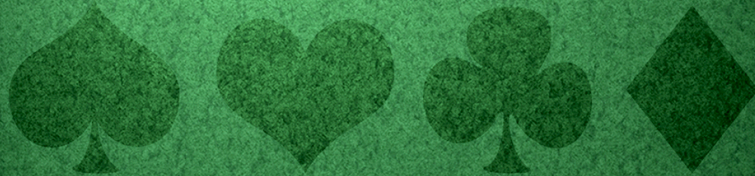




# Introduction to Bridge

*Start playing in 20 minutes!*



Samantha MacDouglas

# **Introduction to Bridge**

**Start Playing in 20 minutes!**

**By Samantha MacDouglas**

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Introduction - What is bridge? .....	4
What do I need to play bridge? .....	4
Is bridge fun? .....	4
How long do I have to study to have fun? .....	4
How long do I have to study to be good? .....	5
Chapter One: Okay, I have 52 cards and 4 people, now what? .....	7
Setting up the table.....	7
How do I deal? .....	8
How do I sort my hand?.....	8
Let's play! .....	9
Who are you calling dummy? .....	10
Can I pick any card I want? Nope! We have to follow the lead. ....	12
I can't follow suit, what do I do? .....	16
Who leads after the first trick? .....	16
Trump, what's that? .....	17
Putting dummy down.....	17
What's next? .....	19
Chapter Two - The Auction .....	21
How does the auction start? .....	21
How does an auction determine trump?.....	21
What if the person before me bid? .....	22
How do we know how many tricks we have to take to make our contract?.....	23
What ends the auction? .....	24
Okay, the auction is over, now what? .....	24
Who is declarer? .....	25
Who leads first? .....	25
How do I know what to bid? .....	25
Having a conversation with partner with bids .....	26
Chapter Three - Where do we go from here? .....	27



## **Introduction - What is bridge?**

Bridge is a popular card game that is similar in some ways to Hearts and Spades. If you love card games and puzzles, you'll love bridge. Bridge is a two-part game. The first part is the "auction" and consists of bidding (like in Spades). The second part is playing the cards.

It is a game of strategy, skill, logic, partnership, and sometimes luck. You will find bridge to be highly addictive and very enjoyable. As you begin to play, remember my one and only rule of bridge: Have fun!

### **What do I need to play bridge?**

You need a deck of cards (preferably two) and four people. OR yourself, a computer, and either an internet connection or bridge software. That's it! If you have that, you are ready to begin. Most of this pamphlet will be directed at a group of four people who've never played bridge before, but all of it should translate easily for someone with a computer.

### **Is bridge fun?**

Bridge is one of the most popular card games in the world. Why? Plenty of reasons! Bridge is a social game and is popular on cruises, dinner parties, family events, and just about any situation where four or more people want to play cards.

You meet interesting and exciting people (especially if you play at clubs or on cruises). While bridge can be very simple, it can also be very complex. Because of this, people often play to exercise their minds, test their skills, compete against others, and practice logic. Bridge is fun for everyone and anyone can play!

### **How long do I have to study to have fun?**

As long as it takes you to read this pamphlet! Remember, bridge is a game, it's supposed to be fun. Just because you don't know everything there is to know about bridge does not mean that you and your friends can't have a great time playing. In fact, I recommend that you get started playing as soon as possible. The ideal situation is to sit down with your three friends, read how to set up the table, and then deal out the cards. Just remember, you don't have to do anything "right" to have fun, just sit back, relax, and play cards.

One of the things that I love most about bridge is how much depth the game has. You can learn the basic mechanics in about 20 minutes and be happily playing. Or, you can study the game for a lifetime and not learn everything there is to know.

You choose the level that you want to play at. If you are just looking for a social game to pass the time with three other friends, just learn the mechanics and never spend another moment studying.

If you enjoy the challenge and competitive possibilities in bridge and want to be the best you can be, you will be practicing and studying for the rest of your life.

You choose where in the spectrum of casual social player to serious competitor you want to be and study as long as you want to study.

### **How long do I have to study to be good?**

Bridge is a rich game with several different facets. Newer players will generally focus on learning the language of bidding to improve their auctions. (Not quite sure what an auction is? Don't worry! I cover that in Chapter 1.)

Learning how to bid is very similar to learning a new language and the length of time it takes to become proficient at it depends on several factors:

1. How often you practice. Similar to learning any language, if you immerse yourself in it and speak it everyday, it's going to come a lot faster than if you take one lesson a month.
2. How complicated the language you are trying to learn is. You can (and should at least in the beginning) keep your bidding language fairly simple. If you do this, it will be easier to become proficient at it. You can always add complexity later.
3. Your experience in learning and using a skill set similar to this. Everyone can learn and play bridge. If you have experience with the skills you need for bridge, learning it will come faster for you. But don't worry if you don't, you'll still do fine!

Another aspect commonly focused on by new players is the play of the hand. This occurs in the second phase of each hand (and I will discuss it in Chapter 1). This uses entirely different skills than the auction. Similar to learning the auction, the single most important factor in how long it takes to get good at the play (and it's often neglected brother defense) is how often you play (and practice).

If you are playing everyday, you will get better much faster than someone who only plays once a month.

Does that mean you have to play everyday? No! Remember, you take your bridge to the level than you want it to be. You don't have to study to have fun. You don't have to be good to enjoy playing. But if your goal is to become *great* at bridge, this will only happen if you dedicate time each day to study and play.

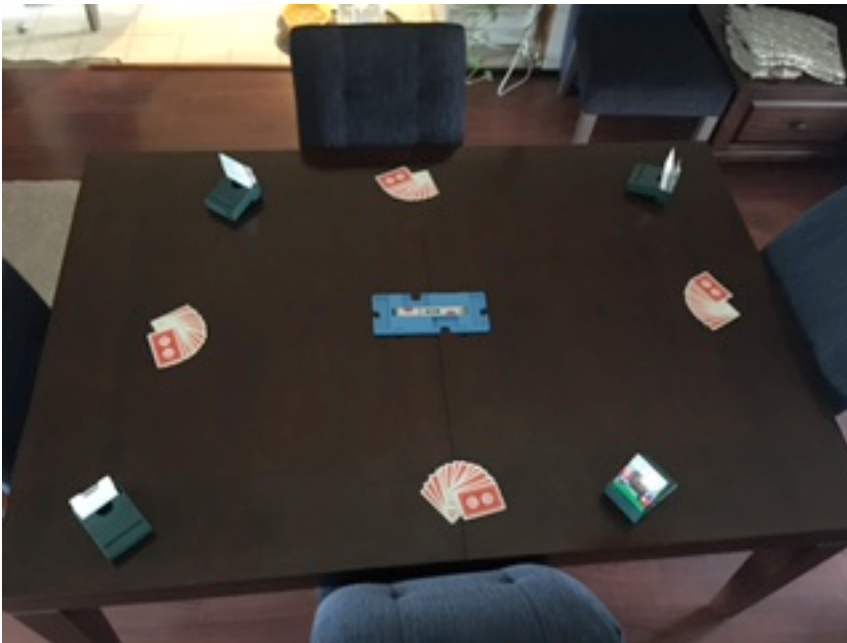
Remember to be patient! No one learns a language in one day. Often times it takes a year or two to become fluent with a language. The more you play, the faster you will learn. But never, ever forget that you don't have to be "good" to have fun, and the number one rule of bridge is to have fun! There are many levels to learning bridge. If your goal is to get good, just focus on attaining the next level, and don't worry about what's after that.

# Chapter One: Okay, I have 52 cards and 4 people, now what?

## Setting up the table.

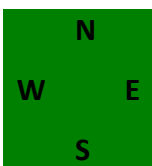
First things first. You need a table...well, that's not precisely true, you can play sitting on the floor or standing (as we've done when desperate to play), but a table is the most comfortable way to play. Square or circular tables are best as you will want each person sitting across their partner. Rectangular tables can work as well (if they are not too long).

This is a picture of a rectangular table set up for bridge. When sitting people at this table, you would put one person in each chair.



Have everyone sit down, one person on each side of the table. The person facing you is your partner. You're a team. You work together. The people sitting on your left and right are the enemy, your opponents.

Traditionally, each seat is given a compass point label. (These don't actually have to match up with the real compass directions, in fact, they often don't!)



One person sits North, one East, one South, and one West.

The partnerships are labeled with the compass directions: North and South or N/S. East and West or E/W.

Each hand begins with one person shuffling and their partner dealing. Let's get started! Grab the two decks of cards (you can play with one if that's all you have but there's less downtime between hands with two). Remove the jokers, advertisements, and everything that isn't a playing card. You should now have a standard playing deck of 52 cards.

Since you and your partner are a team, while you are dealing the cards, your partner should be shuffling. Next hand, your opponents will deal and shuffle. As in all things in bridge, these duties will rotate clockwise.

### **How do I deal?**

You are going to deal the entire deck, facedown. Begin with the person sitting on your left, giving each person one card and continuing clockwise until you run out of cards. Each player should now have thirteen cards. Everyone should now pick up their hand and sort it, keeping it hidden from everyone else.

### **How do I sort my hand?**

However is most comfortable for you! Most players begin by putting all the suits together. In other words, put all the spades together, all the hearts together, all the diamonds together, and all the clubs together. Most people find it easiest organize the suits red-black-red-black. Example: Diamonds on the left side, then clubs, then hearts, then spades. Others prefer to sort according to suit rank (we'll get to that in a moment) to help them remember the order. This is how I sort my hand:





If you are not familiar with the suits, look at the above photo. The red pointed suit (where I have Q97) is diamonds. The next suit that looks a little bit like puppy paw prints is clubs. Next, the cards with the heart shapes are hearts. (I bet you guessed that one.) Lastly, the black ones that look kind of like shovels are spades.

In bridge, higher cards have greater value than lower cards. Each suit has 13 cards. The most powerful cards in all four suits are the aces (aces are always high in bridge). Next, the kings, then the queens, then the jacks. Just below the jacks the cards become numbers starting with 10. They have standard numeric value (with 10 being greater than 9 and so on).

When organizing your hand, I find it best to be as random as you can be. What do I mean by that? Vary what order you organize the suits in your hands. Sometimes have the spades on the left, sometimes the hearts, sometimes the diamonds, and sometimes the clubs. Change it up.

I also recommend (if you can be comfortable with it) not organizing the cards according to their numeric value. Some people are far more comfortable organizing them that way and ultimately, what is most important is being comfortable with your hand. The more random you are with how you sort your hand, the less likely an opponent will be able to gather information from where you pull cards by watching. Now, your opponents shouldn't be doing that, but we don't always do what we are supposed to, do we?

## **Let's play!**

Okay, now that you have organized your hand, let's play a sample hand so we can get familiar with how play works.

On each bridge hand there is one “declarer”. This is the person who controls the cards from two hands and is trying to take a certain number of tricks. Don’t know what a trick is? We will cover that in just a moment! The opponents (the people on your left and right) control only their own hand and are trying to stop you from taking the tricks you need.

Since you dealt, we'll have you declare. Normally, the auction occurs before the play. The auction will determine who the declarer is. Since we skipped the auction to discuss the play first, we will arbitrarily decide that the dealer is the declarer. The dealer is the person who dealt the cards. The declarer is determined by the auction. They can be, but often are not, the same person.

The person on the declarer’s left makes the opening lead. What does leading mean? It’s a little bit like leading on the dance floor. They pick the suit and everyone else has to follow them.

Have the person on your left pick any card from their hand and place it face up on the table in front of them. Don’t worry about which card to pick, just pick one. In order to understand the strategy, you need to first understand the mechanics. Let’s first play one trick (round) to get a sense of how it works before you can understand the strategy. Just go, have fun, and don’t worry about doing it “right”.

Bridge always moves clockwise. But before we get to the next person, we need to talk about dummy!

### **Who are you calling dummy?**

After the person on declarer’s left makes the opening lead, the next person (declarer’s partner) will put their hand face up like this:



For now, it doesn't matter what order the suits go in. Most people prefer they alternate red and black, but it isn't required. We want the hand to be easy for our partner to view (since she's going to be playing it) and so we will now organize the cards according to strength (highest card on top, lowest card on bottom) even if we didn't have it that way in our hand. This picture is declarer's view of dummy. The cards should be facing declarer as she will be playing both hands.

This is a photo of what dummy looks like from declarer's perspective:



The declarer plays both hands. The play goes clockwise. Once the opening lead has been made, it is now dummy's turn. However, the declarer will be making the choice of which card to play.

The declarer will either call a card for dummy to play (this is how it is done in duplicate and the dummy becomes Vanna White turning cards as they are called) or the declarer might reach across and place the chosen card closer to the center of the table (this is how it is done in rubber bridge).

In either case, declarer makes the choice of which card to play, but dummy is still it's own hand.

The play continues in clockwise, in other words, even though declarer is controlling both hands, he must play from dummy after the lead. He cannot choose which hand to play from, he must play from the hand whose turn it is in the clockwise rotation.

**Can I pick any card I want? Nope! We have to follow the lead.**

The first person on each trick determines which suit everyone else will play. A trick is a round of one card from each player. Since each player is holding 13 cards, a hand always consists of 13 tricks. Each trick consists of 4 cards (one from each player).

Your LHO (left hand opponent – your friend sitting on your left) has chosen the suit. You can pick any card you like from dummy's hand, *as long as it's in that suit*. (We'll get to what you do if you don't have any in just a moment). We call playing in the same suit that was led “following suit”. You are required by the rules to do this.

When you call the card from dummy, your partner will place it above dummy, slightly turned so that it is clear that it has been played. Then, your right hand opponent (RHO), picks a card and places it on the table (this card must also be in the same suit that your LHO chose). Lastly, you will pick a card from your hand, again, any card from the led suit. All four cards should be face up.

There should now be 4 cards on the table. This is called a trick. There are four cards (one





from every person) on each trick. The person who played the highest card (*of the suit led*) on the trick won the trick! If diamonds were led and the highest diamond on the trick was the 9, whoever played the 9 wins the trick. Now, remember, bridge is a partnership game, so if your partner played the highest card, both of you won the trick.

In the above photo, the ace has won the trick because it is the highest card.

Now, turn the trick over. There are two ways of doing this. The first way I will discuss is rubber bridge style and is how most home games are played. The person who won the trick collects all four cards and stacks them neatly in front of them face down on the table.



Only one person per partnership should collect tricks, so if you collected this trick, and your partner wins the next, you should collect that one as well. The other way to collect tricks is for each person to keep their own cards and place them face down in front of themselves. If your side won the trick, place it vertical (stand up proud) and if your side lost the trick place it horizontal (fall down sad). This is the duplicate style of bridge, so if you intend to play at bridge clubs, you should adopt this style of trick collecting.





In either method, the principle is the same. Keep track of who wins which tricks, and keep tricks face down.

You should be familiar with both methods, because if you play with different people, you may have to switch between the two. If you are only playing with the people you are with now, I would strongly recommend using the second style (where everyone keeps their own card) as opposed to the first, because it allows you to reconstruct the hands at the end. This is useful if you want to discuss, study, or bring the hand to someone to learn from it.

Once a trick has been turned face down, it can no longer be looked at. Like most games, how flexible the rules of bridge are depends on who you are with. If you are in a highly competitive situation, then you shouldn't even ask if you can look at the trick. If, however, you are just playing for fun among friends, feel free to ask.

### **I can't follow suit, what do I do?**

If you can follow suit, you **MUST**. However, if you are out of the suit that is led, then you can play *any* card from your hand that you want. Typically, you will want to play a card you don't want and don't care about. Why? Because unless there is trump, (we'll get to that in a second), the highest card of the *suit led* wins the trick. So if you lead the 2 of diamonds and no one else has diamonds, you win the trick even if someone else played the A of spades! In order for a card to win the trick, it must either be the highest card of the suit *led* or the highest trump on the trick. If you cannot win the trick, you want to play a low, worthless card and keep your high good cards for later.

### **Who leads after the first trick?**

Whoever wins the trick must lead out the next card. It can be any card in their hand, any suit (we no longer have to follow suit to the last trick because that trick is over). Even though you and your partner are on the same team and one of you winning a trick counts as a win for the partnership, *whichever partner won has to lead*. For instance, if your partner wins the trick, he must lead, not you. Whoever won the trick leads the next card and can lead any card they like.

This is true for dummy as well. Declarer must lead from whichever hand won the trick, just as if her partner were still in control of the hand. So if she won the trick with a high card from her hand, she must lead from her hand, and if she won a high card from dummy's hand, she must lead from dummy.

## Trump, what's that?

Trump is French for triumph. If you've played Spades, you'll recall that spades are always trump. This means that any spade will win a trick with no other spades on it. In bridge, the suit that is trump varies and is determined by the auction.

Let me give you an example of trump. Let's say that in the auction (we'll get to that momentarily) everyone determined that hearts were trump. So, if your opponent leads the ace of diamonds and you don't have any diamonds, you can play a heart. The 2 of hearts, if it is the only heart on the trick, will now win the trick. Why? ***Because trump is essentially a wild card and is higher than any card in the other suits.*** But there are rules. For instance, you still must follow suit if you can. So, if your opponent leads the ace of diamonds and you have a diamond, you **MUST** play the diamond, not a trump. Anyone can trump. So if your opponent leads the ace of diamonds and you are out of diamonds and you play the 2 of hearts, if the person sitting **behind** you is also out of diamonds, they can play the 3 of hearts and win the trick.

Thus, the highest card of the suit led wins the trick, **unless** a trump card is played and then the highest trump card on the trick wins the trick.

Unlike pinochle, you are not required to trump when you are out of a suit. If you are out of a suit, you may play any card from your hand you like. You can choose to trump or not, whatever you think will be most effective.

## Putting dummy down.

When the contract is notrump, you can put the suits in any order you like when laying out dummy. I prefer to put the suit that was led on the right, but there is no special requirement.

When there is a trump suit, dummy will always place the trump suit the farthest to her right.

How the hand looks if spades are trump from dummy's perspective:



Declarer's perspective (with spades as trump):



### What's next?

Before you can understand the logic behind the auction, it helps to play a few hands. Your exercises for this chapter are to deal out a few hands (I would recommend at least four). The deal (like everything else) rotates clockwise. So if you dealt the first hand (your partner should have shuffled), the person sitting on your left will now deal and the person sitting on your right will shuffle.

When shuffling, place the cards on your right when you are done. This will put them on the next dealer's left. Before dealing, he will grab the deck you shuffled, bring it across himself for your partner to cut and then deal. While he is dealing, his partner will be shuffling.

Since we don't have an auction to determine who makes the first lead and who is declarer, for now, the dealer will be declarer (making their partner dummy) and the person on the declarer's left will make the opening lead. For the first few hands, play without any suit being trump (we call this "notrump"). Then, have the dealer decide which suit will be trump, so you can get a few hands in with a trump suit.

How would he choose? Well, trumps are powerful, so he's going to want it to be a suit he has a lot of. So the dealer deals out the cards, picks up his hand and sees he has a lot of hearts. He says: "Hearts are trump for this hand".

Now that we understand the mechanics of play, let's dive into the auction!



## Chapter Two - The Auction

In bridge, the auction occurs *before* the play. It determines what suit (if any) will be trump, which side is defending (trying to prevent the offensive side from succeeding), how many tricks must be taken for the declaring side to succeed, and which player is “dummy”.

I teach the mechanics of play first because you need an understanding of how the play works, how hard it is to take tricks, and how effective trump can be, before you can have any idea what to bid for on the auction.

Now you are ready to learn how to have an auction. Like all things in bridge, the auction moves clockwise. The dealer begins the auction with the first bid. There are two aspects to focus on in an auction: which suit is going to be trump and how many tricks you want to take.

When the auction is over, the final bid becomes the contract (the number of tricks required for success and the trump suit – if any). The final bid (other than double or pass) is the contract.

You get extra points if you take more tricks than you contracted to take (you are never penalized for overtricks in bridge as you are in Spades). However, you lose points if you take fewer tricks than you contracted. While it might be tempting to outbid the opponents just so you can play the hand (and that can be a valid strategy), you have to weigh the cost of doing so. Sometimes you lose less points by bailing out of an auction early and letting the opponents have the contract than you do by bidding over them and not taking enough tricks to make your contract.

Let’s break the auction down into manageable parts.

### **How does the auction start?**

The person who dealt the hand gets to bid first. (This is part of why we rotate who deals clockwise, so that everyone gets a chance to bid first). You may bid anything you like, but remember, like most auctions, unless you are trying to “preempt” the opposition, you will want to start low as possible (at the 1 level) so that you buy it as cheaply as possible.

### **How does an auction determine trump?**

The final bid (other than pass) determines the trump suit (if any). In other words, if the final bid is no trump, there won’t be any trump. If the final bid is hearts, hearts will be trump.

If you and your partner have a lot of diamonds then you want diamonds to be trump. This means you will be bidding diamonds. If your opponents have a lot of hearts, they will want hearts to be trump and will be bidding hearts.

You and your partner will have an advantage over the opponents if the suit you have a lot of is trump, just like they will have an advantage over you if the suit they have a lot of is trump. (If you've been playing hands as suggested above, you will have a feel for how nice it is to have a lot of trump, and how much it sucks to have only a few trump.)

### **What if the person before me bid?**

The primary rule of a bridge auction is the same as in all other auctions: Each bid must have more value than the bid before it. For example, if I bid \$10, the person after me cannot bid \$5. In order for an auction to progress and finally end, each bid must be higher than the bid before it. In bridge, value is determined by two things:

1. The level of the bid. Example: A bid of 2 spades is higher than a bid of 1 spade.
2. Suit ranks. For the purposes of the auction, we give each suit a different value. The rank is notrump (meaning there won't be any trump), spades, hearts, diamonds, and then clubs, in order from highest value to least. Spades and hearts are called the major suits and diamonds and clubs are called the minor suits. Suit rank has no impact on the play, it is only used to distinguish the value of bids during the auction.

Understanding the rank of each suit is very important to having an auction. Why is this important? Remember that in order for an auction to progress each bid must be greater in value than the bid before. An auction could go: 1 club, → 1 diamond → 1 heart, → 1 spade → 1 no trump. But an auction could not go 1 spade → 1 heart. Why not? Because spades out rank hearts! If your RHO bids 1s and you want to bid hearts, you must bid 2 hearts. Remember each bid must have more value than the one before it. If you want to bid hearts over a spade bid, you must raise the level. So it would go 1 spade → 2 hearts.

If you ever get confused about the rank of the suits, check out your bidding box!



A bidding box is a tool I highly recommend playing with. It is not necessary and plenty of people play without them, but I find I have enough to think about, trying to remember verbal bids is often just one thing too many.

Bidding boxes are valuable visual aids. Here, you can see the bids are organized according to rank with notrump - NT (the highest value) on the left and then in descending order until we get to clubs (the lowest) on the right.

### **How do we know how many tricks we have to take to make our contract?**

In order to make your contract, you must take what you have bid plus six. So if you bid 1 spade, you need to take seven tricks to make your contract: Your bid (1 spade) + 6 = 7.

Which means that the most you can bid of anything is 7. Why? Because  $6 + 7 = 13$ . There are only 13 cards in each bridge hand, which means there are 13 tricks on each hand. If you bid 7 of something, in order to make your contract, you need to take all 13 tricks (your bid of  $7 + 6 = 13$ )! You can never bid 8, because that would require you to take 14 tricks and that's not possible.

## What ends the auction?

There are three bids we haven't discussed yet:

1. Pass: This bid can be made at anytime in the auction by any person. It simply means that they do not wish to bid in the auction. If you have a lousy hand, you probably don't want to be obligated to take any tricks. Pass is your bid. Unlike Pinochle, you can pass and then bid again later (as long as the auction is still going).
2. Double: Typically represented by an "x", double simply means: "I don't think you can make what you've bid." You are so confident the opponents can't make their bid that you "double" the points. If they fail the contract, you get twice as many points as you would normally get. If they make the contract, *they* get twice as many points as normal.
3. Redouble: Typically represented by "xx" redouble must be bid in response to double. In other words, it can only be used if the last bid (other than pass) before it was double ("you can't make that"). It says: "Oh yes I can." It quadruples the points for making and failing the contract.

Three passes in a row (they *must* be in a row) ends the auction. For example, if I bid 4 spades, and my left hand opponent (LHO) decides that's too rich for his blood and passes, my partner is happy with that and passes, and then my RHO passes, I have "won" the auction for my bid of 4 spades, and may not bid again. Once three passes have happened, no one may bid again, the auction is over.

There is one exception to this! On the very first round of the auction, it takes all 4 players passing to end the auction. This is called a "pass out". The hands are collected, shuffled and the next person in the rotation deals. In all auctions, each person gets at least one bid. After a bid other than pass, three passes in a row will always end the auction. On the first round, when there hasn't been a bid other than pass yet, it requires 4 passes in a row to end the auction.

## Okay, the auction is over, now what?

Once the auction is over, we move into the play. The side that won the contract is on offense. The side that lost the contract is defending. Simply put: The side that made the last bid (other than pass, double and redouble) is trying to take the number of tricks they contracted to take. The other side is trying to stop them.

The last bid (other than pass, double, and redouble) has determined the trump suit (if any) and how many tricks the offense must take.

For example: If I bid 4 spades and everyone passed, the contract is 4 spades. This means that spades are trump and I need to take 10 tricks to make my contract (my bid of  $4 + 6 = 10$ ).

The auction also determines the declarer, the dummy, and the opening leader. Let's tackle that piece by piece.

### **Who is declarer?**

Declarer is the person who plays both hands. Declarer's partner is dummy. How is the declarer determined? The declarer is the person who bid the suit (or notrump) of the *final* contract *first*.

So, I deal and bid 1 heart, my LHO passes, my partner bids 4 hearts, and then everyone passes, the contract is 4 hearts. That means that hearts are trump and I need to take 10 tricks to make my contract (my bid of  $4 + 6 = 10$ ). Because I bid the hearts first, I am the declarer.

It doesn't matter how complicated the auction was, after all is said and done there will be a contract (the final bid other than pass, double, and redouble). The side who made the final bid is on offense. The side that didn't is defending. The player on the offense who bid the suit or notrump of the final contract *first* is the declarer and their partner is dummy.

### **Who leads first?**

The person to declarer's left makes the first lead. You could also say that the person on dummy's right makes the opening lead (they are the same person). In essence, after the bids are taken away, the person who plays immediately before dummy will choose a card from their hand and place it face up on the table. The dummy will then (never before the opening lead!) lay their hand face up on the table. The declarer will choose which card to play from dummy, and play will proceed as we practiced in chapter 1 (with declarer choosing the cards both from his hand and from dummy's).

The rest of the hand progresses as described above, with the hand that wins the trick making the next lead.

Try it out! Practice another four or more hands, this time having the auction first and having a dummy.

### **How do I know what to bid?**

In this book, we are only going to get into the most basic and simple language of bidding. My goal is to get you started playing and acquainted with the basic mechanics of bridge.

There are as many bidding languages as there are languages in the world and if you want to learn more about bridge, read my books on Beginning Bidding.

But always remember that the great thing about bridge is there are an infinite number of levels in skill and play. You can learn as much or as little as you want, depending on what makes the game fun for you. The best advice anyone can give you is to play, play, play.

### **Having a conversation with partner with bids**

Bidding at its heart is a conversation. You tell your partner you want hearts to be trump (because you've got a lot of them) by bidding hearts. Your partner can agree, or suggest a different suit because he has a lot of those.

If you have a strong hand, you will bid more freely and end up higher. If you have a weak hand, you will bid more cautiously and pass more often.

If you take the time to learn a bidding system (what we call the different languages of bridge), then each bid you make will have a specific meaning, showing a specific number of cards in the suit and a specific strength of hand. Learning a bidding system takes time. It's very much like learning a foreign language. The more you practice, the faster it will come, the less, the slower.

You don't have to learn a bidding system to have fun! You can just bid whatever you feel like bidding and see how it works out. You might not always get to the right contract, but you will be playing and having fun.

When trying to decide what to bid, remember that for partner to bid a suit they probably have a lot of them. So even if you only have three, that's still a good thing. It's only if you have very few, or none at all of your partner's suit that you would want to suggest another suit or no trump as a possible contract.

Never forget that bridge is a partnership game, and that you are working with your partner towards a common goal.

At this point, even if you want to study and learn more, sit down and play several hands with your group. The more you play, the more you will get a feeling for when to bid and when not to bid. The more you play, the more you'll learn, and the more fun you'll have.

Don't be intimidated by not knowing exactly what partner is saying or what the right thing to do is, just have fun! Remember, even if you don't make your contract, this is a game, it's about having fun. Nothing bad will happen to you if you don't make your contract, or don't get the contract. All that matters is you have fun! Play, play, play!



## Chapter Three - Where do we go from here?

It is not possible for me to stress enough that you only need to learn as much about bridge as you want to. If you and your friends can sit down and have a great time with what you have already learned, great! Play, play, play!

If you want to learn a bidding system (language) and want to learn more about how to play both as declarer and when defending, there are a number of places you can turn.

There are hundreds of bridge books out there. My series is geared towards beginners. If you enjoyed this book you are certain to enjoy my other books. I break concepts down in easy to understand parts and always have tons of exercises to practice with.

If you want to look for a different book, I strongly suggest you make certain that it is for beginners. Bridge can become very overwhelming very fast and picking up an intermediate book when you are first starting out can be daunting.

You could also find a teacher. There are several resources for teachers, the ACBL web site, <http://www.acbl.org>, has a list of teachers around the world. Each bridge club has teachers. If your friends play, they probably learned from a teacher.

Always make sure that you choose your teacher carefully. A teacher can be good and still have a personality that conflicts with yours. Make sure you find one who suits your needs, understands your goals, and is capable of helping you achieve your goals. Nothing beats having a friend recommend a teacher.

There are also online resources, many of which can be found at the ACBL web site, <http://www.acbl.org>, and many of which are free. You can play on line, either through a membership organization like OkBridge, or for free through several other on line bridge organizations like Bridge Base. You can also purchase educational or entertainment bridge software which will teach you and/or allow you to play by yourself such as Bridge Baron.

Whatever choices you make, remember that ultimately, no matter how competitive you become, bridge is a game, and you should be enjoying it. If something gets in the way of your enjoyment, change it! Don't give up the game. For instance, if you get a bad teacher, get a different one. If you have problems with your partner, or the people you play with, find another partner or other people.

Bridge is a fabulous game that benefits players in numerous ways. Find what works for you. Have fun and play!