Double Deck Pinochle

Players:

4 (partners sit across from each other)

Cards:

2 pinochle decks with the 9's removed (or 4 regular decks with the 2's thru 9's removed)

Dealing:

The cards can be dealt in whatever fashion you like, as long as players all get 20 cards. One common dealing strategy can be 4 cards at a time, 5 times around. Obviously, with 20 cards, it would take a long time to deal them one at a time. Just bear in mind that dealing in packs means you need to be sure to shuffle the cards very well between hands.

Game play:

The players who sit across from each other are partners. The game is played in two phases: bidding/melding, and card play. The game is over when the first team gets 500 points or more; if both teams get at least 500 points during the same hand, then the bidding team is the winner (regardless of the number of total points).

Bidding/melding:

The bidding phase is used to determine who gets to call trump. Bidding starts with the first player to the left of the dealer. You can either bid or pass. Once you have passed once, you are out of the bidding until it is finished. The bid starts with at least 50 points. Bids must go up by one point or more, until they reach 60; then they must go up by 5 points of more.

It is common during the first round of bidding to "offer your meld" to your partner. This is a sort of "sanctioned" table talk. For example, if the bid is 50, and I bid 52, I am telling my partner that I have 20 meld points in my hand, no matter what trump is; if I bid 53, then I'm telling my partner that I have 30 meld points. Once the bid gets to 60, you're only bidding for trump. No matter what, you are usually safe assuming that your partner has 10 meld points.

EXAMPLE	The player to the left of the dealer bids 51. This means they have 10 meld points. The next person bid 53. This means they have 20 meld points. The next person passes, which tells their partner that they don't want to call trump (but they still may have meld points; use the "assume 10" rule here). The final person passes. So now the bidding is between player 1 and 2, and the "meld offering" is over. Player 1 and player 2 will now bid back and forth for the right to call trump.

Here is a table of the value of meld points. Please note that the greatest variations I've seen around the rules to this game involves the meld points. If you play with a different set, that's okay, as long as everyone agrees ahead of time what they will be. This set is the one I found most often, so it's the one I use.

Type	Combination	Single	Double	Triple	Quad
Runs & Marriages	**Run** A-10-K-Q-J of trump	15	150	225	300
	Royal Marriage K-Q of trump	4	8	12	16
	Marriage K-Q of non-trump	2	4	6	8
Pinochle	**Pinochle** J♦ Q♠	4	30	60	90
Around	**Aces around** A♥ A♦ A♠ A♣	10	100	150	200
	Kings around K♥ K♦ K♠ K♣	8	80	120	160
	Queens around Q♥ Q♦ Q♠ Q♣	6	60	90	120
	Jacks around J♥ J♦ J♠ J♣	4	40	60	80

When you're bidding to "tell" your partner your meld points, make sure you only tell them about the meld points that you can get *regardless of what is called trump*. So, you'd include arounds, pinochles, and marriages (counting royal marriages as regular marriages), but do not count runs.

For the winning bidder to call trump, they *must* have a marriage in that suit. If the bidding completes and the person does not have a marriage, they must forfeit the hand. The bidding team may also choose to forfeit their hand if they feel they cannot win (though they can only speak in generalizations, and not in specifics #s of tricks they can take, or types of cards they have). If a hand is forfeited, the opposing team scores their meld points (there is no trump named), and the hand is re-dealt.

Once trump is named, everyone lays down all the cards they need to, in order to count their meld points. The meld points are recorded on the side of the score sheet (they are not scored yet), along with the winning bidder's bid, and the current dealer (yes, it's possible to forget who dealt!). After everyone has had a chance to see the meld points and cards, then the cards are reclaimed into the hand, and card play begins.

EXAMPLE	The player holds the following cards, and hearts has been named trump: ♥ A 10 K K K Q Q J ♦ Q Q J ♣ Q Q ♠ A K K Q Q J J For meld, this hand will score 87 points. You have a run in trump (15), a royal marriage (4), a double marriage in spades (4), a pinochle (4) and double queens around (60). Remember that you cannot count a royal marriage that is already part of a run in trump.

Card play:

The value of the cards is as follows: Ace, 10, king, queen, jack (note the 10 is out of its "normal" place). The person who called trump starts the first trick. The winner of the trick starts the next trick.

When playing cards, you want to capture aces, 10s, and kings. They are worth one "game point" each. You get two "game points" for taking the last trick. There are 50 "game points" available (48 for the cards, and 2 for last trick). Each team must take at least 20 "game points" to be able to score at the end.

If the team that calls trump doesn't get 20 "game points", then they are scored a negative value for their bid. Also, the team that calls trump must get at least their bids worth of points, when you combine their game points and meld points, or they go negative. So, for example, if they bid 60, and have 43 meld points, they must get the minimum 20 game points (20 + 43 = 63, which is more then 60). However, if they bid 60, and only have 25 meld points, then they must get 35 game points (35 + 25 = 60) to score. If they make their bid, then they score the sum total of their game points and meld points.

If the defending team doesn't get 20 "game points", then they score zero. If they make their minimum 20 game points, then they score the sum total of their game points and meld points.

When playing cards, you must follow suit if you have it, and you must play a higher card than the highest card, if you can. If you do not have the played suit, you must play trump if you have it. Since there are many cards with the same value (eg, 4 aces of diamonds), the first one played is the highest.

EXAMPLE	Clubs is trump. Player 1 leads the jack of diamonds. Player 2 has in his hand, for diamonds: jack, king. He must play the king, because it is higher than the jack. So player 2 plays the king of diamonds. Player 3 does not have any diamonds, but he does have trump, so he must play the trump. He plays the jack of clubs. Player 4 has the following diamonds: jack, 10, ace. Because the high card is now the jack of clubs, he can play any diamond he wants to (he cannot beat trump with non-trump). He will play the jack, because the opposing team is going to take the trick; he does not want to give away cards that score "game points".

Remember that taking "game points" is more important than taking tricks (with the exception of the last trick, which is worth two "game points").

Once all 20 tricks have been played, you should count your game points and score. The cards are taken in and a new hand is dealt. Repeat play until one team scores 500 points.