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**WE LOVE THE
MAJORS!**

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Introduction

Welcome to the world of bridge! Thanks for inviting us to be your guide. We hope you'll come to love the game as much as we do and that we'll see you some day soon at the local bridge club.

The guidelines in this book are based on Standard American bridge. Though there are other bridge systems in common use, Standard American is the most popular and the easiest for beginners to master. Since Standard American is an ever-evolving system, we've taken some liberties with Standard here and there to reflect what's really happening at today's bridge tables.

This is not a book to pick up and read at one or two sittings. It's a workbook. Each chapter builds on the ones that came before. Try to "process" each chapter before moving on to the next.

Each chapter contains:

- A narrative—the "lesson."
- A Summary—highlighting the key ideas.
- Homework and Homework Solutions—to test what you've learned. Don't move to the next lesson until you can do the homework with little difficulty.

If you're ready to get started, turn the page and we're off.

Chapter One

Getting Started

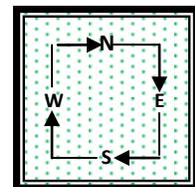
To get started in bridge you need to learn a little bit about a whole lot of things. In this chapter you will learn:

- How the game flows.
- The vocabulary we use to talk about the game.
- Some things bridge players LOVE and HATE.
- A little bit about the most important things--evaluating, bidding and playing your hand.
- Some important information about the score.

Some Mechanics

The game is played at tables of four people. The players who face each other at the table are **partners** in the game. We call them the North-South pair and the East-West pair. These labels have no significance whatsoever for playing, but they are a convenient way to talk about the game. Win or lose, you and your partner will get exactly the same score. So you and he will work together to outplay the other pair.

Players cut to decide who deals first. High card wins the deal. The dealer gives the first card to the player on his left and--proceeding clockwise--passes out all the cards. With 52 cards--no jokers--each player has a **hand** of thirteen cards. For later hands, the deal rotates clockwise.



What's the Object of the Game?

To win tricks. The more tricks you win, the better your score will be. But what is a trick? A trick consists of four cards played in clockwise order--one by each player. For each trick,

Getting Started

someone will **lead** a card--say, a diamond. A **lead** is simply the first card played to a trick. Each player will follow suit--that is, he will also play a diamond if he has any. If he has no diamonds, he may play whatever he chooses. Since each player holds thirteen cards, thirteen tricks will be played on each deal.

There are three ways to win a trick. To illustrate, let's look at a theoretical trick. One of the players leads the **♦A**. Who will win the trick? That depends.

- Ordinarily, the highest card of the suit led wins. The player who led the **♦A** expects to win the trick.
- For most bridge hands, some particular suit is designated as **trump**--a term derived from "triumph." Trump cards are more powerful than other cards. If any player has no cards in the suit led, he can win the trick by playing a trump suit card. Let's say that spades is the trump suit. A player who has no diamonds will win our theoretical trick if he plays a spade--say, the deuce. We call that **ruffing** or **trumping**.
- If another player also has no diamonds, he may win the trick by playing a higher spade--say, the five. We call that **overruffing** or **overtrumping**.



So we LOVE bridge hands with:

- Lots of honor cards--aces, kings, queens, and jacks.
- Lots of trump cards.
- Short suits. We can use our trump cards to ruff tricks in those suits.

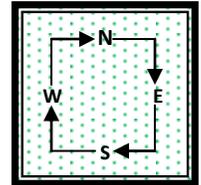
The Idea of an Auction

We start each bridge hand with an **auction**. As in any auction, the highest bidder wins. The dealer always has the first opportunity to make a **bid**. Let say the dealer opens the auction by bidding--saying--"one diamond." He is now the **opener**. His is the **opening bid**. What does his **bid** of **1♦** mean?

Getting Started

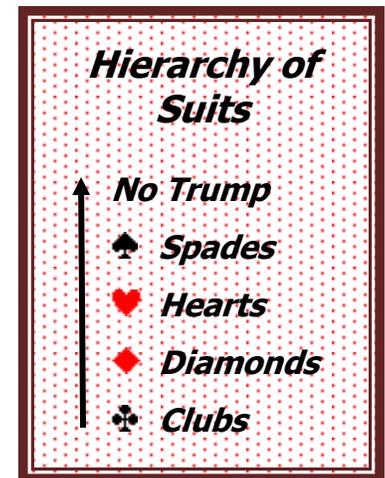
- He is saying: I think partner and I can win at least seven tricks if diamonds is the trump suit--a **book** of six tricks, plus the one that he is bidding.
- His bid is also a message to partner about the **strength** and **shape** of his hand. You will soon learn more about what this particular bid says about strength and shape.

The auction continues clockwise. Other players may make higher bids. If any player decides not to compete, he simply says “pass” but retains the right to enter the auction later.



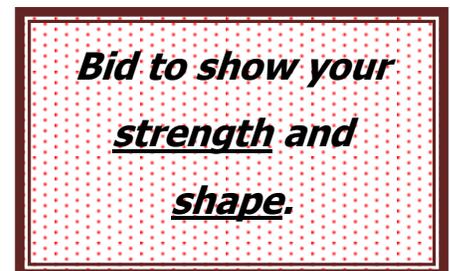
What is a higher bid? The four suits are not created equal. From lowest to highest, the hierarchy for bidding is: clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades. If the dealer opens 1♦, another player might bid 1♥. That is a higher bid because hearts outrank diamonds. He is saying: I think my partner and I can win seven tricks if hearts is the trump suit--a **book** of six, plus one.

But suppose another player wants to bid clubs. He would have to bid 2♣ because his suit is lower in rank than diamonds. If he bids 2♣ he is saying: I think my partner and I can win eight tricks if clubs are trump--a **book** of six, plus the two he is bidding.



You may also bid in no trump. When you play in no trump, there is no ruffing because there is no trump suit. No trump outranks all four suits. If the opener bids 1♦ and another player bids one no trump, that is a higher bid. It says: I think we can win seven tricks if nothing is designated as trump. You like to have good cards in all the suits to play in no trump.

Often, you will open the auction—say, with 1♥--and partner will make a higher bid--say, 1♠. Is he competing with you? Of course not; he is your partner. Rather, he is telling you something about the **strength** and **shape** of his own hand. You and he are having a conversation to decide two things:



- How high should the partnership bid? That depends on combined partnership **strength**.
- Where should you play? In some particular suit or in no trump? That depends on the **shapes** of the partners' hands.

Getting Started

The auction continues until no one is willing to bid higher and there are three passes in a row. The highest bid is now the **contract**. If players fulfill their contract--by winning the number of tricks promised--they will score points. If they don't, the other pair will score points. So bidding is a balancing act. You want to bid high enough to find the best contract, win the auction and get the best possible score. At the same time, you don't want to bid more than you can make.

Can You Afford to Bid? Counting Points

If you want to bid, you need a budget. In bridge, your "budget" is the points you assign to your hand for features that win tricks.

High card points: Since most tricks are won with high cards, we LOVE honor cards. Assign points to your honor cards as shown. Tens are also honor cards but aren't quite valuable enough to warrant assigning points.

High-Card Points	
Ace	= 4 points
King	= 3 points
Queen	= 2 points
Jack	= 1 point

If You Hold:	Your High-Card Points Are:
♠ K8 ♥ J843 ♦ A765 ♣ Q62	10
♠ K8 ♥ J843 ♦ AK65 ♣ Q62	13
♠ AJ43 ♥ KQ7 ♦ T98 ♣ AQ6	16
♠ QJ8 ♥ AK73 ♦ AQT6 ♣ K9	19

Given this point scheme you can calculate that there are 40 high-card points in a deck of cards--four for each ace, three for each king, and so on. The first hand is average with exactly ten points. The second hand--with 13 points--is "a king better" and just enough to open the auction. We call 13 points a **Minimum** opening hand. The third hand--with 16 points--is "a king better" than that. We call it an **Invitational** opening hand. The last hand is "a king better" than that--WONDERFUL with almost half the points in the deck. We call that a **Strong** opening hand.

Short-suit points: Two pages ago you learned that you like hands with long trumps and short suits. Before the auction starts, however, you don't know what will be trump. Who knows? Maybe your short suit will be trump. Maybe the hand will be played in no trump. So we don't assign any points for short suits until later in the auction when we know what will be trump.

Getting Started

Length points: Long suits are always valuable. When you have a long suit you are often able to win tricks with small cards. Let's say that hearts is the trump suit and you hold ♥AKQ32. There are only 13 hearts—ace through deuce.

***Bridge players
LOVE long suits.***

- If you lead the ♥A and all follow, four hearts are played.
- If you lead the ♥K and all follow, eight hearts are played and you have three of the remaining five.
- If you play the ♥Q and two players follow, you now have all of the remaining hearts.
- Play the ♥3 and you will win the trick because nobody has any hearts left.
- Finally, play the ♥2 and win that trick, too.

We call this **establishing** the suit. Of course, things don't always work out perfectly. It's possible—but unlikely—that one player has no hearts at all. On average, though, a five-card suit will be an asset. So we LOVE long suits. Assign one **length point** for each card in excess of four in a suit.

- With a five-card suit, assign one point.
- With a six-card suit, assign two points; and so on.
- If you have two long suits, assign length points for both.

If You Hold:	Your High-Card Points Are:	Your Length Points Are:
♠AJ54 ♥KT7 ♦AKT ♣952	15	0
♠AJ542 ♥KT7 ♦AKT ♣95	15	1
♠AJ5432 ♥KT7 ♦AKT ♣9	15	2
♠AKJ543 ♥T ♦AKT76 ♣9	15	3

Each of these hands has the same high card points but they are not equally valuable. The first hand is not as good as the second, which is not as good as the third, which is not as good as the fourth.

Your **starting** points are a rough estimate of the trick-taking potential of your hand when you first pick it up—before the auction begins. You will often revise that estimate as the auction progresses.

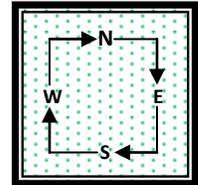
***Starting points =
High-card points
+ length points.***

Getting Started

If You Hold:	Your High-Card Points Are:	Your Length Points Are:	Your Starting Points Are:
♠KQ64 ♥32 ♦KT75 ♣Q96	10	0	10
♠KQT64 ♥32 ♦K75 ♣Q96	10	1	11
♠KQ642 ♥3 ♦KT753 ♣Q9	10	2	12
♠KQ6432 ♥3 ♦KQT53 ♣9	10	3	13

A Sample Auction

We are going to have a simple auction with the opponents passing throughout. You and partner will exchange information to reach the best contract for the **strength** and **shape** of the two hands. Remember that the bidding proceeds clockwise.



The Opening Bid

Opening hands come in sizes Small, Medium and Large—called Minimum (13-15), Invitational (16-18) and Strong (19 or more). Don't worry about memorizing these numbers right now; we will repeat them often in lessons to come.

**Minimum needed to open the auction:
13 starting points.**

Whether you have a Minimum opener or a much stronger hand, you will almost always open the auction by bidding one of a suit. But what suit will you open? Hearts and spades are called **major** suits; diamonds and clubs are called **minor** suits. Bridge players LOVE to bid in majors and HATE to bid in minors. It's all about the score. You will almost always get a better score--with fewer tricks!--for making a major suit contract than for making a minor suit contract. For example, the score for making 3♥ is higher than the score for making 4♦!

**Bidding priorities:
We LOVE majors.
We HATE minors.**