



LESSON 1 – STUDENT NOTES

AN INTRODUCTION TO BRIDGE

THE CARDS

Bridge is a card game played with a standard pack of 52 cards. These are divided into four suits –

Spades	♠	highest ranking suit
Hearts	♥	
Diamonds	♦	
Clubs	♣	lowest ranking suit

You need to know this order of the ranking of suits with spades the highest and clubs the lowest ranked. The suits are in alphabetical order.

Each suit has 13 cards from 1 to 10 and then Jack, Queen, King. The one is an “ACE” and is valued above the King i.e. Ace is high.

Honour cards are Ace, King, Queen and Jack. The 10 can also be included.

PARTNERSHIP. - You need four people to play bridge. North-South play against opponents East-West. The designations, North, South, East and West are for descriptive purposes only. There is no strategic importance to the place you sit at the table.

DEALER - is the player who starts the proceedings for each hand. You will see the letter D on the board denoting which player is the dealer.

THE DEAL – if you play at home, someone will deal out the cards equally between the 4 players. Each player will have 13 cards. This is known as his "hand". In a bridge club or in class the hand will be pre-dealt and arrive at your table in a "board"

THE BOARD - The cards arrive at the table in a “board”. The board should be orientated on the table correctly. The player who is North is responsible for looking after the boards, for putting the correct board on the table in the correct orientation. At the end of a hand, players put their 13 cards back in the board in the slot appropriate to their position on the table.

A TRICK – A trick is 4 cards; one contributed in clockwise rotation by each player. Players must play a card of the led suit if they can. If they are unable to do so, they play a card of another suit. The highest value card of the led suit wins the trick (unless there is a ruff – see below).

HOW YOU PLACE CARDS AT THE END OF EACH TRICK – Once all 4 players have contributed a card to the trick, decide who has won the trick. Place your card face down in front of you with its long axis towards your partner and yourself if you won the trick. If you lost the trick place the card with the long axis pointing towards the opposition. At the end of the hand you can then count up to see how many tricks your side has won. Your hand is intact and the 13 cards go back in your slot in the board. Once you have placed any card face down you may not lift it back up to look at it – you have to try to remember.

BIDDING – This is an auction in which pairs compete to control the hand. Before you start to bid you need to assess the strength and shape of your hand.

ASSESS THE STRENGTH AND SHAPE OF YOUR HAND –

FIRST DECISION – HOW STRONG IS MY HAND?

The simplest method is to add up how many "High Card Points" you have.

High Card Points – Count how many High Card Points (HCP) you have by scoring as follows - **Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1**. There are 40 HCP in a pack. The average HCP count in a hand is 10 so if you have more than 10 HCP in your hand you have an above average strength hand.

SECOND DECISION – Is my hand "Balanced" or "Unbalanced"

"Balanced" or "Unbalanced" – A balanced hand is one which has

No void (a suit in which you have no cards at all)

No singleton (a suit in which you hold only 1 card)

Not more than 1 doubleton (a suit in which you have only 2 cards)

BIDDING - We will start to bid using the bidding crib provided.

What do the numbers mean for example if I bid 1 Club what does that mean?

If I am winning tricks, when I have won the 7th trick I know I will be winning more tricks than the opponents. Therefore, we count winning tricks from number 7 onwards.

If I bid 1 Club I am saying I will win 7 tricks with Clubs as trumps (6 + 1). If I achieve this it is said that I have **Made 1**

If I bid 4 Spades I am saying that I will win 10 tricks (6 + 4) with Spades as trumps. If I achieve this it is said that I have **Made 4**

THE AUCTION – The bidding starts with the Dealer (shown on the board). Each player bids in turn, clockwise round the table. A player may make a positive bid or may pass. If you choose to pass you can enter the bidding in a subsequent round of bidding. Passing does not exclude you from the bidding process. Each bid must be higher than the previous bid therefore you need to know the bidding rank order. The ranking order is:-

No Trumps		highest ranked bid
Spades	♠	
Hearts	♥	
Diamonds	♦	
Clubs	♣	lowest ranked bid

The bidding ends when a positive bid is followed by 3 passes

At the end of the bidding the final bid becomes the **Contract**.

CONTRACT

South was the player who first bid the hearts therefore the contract is 4 Hearts to be played by South

OPENING LEAD - The player on Declarer's left makes the initial lead

PLAY - Play (and bidding) move in a clockwise direction e.g. if N starts, E follows next, then S and finally W. Each player contributes one card to the trick. The highest card wins the trick. The player who wins a trick plays the first card to the following trick.

Bridge is a trick taking game – a trick consists of four cards one contributed in rotation by all four players. Players must contribute a card of the suit led by the first player if he has one i.e. must **follow suit**. The player who contributes the highest card **in the led** suit wins the trick and then leads the first card to the next trick. If you don't have a card in the led suit then discard from another suit. This type of contract is called **No Trumps**.

You can win tricks in NT by virtue of high cards and by establishing a long suit so you win tricks with small value cards.

PLAY IN A SUIT CONTRACT – If a hand is played in a suit, there is a "Boss" or trump suit. This overtakes cards in the plain suits (not the trump suit). Players must still follow suit with the initially led suit if they can. Now, if they are unable to follow suit they can choose to play a trump card. The act of playing the trump card is called **Ruffing**. If this happens then the highest trump card played wins the trick. If you play a trump card you are said to **ruff**. The player who wins the trick plays the first card to the next trick as in No Trumps

HAVE FUN – bridge is a **great** game!