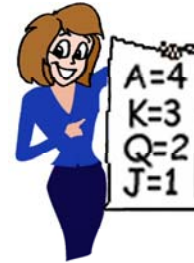




BEGINNER'S BRIDGE NOTES



Leigh Harding

PLAYING THE CARDS IN TRUMP CONTRACTS

ALWAYS MAKE A PLAN!

Don't play a single card until you have planned how you will make your contract!

The plan will influence decisions you will have to make during the play, for example knowing when to delay drawing trumps, instead of drawing them all at the beginning.

STEP 1. Know how many tricks you need to make your contract!

STEP 2. Estimate how many tricks in trump suit (assume most likely split).

STEP 3. Count certain tricks in the other three suits.

STEP 4. Calculate how many extra tricks you need to make contract.

WAYS OF MAKING EXTRA TRICKS

1. Ruffing in the hand with the shorter trump suit, usually **dummy**. Look for short suits in dummy that you can eventually ruff.

You rarely make **extra** tricks by ruffing in the hand with the longer trump suit (usually your hand) as you have already counted these trumps as winners.

3. Promoting high cards.
4. Establishing long suits (once you have drawn trumps).

Don't Forget To Count Down The Missing Trumps As They Are Played

INTRODUCTION TO BRIDGE

Bridge is a game for four people playing in two partnerships. A standard pack of 52 cards is used. There are four **Suits**: ♠ Spades, ♥ Hearts, ♦ Diamonds and ♣ Clubs. Each suit has thirteen cards in the order: A,K,Q,J,10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2. Ace is high.

THE PLAY

The cards are dealt so that each player receives 13 cards. It is best to arrange them in your hand with alternating red suits and black suits. The bidding starts with the dealer. After the bidding is over, one pair become the declaring side. One member of this pair called the **Declarer**, plays the hand while the opponents **Defend** the hand.

The partner of the declarer, called the **Dummy**, puts all of his cards face up on the table and takes no further part in the play. Declarer plays both hands, his own and dummy's. The first person to play a card is the person on the left of the declarer, this is called the **Opening Lead**.

The cards are played clockwise round the table until four cards have been played. The highest card played wins the 'trick'.

* the card is placed like this if your side won the trick,

or like this if your side didn't win the trick.



TRUMPS

You must always follow suit if you can, but if as a result of the bidding there is a trump suit, then any card in the trump suit beats any card in the other suits. So, if ♥'s are trumps, the ♥2 would beat the ♣A. You may only use a trump when you are unable to follow suit, but you don't have to - you may choose to **Discard** (throw away) a card from another suit. Playing a trump card is known as **Ruffing**.

2. Count down the missing cards as you see them played.

In this example lets assume that the missing spades split 3-2.

West	East
♠AKQ32	♠654

First, say to yourself ‘We have 8 cards, the opponents have 5’.

- Play the ♠A and watch what the opponents play. They both play a spade so say to yourself ‘the opponents now have 3 spades left’.
- Play the ♠K and watch what the opponents play. They both play a spade so say to yourself ‘the opponents now have 1 spade left’.
- Play the ♠Q and see the opponents play the last spade. Now your ♠3 and ♠2 are winners.

DEFINITIONS

Honour	the five highest cards of each suit: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, Ten.
Master	A card that is guaranteed to win a trick.
Entry	A master card that allows you to get the lead into a certain hand (your hand or the dummy)
Sequence	At least two cards in a row; e.g. A K, K Q, Q J....
Promote (an honour)	turn a lesser honour into a master by drawing out the opponent's masters.
Blockage	not being able to make the master tricks in the hand opposite because there is no entry.
Establishing	Making small cards into winners by drawing out all of the opponents cards.

MINIBRIDGE

MiniBridge enables you to start playing bridge right away without having to know all the rules for bidding. Everything you learn in MiniBridge is relevant to real bridge i.e. counting your points, how to play the cards, game and part score contracts, scoring etc.

HOW TO PLAY MINIBRIDGE

1. The cards are dealt out one by one to the four players, playing in two partnerships sitting opposite each other – thirteen cards each.
2. Each player estimates the value of their hand by using a scale of points for the high cards. Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1.
3. Each player announces their points starting with the dealer and going clockwise round the table. The total should add up to forty.
4. The pair with the most points between them becomes the declaring side, the other pair become the defending side. If both sides have twenty points, redeal the cards. The person on the declaring side with the most points becomes the declarer and their partner becomes the dummy. If both players have the same number of points, then declarer is the one who announced their points first.
5. The dummy’s hand is put down on the table for all to see and declarer chooses the contract. He announces either ‘part-score’ or ‘game’ and either no-trumps or a specific trumps suit. The goal for a part-score is 7 tricks, and the goals for game contracts are 9 tricks in no-trumps, 10 tricks in ♥ or ♠ and 11 tricks in ♣ or ♦.
6. The first person to lead a card is the player on the left of the declarer. Each person plays a card in turn clockwise and whoever puts down the highest card wins the trick, any trump beating any card in another suit. If either defender wins a trick, it counts as a trick for their side.
7. The cards are then turned over and the winner of the trick leads the first card for the next trick.

OPENING LEADS

Picture cards are called ‘Honours’. For the purpose of leads, the **ten** is also considered to be an honour.

1. TOP OF A SEQUENCE

The very best choice of opening lead against No Trump and Trump contracts is the top card from a sequence of honours (‘*top of sequence*’).

The reason for leading the top of a sequence is that you hope to *promote* some winners for your side by knocking out the declarer’s high cards.

In **No Trumps** contracts it must be a sequence of **three** i.e. $\heartsuit AKQ6$, $\spadesuit KQJ32$, $\clubsuit QJ105$. It is also correct to lead the Jack from $\diamondsuit J1094$.

In **Trumps** contracts it only needs to be a sequence of **two** e.g. $\heartsuit AK43$, $\spadesuit KQ43$ etc

DO NOT LEAD an honour card unless you have the card below it! The lead of an honour promises that you hold the next highest card.

2. 4th HIGHEST FROM YOUR LONGEST SUIT

The next best choice is the 4th highest of your longest suit e.g. $\heartsuit K9852$. Your aim is to force out declarer’s high cards in the suit so that you can promote your own high cards and maybe also make tricks with your small cards (in NT contracts).

TAKE NOTE OF YOUR PARTNER’S LEAD!

Always make a mental note of **which suit** and **which card** your partner played on the first lead. They will usually want you to lead this suit again when you get the chance. Especially notice if they lead an honour, promising the one below it.

MINIBRIDGE TARGET CONTRACTS

Points	Tricks (in NT)	Tricks (In Trumps)
21 – 22	7	7 - 8
23 – 24	8	9
25 – 26	9	10
27 – 28	10	11
29 – 30	11	11
31 – 32	11	12
33 – 36	12	12
37+	13	13

‘Part Score’
50 points bonus

‘Game’ in No Trumps
300 points bonus

‘Game’ in \heartsuit or \spadesuit
300 points bonus

‘Game’ in \clubsuit or \diamondsuit
300 points bonus

Remember that no points are scored for the first six tricks.

‘GAME’ CONTRACTS

A ‘game’ is when the score for the tricks you bid and make adds up to **at least 100**. When your partnership has at least 25 high card points you should usually choose a ‘game’ contract as follows:

9 tricks in No Trumps (3NT) = 40+30+30 (= 100) + 300 bonus = 400
 10 tricks in \heartsuit or \spadesuit (4 \heartsuit /4 \spadesuit) = 4 x 30 (= 120) + 300 bonus = 420
 11 tricks in \diamondsuit or \clubsuit (5 \diamondsuit /5 \clubsuit) = 5 x 20 (=100) + 300 bonus = 400

‘PART SCORE’ CONTRACTS

A ‘part score’ is when the score for the tricks you bid and make adds up to **less than 100**. If your partnership has less than 25 high card points you should choose a target of 7 tricks (i.e. as low as possible).

There is no advantage in choosing a target of 8 tricks over choosing a target of 7 tricks. A contract for 8 tricks making exactly 8 tricks scores the same as a contract for 7 tricks making 8 tricks.

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HIGH CARD POINTS

Ace	4
King	3
Queen	2
Jack	1

THE SUIT RANKING ORDER

Notice it is alphabetical. Clubs are the lowest ranking and No Trumps the highest.

NT	No Trumps	
♠	Spades	'Major' Suits
♥	Hearts	
♦	Diamonds	'Minor' Suits
♣	Clubs	

EXPECTED NUMBER OF TRICKS

The table below shows the expected number of tricks you will make from your partnership's combined point count. It is important to know by heart the ones shown in bold.

Points	Tricks (in NT)	Tricks (In Trumps)
21 – 22	7	8
23 – 24	8	9
25 – 26	9	10
27 – 28	10	11
29 – 30	11	11
31 – 32	11	12
33 – 36	12	12
37+	13	13

UNBLOCKING

Sometimes you can't make all the tricks of a suit because of a **blockage**.

West East
♠AK ♠QJ52

You can recognize the threat of a blockage by the presence of isolated **honours** in one of the two hands. There are two ways of avoiding a blockage.

West East
♠3 ♠A
♥AK ♥QJ52

First play the honours which are blocking (this is called **unblocking**) then use an **entry** in another suit to cross over to get the master tricks in the other hand. West plays Ace and King of Hearts first, then ♠3 to East's Ace. He is then in the right hand to play Queen and Jack of Hearts.

West East
♠AQ ♠KJ5

Sometimes you can overtake one of the blocking cards. West first plays the Ace then takes the Queen with the King: in this way he can make a trick with the Jack without needing an entry outside the suit.

TO AVOID AN UNNECESSARY BLOCKAGE:

Play The High Card From The Short Side First

West East
♠A4 ♠KQJ2

In this case you could accidentally cause a blockage by playing the King first and then the Ace – you are stuck in the wrong hand. When you have honour cards in both your hand and dummy always **play the high card from the short side first**. If you start with the Ace in this example, there is no problem.

Try out some of the examples with a pack of cards.

8. Declarer controls the play of dummy's cards and if the winning card comes from the dummy, the first card for the next trick comes from the dummy (but the declarer says which card it should be).
9. After all the cards have been played, the players agree how many tricks were won by each side and calculate the score.
10. The position of the dealer moves round the table clockwise with each deal.

MINIBRIDGE SCORING

1. The declaring side only scores points if they win the target number of tricks (or more).
2. No points are won for the first six tricks. For each additional trick, points are scored according to the contract, as follows:

No Trumps	40 points for the first trick, 30 points for each subsequent trick.
Hearts/Spades	30 points
Clubs/Diamonds	20 points

(Note that the goals of 9 tricks in No Trumps, 10 tricks in Hearts or Spades or 11 tricks in Clubs or Diamonds, will lead to a total of 100 points – the requirement for 'game')

3. If 'game' has been announced before the play of the cards and it is achieved you gain a bonus of 300 points.
4. If 'part score' has been announced and 7 or more tricks have been made you gain a bonus of 50 points.
5. If you do not reach your goal, you do not get any points for the tricks that you do make. Instead, the defenders get 50 points for each trick that the declaring side is short of their target

MAKING SMALL CARDS INTO WINNERS

In a No Trump contract (or in the trump suit) even the two can become a winner when you have a long suit with high cards.

By playing your high cards you can draw out **all** the opponents cards in that suit. In a trump contract this is called '**Drawing Trumps**'.

Here, East/West have 8 of the 13 cards in the spade suit. How many tricks will East/West win?

West	East
♠AKQJ2	♠543

The answer is **nearly always** 5 tricks. There are 5 spades in North and South, they might be divided 3-2, 4-1 or 5-0. The chances of a 5-0 split are very small so *usually* after West has played the ♠A, ♠K, ♠Q and ♠J there will be no spades left in the opponents hands and the ♠2 will be a winner.

Even if East/West have the same cards but missing the Jack there is still a high chance that after West has played the ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q there will be no spades left and the ♠6 and ♠2 will be winners.

West	East
♠AKQ62	♠543

HOW ARE THE MISSING CARDS MOST LIKELY TO SPLIT?

If there is an **odd** number of cards missing they will split as **evenly** as possible

e.g. 5 missing are most likely to split 3-2

If there is an **even** number of cards missing they will split '**oddly**'

e.g. 6 missing are most likely to split 4-2 (not 3-3)

COUNT DOWN THE MISSING CARDS

When you have a long suit (in could be the trump suit or a long suit in No Trumps):

1. Count how many cards the opponents have in that suit

PLAYING THE CARDS IN NO TRUMPS

DECLARER **ALWAYS MAKE A PLAN!**

When you see the opening lead, **STOP!!!** Ask yourself three questions:

1. How many tricks do I need to make the contract?

Then look carefully at your hand and the dummy:

2. How many tricks can I make without losing the lead?

3. How will I get the extra tricks?

DEFENDERS

THE OPENING LEAD AGAINST NO TRUMPS

Best lead is the top of a sequence of three honour cards e.g. Ace from AKQ, King from KQJ etc. If you don't have a sequence of honour cards lead the 4th highest card of your longest suit. e.g. the four from AJ9⁴2

WIN A TRICK AS CHEAPLY AS POSSIBLE

If you have the Ace and King, win with the King. It helps partner work out what cards you don't have. If you win a trick with the Ace partner knows you don't have the King. If you win a trick with the King partner knows you don't have the Queen.

SECOND HAND LOW

If you can't win the trick in second seat, play a low card. Even if you **can** win the trick, it is still correct most of the time to play low to give partner a chance to win the trick. If in doubt play low!

THIRD HAND HIGH

Even if you can't win the trick, you should play high. You may set up winners for your partner. When playing 3rd hand high with equally high cards, play the lowest of the equal cards (see 'Win a Trick As Cheaply As Possible')

MAKING A PLAN - EXAMPLE

You are South and you need to make 9 tricks in No Trumps. The lead is the 6 of diamonds (4th highest of longest suit).

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠	A 3 2	♠	8 7 6
♥	J 10 4 2	♥	K Q 3
♦	K 9 5	♦	A 4 3
♣	10 6 3	♣	A K Q 2
♠	K 10 5		
♥	8 7 5		
♦	Q J 8 6 2		
♣	7 4		
		♠	Q J 9 4
		♥	A 9 6
		♦	10 7
		♣	J 9 8 5

First count your certain tricks in each suit: 1 in ♠, 2 in ♦, 3 in ♣, 0 in ♥ (you have no certain tricks until you have knocked out the Ace **which means losing the lead!**). You have a total of 6 certain tricks and need 3 more. The extra three tricks will come from hearts but you must first knock out the Ace to **promote** your high cards.

Win the first trick with the Ace of diamonds then immediately play a heart. If the defenders don't play the Ace of hearts the first time round, continue playing hearts until they play the Ace. You can then take your other winners.

The wrong way to play is to take your spade and diamond winners **before** knocking out the Ace of hearts. If you do this the defender will have enough winners in spades and diamonds to beat the contract.

SO: If you have to lose the lead in order to promote some high cards, do it early while you still have winners in all the other suits so that you can win back the lead whatever the opponents play.