

§1. Preliminaries.

By the end of the first chapter you should understand the following terms:

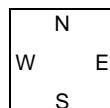
Bidding: Auction, Contract, Dealer, Double, Major suits (\heartsuit and \spadesuit), Minor suits (\clubsuit and \diamondsuit), No-trumps, Opener, Overcall, Pass (No Bid), Rank of the suits, Redouble, Slams (Small Slam, Grand Slam).

Play: Declarer, Defenders, Dummy, Opening lead, Overtrick, Undertrick.

Scoring: Above the line, Below the line, Game, Part-score, Penalty, Rubber, Vulnerable.

Bridge is a whist-derived game played by four players in two opposing partnerships. As in whist, the game is based on the principles of *taking tricks* and *using a trump suit*. The four players sit at a table opposite their partners. For convenience we call these four players *North*, *East*, *South* and *West* where North-South are in partnership opposed by East-West.

The table is represented as a diagram in the following manner:



The game is played with a full pack of 52 cards dealt out fully so that each player receives a hand of 13 cards. Players should sort their hands out into suits to make things easier for themselves (although the rules don't actually say that you have to).

The game is similar to whist in that there is a phase of the game where tricks are taken; the play is clockwise and everybody must observe the *following suit* rule common to all whist-based games. After a player leads a card everyone in turn must play a card of the same suit if they are able to do so. A player unable to follow suit may play any card he likes to that trick, including a trump if he so wishes. The player who wins a trick leads to the next trick. With each player holding thirteen cards there are, naturally enough, thirteen tricks to be taken on any deal and split between the two partnerships.

The suits in bridge have a very important *ranking*, which is set out below:

Spades	\spadesuit
Hearts	\heartsuit
Diamonds	\diamondsuit
Clubs	\clubsuit

In all bridge books (and newspaper articles) deals are represented as in Hand 1 (below) where, in every case, the diagrams have the suits arranged in the order Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs.

Hand 1.

\spadesuit A 9 5	
\heartsuit K Q 9	
\diamondsuit K J 10	
\clubsuit A Q 9 5	
\spadesuit Q 10 6 4	N
\heartsuit 8 6 4	W
\diamondsuit A 9 8 5	E
\clubsuit 8 4	S
\spadesuit J 8 7	
\heartsuit J 10 5 3 2	
\diamondsuit 4 3 2	
\clubsuit K 6	
\spadesuit K 3 2	
\heartsuit A 7	
\diamondsuit Q 7 6	
\clubsuit J 10 7 3 2	

If you have nothing better to do with your time you can check that the deal above is legitimate.

Each hand must have thirteen cards, there must be thirteen Spades, thirteen Hearts, thirteen Diamonds and thirteen Clubs on view and no card may appear twice (and, of course, no card can be missing). To check this thoroughly can be extremely tedious! In fact, many books and newspaper articles on bridge contain errors in hand layouts, usually by having the same card appear twice (and, therefore, a card missing). This is largely due to the difficulty of proof-reading such deals, or (at least) the sheer tedium of proof reading large numbers of such deals.

Although bridge is derived from whist there are major differences between the games. These include:

- The trump suit is not known at the end of the dealing process (in whist, by contrast, it is).
- Not all hands are played with a trump suit – many deals are played without any trump suit.
- One hand is displayed face upwards on the table and its owner is effectively out of the game for the rest of the deal. That player is called the *dummy*.

The Mechanics of the Game.

There are two phases to the game, firstly the *auction* (also known as the *bidding*) where each player in turn can bid (or *Pass*) and, secondly, there is the *play*.

In the play phase there is a *contract* (determined by the auction) which will indicate the trump suit, who will play the hand (the *declarer*), which of the *defenders* will make the *opening lead*, who will place his hand face upwards on the table (the *dummy*) and, finally, how many tricks each side requires.

The auction starts with the *dealer* and proceeds clockwise around the table with each player in turn making a bid or Passing.

The first player to make a bid other than *Pass* is called the *opener*. Each bid of the auction (and the contract itself) consists of two parts: the number of tricks to be made and the trump suit (or *No-trumps*).

The form that this takes is that each bid consists of a number (between one and seven inclusive) and a suit (or *No-trumps*) so, for example, a player might make the bid of “Two Hearts”, written in shorthand form as 2♥.

Since it is not allowed to contract to make fewer than half the total number of available tricks (which is, of course, thirteen) each bid must be for *more than six tricks* so a bid of “Two Hearts” (or 2♥) is an attempt to make *eight* tricks with Hearts as trumps.

In order to work out how many tricks are required simply add six to the bid. Thus a contract of 3♦ requires nine tricks to be successful, 4♠ requires ten tricks and so on. Clearly, the highest level bid is 7 somethings which contracts for all thirteen tricks. A contract of 6 somethings is called a *small slam* and a contract of 7 somethings is known as a *grand slam*.

In order for a bid to overcall a previous bid it must either be of a higher level (i.e. more tricks) or be of higher *rank* (or both). The table from the previous page has to be modified here to include *No-trumps*:

No-trumps	NT
Spades	♠
Hearts	♥
Diamonds	♦
Clubs	♣

Each bid of the auction must out-bid or *overcall* the previous bid.

Thus, for example, a bid of 1♠ will be sufficient to overcall 1♥ since Spades outrank Hearts. However, to overcall 1♥ with Diamonds you would have to bid 2♦. As another example 3♣ will overcall 2♦, but 2♦ would be enough to overcall 2♣.

If a player does not want to bid he may *Pass* or, more unusually and in certain circumstances, he may *Double* or *Redouble*.

Note that it is not necessary for an auction to proceed in minimum steps. As one of many possible examples: if North bids 1♥, East may, if he so wishes, bid 3♠.

Apart from on the first round of bidding the auction is terminated by three consecutive *Passes*; at this point the last positive bid of the auction is established as the *contract* and the play phase begins.

Below is a sample auction with North the dealer.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♥	1NT	2♥	3♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The dealer gets to bid first, remember; here he chooses to Pass.

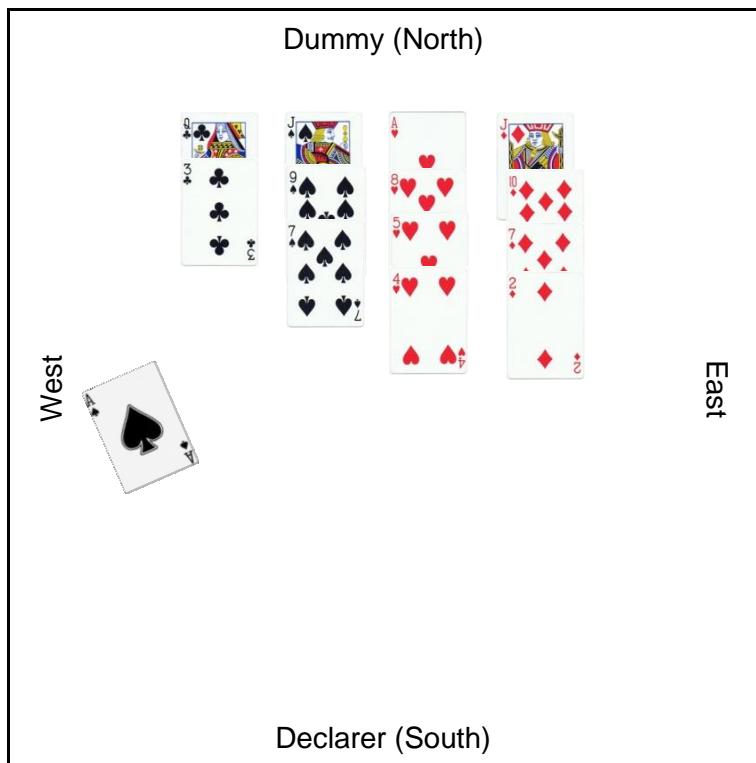
In this case the *contract* would be 3♣, played by South who becomes the *declarer* with West to lead and North to become the *dummy*.

There are targets for both sides: South needs to make nine tricks (or more) to make the contract, East-West (the *defenders*) need five tricks (or more) to *break* the contract.

On every hand at bridge there is a target for each side. There is a target for the side making the declaration and a different target for their opponents who are trying to prevent the declaring side from achieving that target.

Once the contract has been established the player to the left of declarer makes the opening lead by facing one of his cards. Let us say that the opening lead is the ♠A.

At this point (and not before) dummy faces his hand, placing his cards in columns so that the table looks something like this:



Notice that whilst it is mandatory for dummy's cards to be arranged top to bottom, high to low as shown above there is no particular statutory order for the suits to be displayed from left to right. However, trumps do have to be to dummy's right (declarer's left).

The play of dummy's cards is at the behest of declarer and dummy must act as a robot, playing the exposed cards exactly as he is told, without grimacing!

Declarer must call for the cards rather than touch them (especially, he shouldn't "paw" the dummy, that's a revolting habit!) but he can use shortened terms such as "small, please", indicating that he would like dummy to play the smallest card in the led suit.

Scoring at Bridge.

You need to understand the scoring method. A blank score sheet is shown on the right, with a horizontal line roughly two-thirds of the way down the page. This is known as “*the line*” (!) and the area above is “*above the line*”. Not surprisingly the area below the line is known as – er – “*below the line*”.

Contracts bid and made score *below the line* and *overtricks* and *undertricks* score *above the line*. (As do “honours”, slam bonuses and rubber bonuses).

You need 100 (or more) points *below the line* to score a *game* and you need two games to win the *rubber*. (Although it is possible to win two games but lose overall.) A game can be made up from two or more *part-scores* or in one fell swoop with a *game contract*.

The ranking of the suits in bridge is associated with the scoring:

No-trumps	NT	40, then 30, 30, 30 etc per bid trick.
Spades	♠	{ Major suits 30 points per bid trick.
Hearts	♥	
Diamonds	♦	{ Minor suits 20 points per bid trick.
Clubs	♣	

We	They
	Above the line
	Below the line

As an example: a successful contract of 2♥ would score 60 (that is: 2×30) points *below the line*. A successful contract of 3NT would score 100 (that is: $40 + 30 + 30$) points *below the line*. Note that a contract of 2♥ making nine tricks would score 60 points *below the line* and 30 points *above the line*.

It follows that contracts of 3NT, 4♠, 4♥, 5♦, 5♣ are all *game contracts* (because they are worth 100 points or more to be scored *below the line*). Contracts which score less than 100 points *below the line* (there are many examples of these including 1♦, 2NT, 4♣) are known as *part-score contracts*.

A pair that has scored a game (and are therefore half way to winning the rubber) is said to be *vulnerable*. The explanation for this term comes from the table of *penalties* for undertricks:

Down	Non-vulnerable		Vulnerable	
	Undoubled	Doubled	Undoubled	Doubled
1	50	100	100	200
2	100	300	200	500
3	150	500	300	800
4	200	800	400	1100
5	250	1100	500	1400

If someone has Redoubled the final contract then the Doubled scores are themselves doubled. (Huge penalties like these can prove expensive. **Very** expensive). Notice that a player can only Double an opponent’s contract and can only Redouble a contract of his own side if an opponent has Doubled it.

There are bonuses for winning the rubber. These are: **700** for a two game rubber (i.e. winning by two games to nil) and **500** for a three game rubber (i.e. winning by two games to one)

Slam bonuses are quite attractive but remember you have to bid the slam to get the rewards:

	Non Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Small Slam	500	750
Grand Slam	1000	1500

Finally, there are points for *honours* although in many forms of bridge they have been abandoned. These points are scored *above the line*. Just for completeness sake they are listed here:

In a trump contract: {	a holding of 4 out of the 5 top honours in one hand: = 100
	a holding of all 5 out of the 5 top honours in one hand: = 150
In No-trumps :	a holding of all four aces in one hand: = 150

These bonuses are available to both the declaring side and to the defenders.

Scoring at Bridge: an Example Rubber.

Here is an example rubber to help you understand the scoring. The four players are, as always, North, South, East and West, playing as North-South against East-West. As it happens the rubber took nine hands to complete.

	Score	Comments
Hand 1 North-South bid 3♥ and make 10 tricks.	30 above the line to NS. 90 below the line	A part-score of 90 to NS. The overtrick is also worth 30 points.
Hand 2 East-West bid 4♣ and make 8 tricks.	100 above the line to NS.	A penalty to NS. Two undertricks at 50 points each.
Hand 3 East-West bid 2NT and make 8 tricks.	70 below the line to EW.	A part-score of 70 to EW.
Hand 4 North-South bid 3♦ and make 12 tricks.	60 above the line to NS. 60 below the line	The NS part-score is converted into a game. NS are now <i>vulnerable</i> .
Hand 5 North-South bid 5♦ and make 8 tricks.	300 above the line to EW.	A penalty to EW. Three vulnerable undertricks at 100 points each.
Hand 6 East-West bid 3NT and make 9 tricks.	100 below the line to EW.	A game contract bid and made. Both sides are now vulnerable.
Hand 7 East-West bid 4♦ and make 9 tricks.	100 above the line to NS.	A penalty to NS. Each undertrick when vulnerable costs 100 points.
Hand 8 North-South bid 1NT and make 8 tricks.	30 above the line to NS. 40 below the line	A part-score bid and made with one overtrick.
Hand 9 East-West bid 5♣ and make 11 tricks.	100 below the line to EW.	EW have made two games so the rubber is now over.

East-West are entitled to a bonus for winning the rubber. This is worth 500 points since they won by two games to one. (Had they won by two games to none the bonus would have been 700 points.)

NS	EW
30	
100	
60	
100	500
30	300
90	70
60	
	100
40	100

The final score-sheet should look like the one on the left.

Now that the rubber is over **all** the scores in both columns are added up. The totals come to 1070 points to East-West and 510 points to North-South, making an aggregate of 560 points to East-West.

It is important to realise that completing the rubber does not necessarily mean that the side that scored the two games turned out to be the winners.

As an example, suppose that on Hand 4 North had bid and made a grand slam in Diamonds, scoring 140 below the line and 1000 above the line. Now when the rubber is totted up it is North-South who would have won by 460 points, despite the fact that their opponents have completed the rubber.

Those players who like to play for money now settle up and the next rubber commences. However, money bridge is rare these days and what usually happens is that a rubber restarts with different partnerships. There are two ways this may be done. One is simply to rotate the partnerships, the other is to *cut for partners*. Here, each player takes a card at random from a pack and the players with two highest cards form a partnership against the players with the two lowest cards. The bridge ranking of the suits plays a part here in the cut. If two players cut a card of the same rank then Spades rank higher than Hearts rank higher than Diamonds rank higher than Clubs.

For example, in a cut-for-partners game of rubber bridge, Alan picks the ♦7, Belinda the ♠Q, Colin the ♦Q and Delia the ♣A. The two highest cards are the ♣A and the ♠Q so the partnerships would be Belinda and Delia against Alan and Colin. In this case the ♠Q outranks the ♦Q because Spades outrank Diamonds.

This method is also used when there are more than four players wanting to play, everyone selects a card and the lowest card sits out, the others forming two partnerships. As a point of fact, the player with the highest card (here it is Delia) can select which chair to sit in. Some players are very superstitious about such things...!

Scoring at Rubber Bridge: Quiz.

Try scoring these rubbers yourself. The answers are on the next page.

Number 1.

- Hand 1.** North-South bid 4♠ and make 12 tricks.
- Hand 2.** East-West bid 3NT and make 10 tricks.
- Hand 3.** North-South bid 4♥ and make 8 tricks.
- Hand 4.** East-West bid 3♦ and make 10 tricks.
- Hand 5.** North-South bid 4♣ and make nine tricks.
- Hand 6.** East-West bid 1NT and make 10 tricks.

Number 2.

- Hand 1.** East-West bid 3♣ and make 8 tricks.
- Hand 2.** North-South bid 1NT and make 8 tricks
- Hand 3.** East-West bid 2♦ and make 9 tricks.
- Hand 4.** East-West bid 2♥ and make 7 tricks.
- Hand 5.** North-South bid 2NT and make 8 tricks.
- Hand 6.** North-South bid 4♠ and make 9 tricks.
- Hand 7.** North-South bid 3NT and make 7 tricks.
- Hand 8.** East-West bid 3♥ and make 9 tricks.
- Hand 9.** North-South bid 1NT and make 7 tricks.
- Hand 10.** East-West bid 3♦ and make 8 tricks.
- Hand 11.** North-South bid 3♥ and make ten tricks.

Number 3.* This is a much harder example as it contains bonuses for *honours* and *slams* and a nasty penalty for a Doubled contract.

- Hand 1.** North-South bid 4♠ and make 11 tricks.
- Hand 2.** North-South bid 5♦, get Doubled and make 7 tricks (very expensive!).
- Hand 3.** North-South bid 2♥ and make 9 tricks. North has ♥A Q J 10.
- Hand 4.** North-South bid 2NT and make 7 tricks.
- Hand 5.** East-West bid 6♠ and make 12 tricks. West has ♠A K Q J 10.
- Hand 6.** North-South bid 1NT and make 9 tricks.
- Hand 7.** East-West bid 3NT and make 7 tricks.
- Hand 8.** North-South bid 2♦ and make 7 tricks.
- Hand 9.** North-South bid 2♥ and make 11 tricks.

Number 1.	
NS	EW

Number 2.	
NS	EW

Number 3.	
NS	EW

Answers.

Number 1.		Number 2.		Number 3.	
NS	EW	NS	EW	NS	EW
	500	700		500	
	90	30		90	
	100	50		200	100
	20	50	200	60	150
	200	30	100	100	500
60	30	50	30	30	100
120		40	60	30	1100
	100	70		120	
	60	40	90	60	180
	40	90		40	
Totals:	180	1140	1150	480	1290
Aggregate:	960 to East-West		670 to North-South		2130
				840 to East-West	