

BRIDGE at SEA - BEGINNER'S LESSON # 1

Introductory Concepts – Vocabulary – Mechanics of the Game

Bridge is a partnership game in which each Player is designated by his/her compass direction. **NORTH** and **SOUTH** are **PARTNERS** playing against their **OPPONENTS**, **EAST** and **WEST**. The bridge deck consists of 52 cards with a total of four **SUITS: CLUBS, DIAMONDS, HEARTS, and SPADES**. Clubs and Diamonds are termed **MINOR SUITS**, Hearts and Spades are termed **MAJOR SUITS**. The cards in each suit are **RANKED** with the Ace being the highest, followed by the King, Queen, Jack, Ten ... then on down the line to the 2 (the lowest ranking card). The suits are also ranked in alphabetical order: **"C"**lubs, **"D"**iamonds, **"H"**earts, and **"S"**pades. Clubs is the suit of lowest rank, and Spades the suit of highest rank. The cards are **SHUFFLED** and the deck is then dealt by the **DEALER**, one card at a time, face down, in a clock-wise direction, until each Player has 13 cards; comprising his/her **HAND**.

The game of Bridge has two stages, a **BIDDING PHASE** followed by a **PLAYING PHASE**. During the second phase of any bridge hand, the playing phase, each Player contributes one card to each of thirteen turns, with the highest card winning each series of four cards played for his/her team. Each series of four cards played is called a **TRICK**. Since each Player contributes one card to each trick, there are, therefore, a total of thirteen available tricks to each hand played.

In the first phase of bridge, the bidding phase, there is a continuous **ROUND OF BIDDING**, which, in an auction fashion, determines which Partnership will undertake a final **CONTRACT**. The bidding is begun by the Dealer with each Player, in turn, in clock-wise rotation, choosing to either **BID**, or to refrain from bidding by simply saying **"PASS"**. Each bid consists of two parts; for example: ("1 Spade", "2-Hearts", "3-Diamonds", "4-Clubs", "5-No Trump", etc.

The first part of each bid, the *numerical portion*, represents the number of tricks that the Partnership is committed to take over and above the first six tricks called **BOOK**. For example, bidding "1" of any denomination commits that team to taking seven tricks (6+1); bidding "3" of any denomination commits the team bidding it to taking nine tricks (6+3); etc. The highest level of bidding is, therefore, seven, which commits a team to all of the possible tricks, a total of thirteen (6+7). The second portion of any bid is the *denomination*; i.e., whether the contract is to be played in a **TRUMP SUIT** or in **NO TRUMP**. There are, therefore, only five possible denominations: Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades, or No-Trump, with No-Trump ranked above Spades. As in any auction, each successive bid must be higher than the preceding bid; i.e., either in level, *or* denomination, *or in both*. The auction proceeds until there are three successive passes. The member of the Partnership winning the auction who first suggested the suit denomination of the final contract becomes the **DECLARER**. The bidding phase is then concluded with the last declaration becoming the **FINAL CONTRACT**. The Opponent to the left of Declarer makes the **OPENING LEAD** by placing a single card, face up, upon the table, which begins the play of the hand.

Playing Guidelines

The second phase of the game of bridge, as previously mentioned, is the **PLAY OF THE HAND** in which one side, played by the **DECLARER**, tries to fulfill the agreed-upon **FINAL CONTRACT**; while the other side, the **DEFENDERS**, try to defeat the specified contract. Declarer's Partner is called, the **DUMMY**. Declarer plays the cards for both himself/herself *and* the Dummy. Each Player, in a clock-wise rotation, plays a card of the same suit. The four cards played constitute a **TRICK**. When the contract is played without a **TRUMP SUIT** the Player who contributes the highest-ranking card of the same suit led wins the trick. On many hands, however, one suit is designated, through the bidding, as "wild," or as the, so-called, **TRUMP** suit. A trump card of any denomination beats any card in all the other three suits, no matter its rank. Since it is a Partnership game, either Partner playing the highest card wins the trick for his/her side. One must always follow the suit which is being played, but if one does not have a card in the suit that has been led one may then play a card from the trump suit, or from any other suit. The former is called **TRUMPING** or **RUFFING**, the latter is termed **DISCARDING**. If more than one Player trumps a trick, the highest ranking trump wins the trick. The trump suit does *not* have to be led at any particular time. It is up to the discretion of each Player when it is his/her turn to lead, whether to lead a trump, or not.

The Partner who wins the preceding trick leads the first card to the next trick, and so on, until all thirteen tricks have been played. Each team then counts its tricks won and lost and it is thereby determined whether the contract has been made or defeated. A score is then awarded to the Declarer's team if the contract is made or to the Defending team if the contract is defeated or **SET**. The play of the hand, both from the Declarer's and the Defender's point of view, is an exciting part of the game and poses numerous challenges as to which card to play on each trick. A few example guidelines are as follows:

1. THE OPENING LEAD: - The play of each hand begins with the Player to the left of the Declarer making a lead. Then the Dummy's hand is tabled, face up, so that the Declarer can select the play of the cards for both members of the Partnership. When leading against a No-Trump contract it is usually best to **lead your longest suit**, since long suits can be a good source of tricks. When choosing a card to lead, one leads the top card if you have three or more **touching high cards, (a SEQUENCE)**, (Ex. **QJ10** or **KQJ**), or **fourth best** from your longest suit (Ex. **K9832** or **A10963**). When leading against a suit contract one might also lead the **top of a sequence**, as just explained, or else one may choose to take advantage of one's trumps by leading a **short suit** of one (called a **SINGLETON**) or one from a suit of two cards (called a **DOUBLETON**), especially if Partner has bid that short suit. You are hoping that, when the suit is led again, you will be able to win the trick by ruffing (trumping). When leading from a doubleton, lead the higher card first. (Examples: The eight from **82** or the four from **43**).

2. SUBSEQUENT LEADS: - The winner of the previous trick leads to the next one. If defending, it is often a good idea to **return the suit that your Partner originally led**, unless you believe a switch to an alternate suit is preferable.

THE MECHANICS OF THE GAME

The Preliminaries

1. Bridge is a game for four people with two of them playing as Partners against the other two, who are similarly allied.
2. The cards are dealt in a clockwise order, until each Player receives 13.
3. Within each suit the cards rank from the ace (high) to the deuce (low).
4. A trick consists of four cards with each Player contributing one in a clockwise order.
5. When everyone follows to the suit that is led, the highest card played wins the trick.
6. The winner of a trick is obligated to lead to the next trick.

How to Win Tricks

1. By playing high cards (it's much nicer to hold aces and kings than two's and three's).
2. By playing a card from the trump suit when no longer able to follow to the suit being led.
3. By playing small cards from long suits after the other players become void in that suit and are unable to trump.

The Bidding Phase (“Auction”)

1. A bid consists of a number and a suit, suggesting something about playing strength and a possibility for trumps.
2. For bidding purposes the suits are ranked from Clubs as the lowest, through Diamonds, Hearts, and Spades as the highest. No-trump as a bid, however, outranks all of the suits.
3. Clubs and Diamonds are the Minor suits; Hearts and Spades are the Major suits.
4. The Book is the first six tricks that must be fulfilled before any other tricks are actually counted. Thus, a bid of two hearts is really a pledge to win eight tricks (6 + 2).
5. The auction starts with the Dealer and proceeds around the table in clockwise order. A Player may choose not to bid by saying “Pass”. All new bids, however, must be higher (in number or suit) than those that come before.
6. The auction ends whenever there are three consecutive passes following any bid.
7. The last bid becomes the final contract, which determines several things:
 - a) The suit, if any, that will be trumps
 - b) The number of tricks that must be won
 - c) The Declarer (the person who plays the hand) – The player of the Partnership who first mentioned the denomination (suit) of the final contract.
 - d) The Opening Leader (the Opponent to the left of the Declarer)
 - e) The Dummy (the person who exposes all 13 cards)
8. The language of bridge consists of 15 words: the numbers 1-7, the four suits, No-trump, pass, double, and re-double.

OUTLINE FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON ONE

THE MECHANICS OF THE GAME

Sequence of Topics

A. After you introduce yourself~ welcome your students to the wonderful world of bridge. Give them a *brief* pep talk about the many pleasures and the intellectual challenge the game can bring.

B. Explain the lecture schedule, the handouts, and the follow-up practice sessions, as part of the weekly schedule.

C. Be sure to check that there really are some true beginners in attendance. If so, proceed with Lesson One. If there are none, go directly to Lesson Two.

D. Always discuss the play of the cards first.

1. Explain the following concepts:

- a) Bridge as a partnership game
- b) How partners are chosen
- c) How the deal is done
- d) What a hand is
- e) The rank of cards within each suit
- f) What a trick is
- g) Following suit
- h) Who wins the trick
- i) Who leads to each trick

2. Explain how tricks can be won naturally:

a) With high cards, e.g.,

432 = 0 tricks

AK2 = 2tricks

KQJ10 = 3 tricks after the ace is removed

b) With long cards (assuming an even division), e.g.,

AKQ2 = 1 possible long trick

AKQ32 = 2 possible long tricks

65432 = 2 possible long tricks

3. Next, introduce the notion of a trump suit. Be sure to explain:
 - a) The role of trumps both as a source of control and extra tricks (use AXX opposite x as an example)
 - b) When you can play a trump card
 - c) Why you might choose to lead a trump

4. Finally, explain about the dummy:
 - a) Why the dummy's hand is exposed
 - b) The advantages of seeing the dummy
 - c) The role of declarer vis-à-vis the dummy

- E. The bidding period (i.e., the auction) precedes the play period.
 1. The purpose of the bidding is to determine:
 - a) The number of tricks your side pledges to take
 - b) What suit, if any, will be trumps
 - c) Who the dummy, declarer, and the opening leader will be

 2. Explain the following concepts:
 - a) Each bid specifies a number and a suit (or NT)
 - b) The rank of suits, plus NT
 - c) Minor suits and major suits
 - d) The book
 - e) How the auction proceeds
 - f) How the auction stops
 - g) The final contract
 - h) The 15 basic words of bidding (1-7, four suits, NT, pass, double, re-double)

Notes

- A. Obviously, there is a lot of material to be covered in just 45 minutes. It is recommended that you finish the preliminaries and basic play in the first 20 minutes, since the bidding concepts require more time.

- B. Even if you have to pass over certain topics quickly, the handout sheets will fill in some of the gaps. In addition, the follow-up practice session will be able to dwell longer on some of the playing problems.

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION

BEGINNERS' LESSON ONE

1. All tables receive and play the same hand at the same time. There is no bidding. Just give them the listed conditions to get started.
2. As they play, supervise each table to make sure they place the dummy correctly, play to each trick in the proper order, and collect their tricks in the right way. In general, be available to answer questions simply about the mechanics.
3. Let them play each hand on their own. Do not help them at this stage with the technique for taking tricks.
4. When every table is done with the first hand (gently prod the tardy ones), discuss the play but not the bidding. You should use a flip chart or marking board for this purpose. Then move on to the second hand.

HAND - 1

	AKQ		
	432		
	KQJ76		
	32		
654		J10987	
Q76		J1098	Declarer: North
A		1098	Contract: 3-NT
QJ10987		6	Lead: SJ
	432		
	AK5		
	5432		
	AK54		

- a) Show what happens if declarer simply cashes all the winners and then leads the DK.
- b) Explain why it is necessary to start the diamonds first, stressing the point that they should not be afraid to lose the lead.

HAND - 2

	987		
	Q876		
	87		
	KQJ10		
AKQJIO		432	Declarer: West
A109		2	Contract: 4S
32		AK654	Lead: CK
A32		7654	

65
KJ543
QJ109
98

- a) Explain what it means to draw trumps, but show what happens if declarer does this and cashes all the winners. There will be four losers at the end.
- b) Explain the proper play. Do not draw trumps until you ruff at least one heart in the dummy.