

BEGINNERS COURSE: LESSON ONE

Introduction - Objectives

Welcome to Bridge, the most fascinating game ever devised!
To play Bridge you need four people sitting around a table – two partnerships.

- 1) **The pack of cards.** There are 52 cards in a pack, comprising 13 cards in each of four suits - Spades (♠), Hearts (♥), Diamonds (♦) and Clubs (♣). The Ace is the best card, followed by King, Queen, Jack, Ten, Nine ... to the Two.
- 2) **Choosing Partners.** The pack of cards is spread face down on the table and each player chooses a card. The players picking the two highest cards become partners, as do the players picking the two lowest. Highest card deals.
- 3) **Dealing.** The dealer chooses which pack to deal and the other pack is shuffled by his partner and placed on his partner's right (for the next deal). The dealer takes the chosen pack from his left (it has been shuffled by his left-hand opponent), passes it to his right-hand opponent, who cuts it towards him. As with every aspect of bridge, the deal is made clockwise by placing a card face down in front of each player in turn, starting with the player on your left, until all the cards have been used and each player has 13 cards.
- 4) **Inspection.** After the deal, all players pick up their cards (*a hand*) and sort them into suits. Notice how many cards you have in each suit (the distribution or "shape"), then consider the value of the cards. Have you got a *good* hand - aces, kings and queens - or a *bad* hand?
- 5) **Tricks.** A player puts one of his cards face up and the other players in clockwise rotation add one of their cards until there are four cards: a trick. The highest card wins the trick. The first card to each trick (the lead) denotes the suit of that trick and all the other players must play a card of that suit if they have one. If they have NO cards in that suit then they may play any other card from their hand but a card from another suit cannot win a trick unless it is a trump (see later). The player winning the trick leads to the next trick.
- 6) **Trumps**
The auction will usually specify a trump suit for the hand. If you cannot follow to the suit led, you can play a card of the trump suit and win the trick unless a higher trump card is also played. NB: it follows that when there is a trump suit, the partnership which holds most of the trumps are likely to win the most tricks.

7) Valuation

To help us evaluate how good our hand is, we count points:

Ace	= 4 points
King	= 3 points
Queen	= 2 points
Jack	= 1 point

There are 40 points available each deal and each hand should average 10 points, equivalent to one Ace, one King, one Queen, and one Jack.

THE AUCTION

After the hand has been dealt, but before any play takes place we have the *auction* or *bidding*. It is the auction that decides which suit (if any) will be trumps for that deal and how many tricks each partnership must aim to make. All the players at the table have the opportunity to make bids in the auction, starting with the dealer and proceeding clockwise. Each bid must be higher than the previous bid. The suits have a ranking order:

	(Notrumps - NT)	Highest
Major	Spades	
Suits:	Hearts	
Minor	Diamonds	
Suits:	Clubs	Lowest

The lowest bid is at the level of One in Clubs, the lowest ranked suit. Thus *One Diamond* (1♦) is a higher bid than 1♣, and bidding can continue as far as the highest possible bid: 7NT. If the bidding is opened 1♥ and you wish to bid diamonds, you must do so at the two-level. If you wish to bid spades, then you can bid 1♠. A bid suggests that the partnership expects to make six tricks *plus* the number of tricks bid, with the suit named as trumps. For example: 3♥ suggests that we can make 3+6=9 tricks with hearts as trumps.

Dealer may either open the bidding (e.g. 1♠), or he may say "No Bid" or "Pass". If the dealer passes (says "No Bid"), the next player opens the bidding with 12+ points otherwise passes. If all four players in turn say "No Bid", the hand is re-dealt. The opening bid is very important and shows 12+ points. Because bidding a suit suggests a trump suit we always start with our longest suit, in which we must have at least four cards. After the bidding has been opened, you do not need 12 points, but must make a higher bid.

After three consecutive "No Bids" the auction ceases and the last bid becomes the contract, i.e. denotes the trump suit and the number of tricks (+6) that must be made by the partnership. The player who bid the trump suit initially becomes declarer (the player who plays the hand), and his partner becomes dummy. The player on the left of declarer makes the first lead (he chooses); dummy then lays his cards face up on the table (with the trump suit on his right) and takes no further part in this deal. Declarer plays dummy's hand as well as his own. His first play will be from dummy (tricks progress in clockwise rotation). Play proceeds until all 13 cards have been played from each hand and each side has collected the tricks that they have won.