [www.BuncoGame.com](http://www.BuncoGame.com), which eventually rebranded and became [www.DiceGamers.com](http://www.DiceGamers.com), had rules, Bunko accessories, and a pretty active forum. I found a couple of other resources that had some limited information about the game, and immediately I had a problem.

Was the game Bunko (as I had learned), or Bunco? Or maybe even Bonko? Was the point 21 or 23? Did you change the number each round? What happened when you rolled all ones? All the

rules were different! Picking my mother's brain wasn't very much help; she could not remember too well, and she recalled playing it different ways in different locations.

I am a curious guy. I abhor a mystery unsolved. So I did two things. First, I created [www.BuncoRules.com](http://www.BuncoRules.com) to share what I had learned about the rules, and to create a voluntary survey, asking 24 questions about how people played the game, while including an open comments area, which provided some of the most interesting information. I didn't count on the thousands of emails I would receive!

Second, I started asking anyone and everyone about the game. I was traveling a lot, American Airlines Platinum, and on the road about half the time. Everywhere I went I asked about the game. I was astounded to find more than half the women I spoke to were familiar with the game, and almost 1 in 5 had played the game at one time or another. Men, on the other hand, knew very little of the game, and within a month or two I stopped even asking them.

Three years later, and with about 30,000 survey responses, I had learned all I could (or so I thought.) I'd read *The Sisterhood of Bunko*, and was delighted to find the author's numbers and conclusions about game play closely paralleled mine, even though her survey sample was only about a 100 respondents. I hunted down a variety of boxed versions of the game, and researched publications (to little avail) at the library and online. I had responded to thousands of emails about game play, versions of the rules, and suggestions. Strangely enough, the history of the game was still a mystery to me, and although I had read and heard a variety of reports of its origins, I still was not able to find the same information. Therefore, it was time for more research.