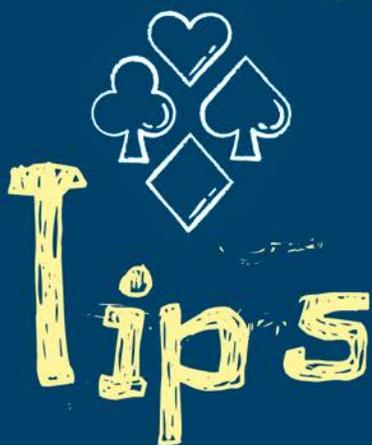


Barbara's



Bridge

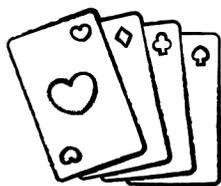


Tips



Barbara Seagram

# Barbara's Bridge Tips



Barbara Seagram

## DEDICATION

To my husband Alex, who brings endless joy into my life each and every day.

And to Ray Lee, co-founder and publisher of Master Point Press, who has been the inspiration for all of my books.

## Copyright

Text © 2020 Barbara Seagram  
Cover image © bsd/Shutterstock

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press  
214 Merton St. Suite 205  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
M4S 1A6 (647) 956-4933  
[info@masterpointpress.com](mailto:info@masterpointpress.com)

[www.masterpointpress.com](http://www.masterpointpress.com)  
[www.teachbridge.com](http://www.teachbridge.com)  
[www.bridgeblogging.com](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)  
[www.ebooksbridge.com](http://www.ebooksbridge.com)

### **Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Title: Barbara's bridge tips / Barbara Seagram.

Names: Seagram, Barbara, author.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20200367722 | Canadiana (ebook) 20200367757 | ISBN 9781771400619 (softcover) | ISBN 9781771405706 (PDF) | ISBN 9781771407168 (HTML) | ISBN 9781771407663 (Kindle)

Subjects: LCSH: Contract bridge.

Classification: LCC GV1282.3 .S43 2020 | DDC 795.41/5—dc23

Editor: Ray Lee

Copy editor/interior: Sally Sparrow

Cover design: Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

# CONTENTS

Before You Begin...	5
Part One: Bidding	9
1. Hand Evaluation and Revaluing	10
2. Responding to an Opening Bid — The Right Way	14
3. Rebids by Opener	17
4. The Opening Bidder's Options with a Minimum Hand	21
5. Raising Responder's Major with Three Trumps	23
6. The 'Short' Club and the 'Short' Diamond	25
7. Location, Location, Location — the Splinter Bid	28
8. Drop-dead Bids (or Shutout Bids)	31
9. To Overcall or Double?	34
10. Responding to Partner's Overcall	36
11. The Law of Total Tricks	39
12. The Balancing Act	41
13. Negative Doubles	43
14. Penalty Doubles	53
15. Redoubles	55
16. Lead-directing Doubles	59
17. Preempts — How to Upset Your Opponents	62
18. Weak Two-bids	66
19. The 4-4 Fit or the 5-3 Fit... Does It Matter?	70
20. Look Before You Leap	72
21. Quiz Time!	75

<b>Part Two: Declarer Play</b>	<b>85</b>
1. Kicking the Habit — the First Step to Improving	87
2. Planning the Play of the Hand	89
3. Long-suit Establishment	92
4. To Pull or Not to Pull?	94
5. The Crossruff	97
6. Planning at Trick 1	99
7. The Hold-up Play	101
8. Safe Hand, Danger Hand	104
9. The Bridge Detective — Who's Got the Queen?	106
10. Don't Get Divorced from Dummy!	110
11. Locating Your Opponents' Honor Cards	113
12. Detective School Lesson Two	117
13. Eight Ever, Nine Never	123
14. Is 50% good enough? (Advanced)	127
15. Declarer Play Quiz	130
<b>Part Three: Defense</b>	<b>135</b>
1. Being At the Table	137
2. Your Lead. Now What?	139
3. Leading Trumps	142
4. The Rule of Eleven	144
5. Using Those Spot Cards	149
6. Show Some Attitude!	152
7. The Count Signal	153
8. Suit Preference	156
9. Counting Tricks	158
10. Defending Against Notrump	160
11. Trump Promotion	164
12. Squander the Queen	167
13. Shortening Declarer's Trumps	171
14. To Cover or Not to Cover?	175
15. Creative Defense	177
16. Defense Quiz	179

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

## COMMON ERRORS TO AVOID

Most of this book is technical — it's about how to bid, how to play and how to defend. But before we go there, let's talk about some general things that we all do at the bridge table — but shouldn't.

What distinguishes experts from good players and good players from average players? The frequency of their mistakes. Bridge is a game of mistakes. The players who make the fewest mistakes win. But take heart... when you make a mistake and it is pointed out to you, you often remember not to repeat that same error.

Here's a quote from Alan Sontag, a multiple World Champion: *It is not the handling of difficult hands that makes the winning player. There aren't enough of them. It is the ability to avoid messing up the easy ones.*

Here are some of the more common errors we all make — and how you can avoid them.

### Playing Too Fast

Slow down. Yes, duplicate bridge is a 'timed event', but take the time to make a plan at the start of the hand and stop playing instinctively and by rote. Stop and think. As declarer, count your winners in notrump contracts or your losers in suit contracts. As a defender, calculate how many high-card points declarer and dummy have in the combined hands (the bidding will give you a good idea of that), then count your points and subtract that total from 40. There are 40 HCP in the deck, so your partner has the leftover points. If you know that partner can only have 5 points and she has already led a king, you know she has the king and the queen in that suit (by inference) and can have nothing more. *All* of this is done at Trick 1, before you play a card.

## Cashing Tricks Too Early On in the Game

Aces were put on this earth to capture kings and queens. Kings have a job to do too — they capture queens and jacks.

If dummy is on your left and has KJ72 and you have A63, think ahead. Be prepared, so that when declarer leads a small card from her hand toward that suit in the dummy you will play low smoothly and not hesitate. You are going to hope that declarer will play the jack — it's possible partner will be able to win the trick with the queen. That's where the expression 'second hand low' comes from.

Another situation. Let's say hearts are trumps, and you have the ♠A54 and the ♦KQJ. If your opening lead is the ♦K, you have established tricks for your side. When you win a trick with the ♠A, you may now be able to cash one or even two diamond winners. But if instead you choose the ♠A as your opening lead, your diamonds have not been established. Besides which, you may now have set up declarer's king (and maybe queen) of spades.

On opening lead, do not lead an ace unless you also have the king (or partner has bid the suit). So, from A54, which card do you lead? The correct answer usually is, 'Another suit.'

## To Draw Trumps or Not?

Sometimes you may be reluctant to draw trumps because your trumps are poor quality, e.g. 5432 opposite 9876. That should not make you nervous. If you have lots of good tricks (high cards) and lousy trumps, you simply have to draw those trumps, otherwise the opponents will ruff your good tricks in the side suits.

Sometimes you may err by playing too many rounds of trumps or drawing trumps when you cannot afford to do so. If, for example, you have to ruff some losers in dummy, then you must leave some trumps in dummy with which to do it.

Sometimes you need to keep some trumps in dummy as entries to winners in a side suit.

Sometimes you have quick losers and no ace of trumps. Don't draw trumps just yet; try to discard one of your quick losers on an extra winner before letting the opponents have the lead.

## Bidding Errors

Bidding is a language. Make sure you know what bids mean. For example, think about the simple sequence 1♠ – 2♠. Bidding 2♠ in response to part-

ner's 1♠ opening says you have 6-9 points. If you make the same bid with 12 points, partner will have no idea what you have. Memorize standard bids. Pay attention to the opponents' bidding so you can use the clues to help you figure out who has what.

Too many people agree to play a convention but, when the situation arises, discover that they only know page one of the convention. They do not know the follow-up responses. The sequence 1♠ – 2NT is a good example. Most people play this as being a convention called Jacoby 2NT, a forcing raise in the major. There are four or five choices of subsequent bids by opener, and they all have specific meanings. It is no good just knowing the first part.

## Have You Already Told Your Story?

You have this hand as dealer:

♠ 4 ♥ K Q J 9 8 6 3 ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ K 6

You open with 3♥ and the next two players pass. Now your RHO overcalls 3♠. What will you do?

You *must* pass. Too many players feel they should bid again, as they don't want to 'sell out' to a spade contract. But you have already told partner that you have a weak hand and a good-quality seven-card suit. You cannot tell the same story twice (unless you happen to look down and find an ace on the floor). You may *not* now bid 4♥. If partner wishes to bid, she can, but you may not.

Another example. You are dealer again with:

♠ A 5 ♥ K J 4 ♦ A Q 6 3 ♣ Q 6 3 2

You open 1NT, and after two passes, RHO bids 2♥. Now what?

Once again, you have told your story. You may not bid again. Leave it up to your partner. You *still* have a balanced hand with 15-17 HCP, no more, no less. Partner has already heard that. Partner can bid now if she wishes.

## Silly Errors

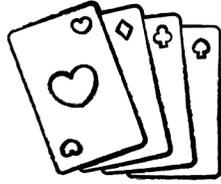
Don't be in such a rush. When we rush, we forget to notice whose bid it is and bid out of turn. We don't pay attention to the auction so far and make insufficient bids. Take your time and look to see what RHO has already bid. It is easy to miss doubles by partner or the opponents. These can be *such* ex-

pensive mistakes. Also, make sure it is your lead before facing a card. *Do not lead out of turn* — another expensive error. Always make your opening lead face down, just in case. And last but *not* least, do not revoke. Those things keep you awake at night.

Do not arrive at the last minute before the start of a game. Come early to discuss your agreements with partner so that you are both on the same page. Also, give yourself time to settle down and focus and not be distracted.

As soon as a deal is over, you must erase it from your memory, especially if you did make a mistake. It is impossible to change the result, so get over it. If you dwell on a bad result, the next deal will also be a disaster, and now you have two bad boards to fret about.

# Part One



# Bidding

# 1. HAND EVALUATION AND REVALUING

Many students have great difficulty with the concept of hand evaluation. I believe that it is right to count distribution even as an opening bidder. Most people now count long suits (1 point for fifth card in long suit, 1 extra point for sixth, etc). That is counting distribution. Let's call your points including distribution **total points**.

You need 13 total points to open the bidding in first or second seat. Some books say 12 only but then they are not including distribution. You need to know the **Rule of 20** for when you are in first or second seat and only have 11 or 12 points. If you find yourself close to an opening bid but feel you don't have enough points to open, use the Rule of 20. Count your HCP and then add the length of the two longest suits. If this totals 20, then you have permission to open the bidding.

e.g. If you have:

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

Your 12 HCP plus two four-card suits = 20. You have permission to open the bidding.

*Note:* You should not use the Rule of 20 to give you permission to open the bidding in first or second seat when you have a hand such as this:

♠ Q J   ♥ Q J 6   ♦ Q J 7 4   ♣ Q J 4 2

This assortment of junk will tally 20 with the Rule of 20 but doubleton queens or jacks are a sorry sight and do not deserve much respect. We call queens and jacks, 'quacks'! This hand is not an opening bid.

Here's what you *really* have to remember: the value of your hand is in a constant state of flux. Once partner starts bidding, your hand is like a flower — it either blossoms and grows or it wilts and dies. If you have a short suit in your hand and partner bids that suit, you are depressed. Your hand has wilted. It is *never* good to have a shortage in partner's suit. We are constantly searching for *fits*, not *misfits*. If partner bids spades and you have a shortage of spades in your hand (2 or fewer), adjust your point count as follows:

- if you have a void in partner's suit, deduct up to 3 length points from your hand.
- if you have a singleton in partner's suit, deduct up to 2 length points from the value of your hand.

- if you have a doubleton in partner's suit, deduct up to 1 length point from your hand.

If you had not added any length points because you had no long suit, you will not subtract at all. But you need to realize that your hand has gone downhill. It is devalued.

## Declarer Points

♠ 3 ♥ A J 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ A K 4 ♣ 7 6

Counting total points on this hand, it comes to 15. But if we open with 1♥ and partner bids 1♠, this hand has now dropped in value and we only have 13 (subtracting 2 length points for the singleton spade). We should choose 2♥ as our rebid as this is now a minimum hand.

But, if instead (see hand above again) partner has bid 2♥ after our 1♥ opener, then our hand now grows up. We must add 1 extra point for the fifth card in the suit that has been supported and 2 extra points for each remaining card. (Yes, in addition to the length points you already counted. You may call it double-dipping!) Your hand has *increased* in value, now that you know you are going to be declarer. If you do not do this, then you remain with the same old 15 points and will have to pass partner's 2♥ bid that showed 6-9 points. How can this be right?

This idea was the invention of Charles Goren, many years ago, and will never fail you in getting you to games and slams. I truly believe it is the best hand revaluing method. In the above example, we now have 20 points (after adding the extra 5 points). Partner has raised us to 2♥ (showing 6-9 points), and we should now bid 4♥.

If the opponents have bid a suit in which you have a singleton king or queen, or even a doubleton queen or jack, count nothing for these cards: they are most unlikely to win any tricks.

## Dummy Points

When you are going to become dummy (because you have three-card or better support for partner's major suit or five or more of partner's minor suit), then long-suit points go away and short-suit points come in.

When you are going to become dummy, if you have *three*-card support for partner, then use the 3-2-1 dummy points method. Short-suit points will be counted as 3-2-1 (3 for a void, 2 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton).

When you are going to become dummy, if you have *four*-card support (or more) for partner, then use the 5-3-1 dummy points method. Short-suit points will be counted as 5-3-1 (5 for a void, 3 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton).

Always remember to revalue your hand — up or down — as the bidding proceeds.

## A misfit? Quit!

The ideas in this section are so important that they are worth emphasizing again. Less experienced players sometimes pick up their hand, count their points, find they have 13 points and no matter what happens during the entire auction, they continue to believe they have 13 points. That's very rarely true. A bridge hand is like a living, breathing thing, and its value changes during the auction. We must learn how to evaluate our hand at all times and bid accordingly. Take the following scenario:

<p>♠ Q 4 2 ♥ K 8 4 ♦ A J 4 ♣ K 10 9 4</p>	<p>♠ K J 10 9 7 5 3 ♥ 7 ♦ K 6 3 2 ♣ 3</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 10px auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W     E</div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div> <p>♠ 6 ♥ A Q 10 9 6 ♦ Q 7 ♣ A J 7 6 5</p>	<p>♠ A 8 ♥ J 5 3 2 ♦ 10 9 8 5 ♣ Q 8 2</p>
---	--	---

West	North	East	South
pass	1 ♠	pass	1 ♥
pass	2 ♠	pass	2 ♣
pass	3 ♠	pass	3 ♣
pass	4 ♠	dbl	4 ♣
			all pass

This wasn't an auction, it was a fight! Indeed, without the use of bidding boxes, the auction would get louder and louder as each player insisted on the right to play in their choice of trump suit! (Tip to the opponents: always penalty double such an auction!) On any reasonable line of defense, declarer will go down two in 4♠.

What went wrong? Whose fault was this? Who should have quit first? The first person to recognize that there is a misfit should quit once they have adequately described their hand. In this case, South correctly bid hearts first and then bid her clubs next. She could have passed 2♠, but rebidding clubs isn't terrible. However, after that, enough's enough. Let partner play this hand in 2♠ or 3♠.

Now let's look at a much rosier situation, where the players still went wrong.

### A fit? It's a hit!

	♠ K 9 8 7 ♥ K 7 ♦ 8 5 4 3 ♣ 7 6 5		
♠ 2 ♥ A 10 8 4 ♦ Q 10 9 2 ♣ Q 4 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W     E</div> <div style="margin-top: 5px;">S</div> </div>		♠ Q 10 ♥ 9 6 3 2 ♦ A K J ♣ J 10 9 8
	♠ A J 6 5 4 3 ♥ Q J 5 ♦ 7 6 ♣ A K		

West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	2♠	pass	3♠
all pass			

This hand always makes 4♠. What happened? Back to hand evaluation. Adding two points for the fifth and sixth card in the spade suit, South has 17 points. *But* the minute partner supports your long suit, you should be glowing. Gone are the feelings of despair that you experienced on the last 'misfit' hand! Your hand has increased in value.

Whenever partner supports your long suit, remember to add 1 extra point for the fifth card in the suit that has been supported and 2 extra points for each remaining card in that long suit. Yes, this is *in addition* to all the points you started with. Now this hand is worth 20 points. Partner promised you at least 6 points. Add this together and away you go! Knowing her side has 26 points, South should have bid 4♠, instead of inviting partner with 3♠.

Also Available by Barbara Seagram



## Planning the Play of a Bridge Hand

978-1-897106-51-8

Barbara Seagram and David Bird

## Planning the Play: The Next Level

978-1-77140-039-8

Barbara Seagram and David Bird

## Planning the Defense

978-1-77140-053-4

Barbara Seagram and David Bird

## Planning the Defense: The Next Level

978-1-77140-054-1

Barbara Seagram and David Bird

Whether you have been playing for a while or you're not very experienced, this book will help you to move your game up to the next level. The tips cover all aspects of bridge — bidding, play and defense. Advice and examples are drawn from material Barbara Seagram has developed for her students over the last twenty years — it's like having your own personal bridge coach sitting beside you!



**BARBARA SEAGRAM** (Toronto, Canada) travels the world teaching bridge. She is the author or co-author of dozens of well-known books, the most popular being *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* (with Marc Smith).

