

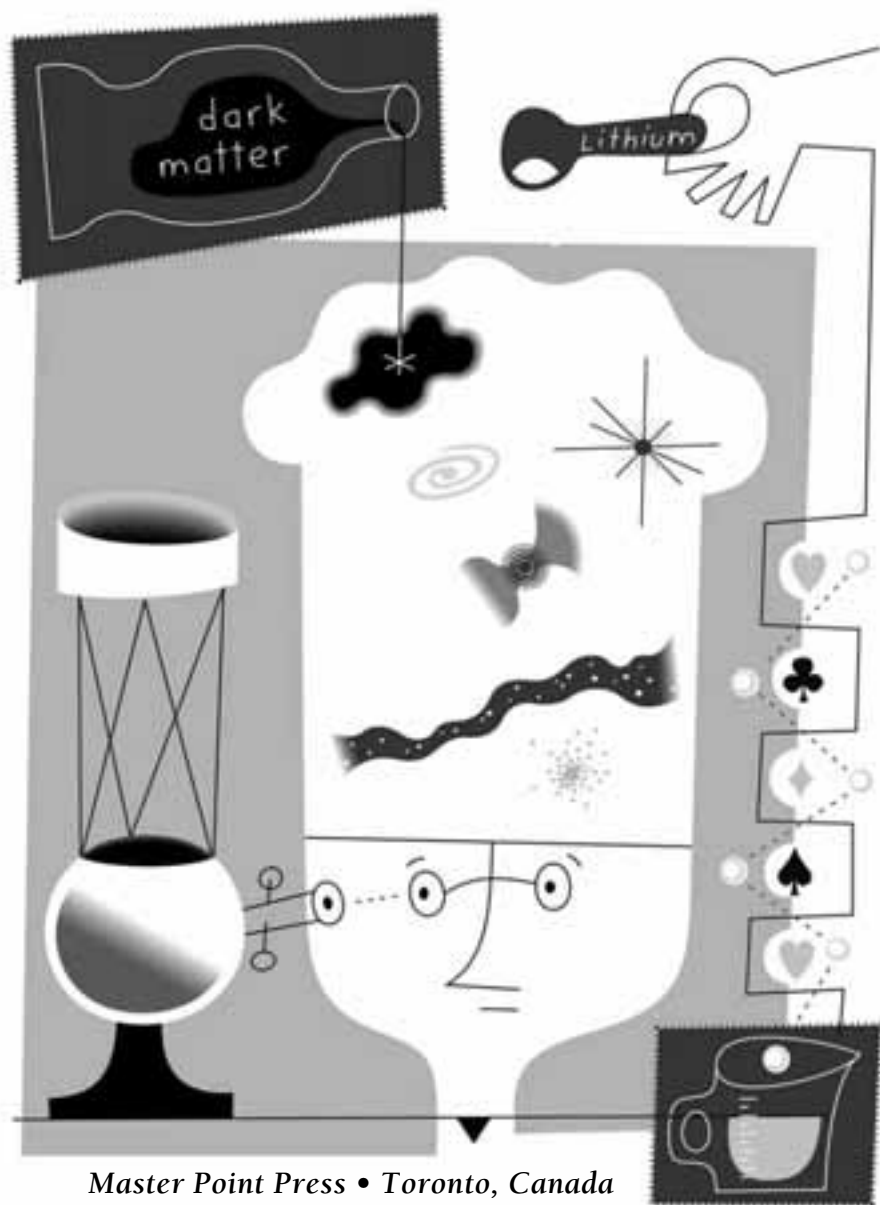
# BRIDGE

with BELLS  
& WHISTLES



# BRIDGE with BELLS & WHISTLES

MARY ANN DUFRESNE and MARION ELLINGSEN



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To my dear husband, Artie, who is so supportive and so patient about my bridge writing and all my endeavors.

*Marion*

To Mom, I still miss the love and encouragement every day.

*Mary Ann*

To bridge players and teachers everywhere. Thanks for enriching our lives.

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*Marion and Mary Ann*



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# Introduction

If you picked up this book, we assume you're ready to play better bridge. You have a year or two of experience and you want to learn some of those gadgets that expert players use against you.

You've come to the right place! We're going to look at the bidding areas you encounter almost every time you play. We'll explore the nooks and crannies, suggest new ways to think about auctions and let you in on the expert secrets. The bells and whistles we've promised will make you a much more successful bidder.

We have some bad news, though. Those expert players have more than a few simple gadgets. Their success comes not just from a set of memorized rules but from a genuine understanding of the game. They know what works — and what doesn't work — at real bridge tables. More importantly, they understand why.

You'll find that gadgets are pretty easy to learn but understanding is hard to come by. Patience, practice and some serious hard work are part of the success recipe. As your teachers we'll help by challenging you to think — and think — and think some more — about how the game really works. Our favorite Yogi Berra-ism is: ***you can observe a lot by just watching***. As we track through our bidding areas, we'll insist you watch carefully. Let's see what you can observe.

What are we expecting from you? We assume you have a basic bidding toolkit. You know how and what to open and how high to bid based on various levels of strength. You've learned Stayman, transfers, strong 2♣ and 2NT openings and high-level preemptive openings. Maybe you've stepped up to the Two-Over-One system. If so, that's great! We recommend it for everyone. But if you haven't, that's fine, too. The ideas we'll introduce work well with any bidding system.

How should you use this book? We recommend you start with the first three chapters — just because they're so fundamental to good bridge. After that, it's up to you. In the Contents we categorized chapters as fairly easy \*, more difficult \*\*, and downright hard \*\*\*. You may want to start with the easy chapters. Or if you're having a particular problem at the table, you may want to start with chapters that will help you right away. Your choice.

To get started, we're going to focus on *the* most basic aspect of good bidding — evaluating the strength of your hand. If you're ready to get started, turn the page. And don't forget to watch carefully!



## Chapter 1 ✨

# POINTS DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY

When you pick up a hand, your first question is whether you are strong enough to open the bidding at the one-level. The only information you have is the thirteen cards you hold. You probably count your starting points — high-card points + length points — and open all hands with 13 or more.

Unfortunately, counting points is a crude way to measure something quite complex — the trick-taking potential of your hand. Any experienced player will tell you that many hands that are equal in starting points aren't equal in value. Some of those 13-point hands are overvalued; some 12-point hands are undervalued. The key to good bidding is good hand evaluation. In this chapter you will learn how to assess the real value of your hand.

### ASSETS AND DEFECTS

There are hand features that enhance or detract from the trick-taking potential of your hand — your assets and your defects.

- With *assets*, your hand is worth more than your points suggest.
- With *defects*, your hand is worth less than your points suggest.

### IS YOUR SHAPE POWERFUL?

Bridge theorist/writer Marty Bergen has taught a generation of bridge players to appreciate the power of shapely hands. He tells us: hands with long suits and short suits play better than flat hands. After you've counted your high-card points and your length points, ask: is this a shapely hand?

### *We Hate Flat Hands*

The worst possible distribution you can have is 4333 — that is, four cards in one suit and three in each of the others. Here are two examples:

♠ Q 8 7   ♥ K Q 6   ♦ A K 5 4   ♣ 10 7 5  
♠ Q J 10 6   ♥ A Q 7   ♦ K 8 6   ♣ 10 7 5

There is nothing good to say about this shape. You have no long suits to establish and no short suits to ruff if you and partner find a fit. Whether playing in a suit contract or in notrump, this distribution is a clear defect. Your points are worth less than you think.

## We Love Strongly Two-Suited Hands

Strongly two-suited hands have at least ten cards combined in two long suits. That shape is a definite *asset*. It's easy to see why when we compare two hands that each have the same number of starting points: 14. The difference is the shape.

♠ A Q 10 7 5   ♥ 8 2   ♦ A Q 10 5 4   ♣ 6  
 ♠ A Q 7   ♥ 8 2   ♦ J 8 7   ♣ A Q 9 6 5

We like the first hand better. Can you see why? With the first hand you have several advantages:

- Two excellent chances to find a fit with partner.
- A side suit to establish as a source of tricks.
- A singleton to control losers in at least one of the outside suits.

### Did You Know...

There's an age-old expression in bridge: 'With 5-5, come alive!'

Let's look at two more.

♠ A Q 10 7 5 3   ♥ 8 2   ♦ A Q 10 4   ♣ 6  
 ♠ A Q 10 7 5 3   ♥ 8 2   ♦ A Q 10   ♣ 6 3

Both hands have 14 starting points and a good six-card major. But we like the first one much better. Your diamonds are more likely to be a secondary source of tricks and your singleton limits losers on the outside.

The greater the length of your two long suits, the greater the playing strength of your hand. Check out these wonderful shapely hands, each with two aces and two queens.

♠ 8   ♥ A Q 10 7 6 3   ♦ A Q 10 7 6   ♣ 6  
 ♠ 8 2   ♥ A Q 10 7 6 3   ♦ A Q 10 7 6   ♣ —  
 ♠ 8   ♥ A Q 10 7 6 3   ♦ A Q 10 7 6 2   ♣ —  
 ♠ 8   ♥ A Q 10 7 6   ♦ A Q 10 7 6 5 2   ♣ —  
 ♠ —   ♥ A Q 10 7 6 3 2   ♦ A Q 10 7 6 4   ♣ —

It's almost impossible to overestimate the power of these shapes. Each hand has only 12 high-card points but notice how little you need from partner to make game. A red king might well be enough, or even less if partner has a few small trumps for you. The trick-taking potential of your modest 12 high-card points is spectacular!

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# ARE YOU READY TO GO BEYOND BASIC BIDDING?

Have you mastered basic bidding, and begun to discover that there are situations your system doesn't handle very well, if at all? Is your slam bidding less than perfect? Are you sometimes unsure whether a bid is forcing or not? Do you want to understand how the value of your hand changes with every bid made by your partner or the opponents?

If you answered 'Yes' to these questions, this book is for you. In an easy, conversational style, it reviews all the bidding ideas you have learned so far, and then takes you to the next level. The topics discussed include:

- \* Hand evaluation: points don't tell the whole story
- \* Re-evaluation during the auction
- \* Better bidding after a 1NT opening
- \* What's forcing and what isn't
- \* Major-suit raises: Bergen, Jacoby and beyond
- \* Tools for competitive auctions: overcalls, doubles and balancing
- \* Control bidding, Roman Keycard Blackwood and other ways to get to slam

Each chapter ends with a helpful summary and quiz to reinforce the ideas. This book will change the way you think about bidding and suggest some nice 'bells and whistles' to add to your system.

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