



BRIDGE IN

3

WEEKS

*the beginner's 21-day guide to the world's most popular card game*

ALAN TRUSCOTT | BRIDGE EDITOR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

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**3**  
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# INTRODUCTION

This book is a complete bridge course, taking the beginner to intermediate caliber. The player who knows the rules and has some experience can skip Day 1 but should not skip Day 2, since this introduces the Asset method of valuation, used throughout.

This book was originally published in 1985 as *Basic Bridge in 3 Weeks*. The new edition has been revised to reflect changes in bidding practice since that time, especially in the area of notrump bidding ranges and the use of transfer bids.

The bidding style is the modern one that is standard in clubs and tournaments. The chief differences between this and the traditional style used in social games are set out on [page 205](#). A [glossary](#) of unfamiliar terms is included at the back of the book.

I am most grateful to Dorothy Hayden Truscott for setting aside her own writing in order to help me complete this book.

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3

WEEKS

## YOUR FIRST DEAL

Here you are, sitting at a card table with three other bridge players. The one opposite you is your partner. Somebody deals the cards clockwise, one at a time, so that everyone has thirteen. You take a look at yours, being careful that nobody else can see them.

Sort your cards into suits, and sort each suit: the ace ranks high, then king, queen, jack, ten, and so on down to the two. When you have done this your hand turns out to be this:

♠ A K 8 7 6 3    ♥ 5 4 2    ♦ J 6    ♣ J 5

In each suit the highest card is shown on the left, which is the way most players prefer. In bridge the suits also have a rank, as shown. Starting at the bottom with clubs, they are in alphabetical order. Highest of all is notrump, which will be explained shortly<sup>1</sup>. This order is very important, as we shall see later, so memorize it:

Notrump  
Spades  
Hearts  
Diamonds  
Clubs

The first phase of each deal is the **bidding**, or auction. This determines the vital guidelines for the **play**, which is the second phase.

In this chapter we are concerned with *what* happens, rather than with *why*. Your partner dealt the cards, so he is entitled to start the action. He could say 'Pass' to indicate he does not wish to be involved for the time being. Instead he announces, 'One notrump'.

---

1. Strictly speaking, of course, 'notrump' is not a suit, but we can avoid a great deal of linguistic complication by referring to it as one.



This is a **bid** that starts the **auction**. It will be exactly like a commercial auction: every bid must be higher than the one before, and the highest bid wins. Since partner is the first player not to say ‘Pass’ at his turn to bid, he is said to have **opened the bidding**.

A bid in ‘Notrump’ suggests that the eventual play be carried out without **any trump suit**. The significance of having a trump suit will become clear shortly.

Every bid consists of a number followed by a suit, or perhaps, as in this case, by **notrump**.

The number you bid is the number of tricks *over six* that you are offering to take in the play. (A **trick** consists of four cards, one from each player.) Each of your thirteen cards will eventually be played, one at a time, so there will be thirteen tricks. The highest possible bid is therefore seven, an offer to take all the tricks (six plus seven equals thirteen).

Your partner's bid of one **notrump** therefore suggests that the partnership hands in combination take seven tricks without a trump suit. But that will be the final bid only if the next three players all say ‘Pass’, and that is not very likely.

The auction goes clockwise around the table, so before you can bid it is the turn of the player on your right. If he wants to bid he must go higher than one **notrump**, but he chooses to say ‘Pass’.

Bidding more than the minimum number is often desirable and you should do it now. You could bid ‘Two spades’, but firmly and clearly you announce, ‘Four spades’.

This is an offer for the partnership to take ten tricks (six plus four) with spades as the trump suit.

The reason for this apparently extravagant ‘**jump**’ bid is connected with the scoring. (For details, see the **next chapter** and **page 218**.)

For now, it is enough to note that the following **contracts** are very desirable:

Three **notrump** (nine tricks)

Four **hearts** (ten tricks)

Four **spades** (ten tricks)

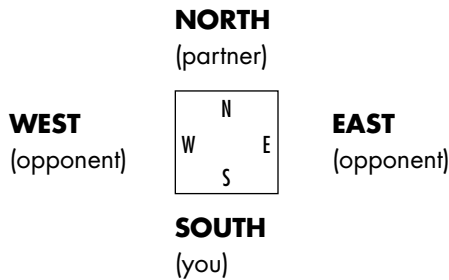
We therefore jump to the desirable four-spade contract, expecting to make ten tricks.

It happens that our left-hand opponent thinks we have made a mistake. He says, ‘Double’.

This approximately doubles the number of **points** at stake. Our partner and the other opponent both say 'Pass'.

If we felt very greedy we could say 'Redouble', again doubling the stakes. But we say 'Pass' and the bidding ends. Except at the start of the auction, three passes end the bidding because everyone has declined to bid higher.

It is usual in bridge literature to name the four players by the compass points. If we call you South, your partner North, your left-hand opponent West, and your right-hand opponent East, the table will look like this:



Now we can tabulate the bidding:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	One notrump	Pass	Four spades
Double	Pass	Pass	Pass

However, this can be abbreviated (and in future will be) like this:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1NT	pass	4♠
dbl	all pass		

Notice that in these bidding diagrams, West's bids will always be in the far left column, no matter who deals or which player makes the first bid.

We have now struggled through the bidding of our first bridge deal. The first phase is over, and we must now play the hand. Remember that the contract is four spades doubled. Playing the North and South hands in combination, we must make at least ten

tricks out of the possible thirteen. Our opponents can frustrate us if they can make four or more.

We bid spades for the partnership, so we have to do all the work as **declarer**. Partner is the **dummy** and has nothing to do but sit back and admire our skillful play.

When you are the declarer the **opening lead** (the very first card played to the deal) always comes from your left-hand opponent. In this case, he produces the king of hearts and your partner puts down his hand on the other side of the table like this:

```

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣
9 A A A
2 8 K 7
6 Q 4
3 2

```

He will always put the **trumps** on his right, your left.

In future, however, we will show the suits horizontally, making them rather easier to read. The whole picture you see is therefore this:

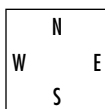
**NORTH** (dummy)

```

♠ 9 2
♥ A 8 6
♦ A K Q 3
♣ A 7 4 2

```

West leads the heart king



**SOUTH** (you)

```

♠ A K 8 7 6 3
♥ 5 4 2
♦ J 6
♣ J 5

```

Remember that our contract is four spades **doubled**: we are trying to take ten tricks out of a possible thirteen. A trick is a group of four cards, one from each of the four hands. These cards are played in clockwise sequence.

## LEARN THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR CARD GAME - THE EASY WAY

A comprehensive, 3-week, day-by-day bridge course for the absolute beginner. Assuming no prior knowledge, this book takes the reader through every part of the game in an easy series of short steps so that by the end, they can feel comfortable joining a social game or even venturing out to a local bridge club. Truscott's unique 'asset' method of hand evaluation is simple, and as numerous bridge teachers have found, it works!

Written by an expert, but simple enough for anybody to follow, this is *the* guide you need if you want to learn to play bridge.

### Reader reviews of the first edition:

*'The most comprehensive and readable book on the subject I have seen.'*

*'This is an excellent book. The format is ideal for a busy person like me: the chapters are short, to the point and can be read and absorbed in a period of 1/2-1 hour per session.'*

*'Makes learning the basics of Bridge dynamic and exciting, unlike other books, where the reader spends the first half of the book counting points and memorizing bids.'*



**ALAN TRUSCOTT** has been the Bridge Editor for *The New York Times* since 1964. He is a world-renowned journalist, theorist, and international player, who has written more than a dozen previous books. His wife, Dorothy Hayden Truscott, is one of the most distinguished women players in the history of the game.

