

# **A Basic Bridge Course for University Students**

**Based on the Course given at the  
University of Antwerp, 2008.**

University students will learn bridge as a leisure activity.

They do not wish to attend extra lectures!

They will pick up the basics remarkably quickly, and you should aim to restrict classes to a maximum of 8 before starting a proper club where they will play 2-hour tournaments with predealt boards and handouts that they can discuss afterwards in the bar.....

The suggested course contains the topics you will want to cover: the exact order, and how quickly you progress, will depend on the make-up of your group.

The suggested Bidding System is Acol as played widely in Great Britain, with a weak No-trump. If you prefer to teach a different system you should adjust the text to suit.

When you sign up your students remember to collect Emails so that you can easily contact them, send lesson material they have missed, remind them of Bridge Club Meetings.....

# Topic 1      The essentials

## 1. How to Play

Bridge is the most popular card game in the world

It is played by four people with a pack of 52 cards.

You play with a partner, who sits opposite you.

The players are called by points of the compass, so North plays with South (NS) against East and West (EW)

Each player is **dealt** a **hand** of 13 cards, which may arrive in a board or wallet.

Alternatively the pack can be shuffled, then dealt one card at a time into four equal piles, starting with the player on the dealer's left.

There are two phases to bridge: the **auction**, which decides the final contract, and the **play**, where the contract succeeds or fails.

## 2. Contracts

There are 4 **Suits**: ♠(spades), ♥(hearts), ♦(diamonds), ♣(clubs), and also NoTrump (NT)

These five denominations are ranked in ascending order: ♣, ♦, ♥, ♠, NT.

The denominations are bid to a **level**, from 1 to 7

A bid at the 1-level is a contract to make 7 tricks; a 2-level contract needs 8 tricks, and so on. The maximum number of tricks is 13, so the highest level is the 7-level.

To play bridge you need a **Bidding System**. That is a collection of calls with which you do your best to describe your **Hand** (the 13 cards you are dealt) to your partner. These bids form an **Auction** at the end of which one side has won the **Contract** – they will try to win a certain number of tricks with a known trump or no trump.

The bidding system in this course is **Acol**.

## 3. Rules for the Auction

- Each player takes it in turn to bid, in clockwise order, starting with the dealer
- The first player to call can bid (a suit or no-trump) or pass
- The next player can then
  - Pass
  - Bid a higher-ranking suit/NT at the same level
  - Bid at a higher level
  - Double.
- Each player at his turn may bid, pass, double or redouble
- When after a bid the next three players pass, the auction is finished, and the final bid becomes the Contract. If the last bid is a suit that suit becomes **Trump**.
- The first player in the partnership to bid the denomination of the final contract becomes **declarer**. The players on his right and left become **defenders**.
- The defender on declarer's left makes the **Opening Lead**. At this point declarer's partner lays his cards face up on the table and becomes **Dummy**. He takes no

further part in the play, because declarer nominates which card will be played from dummy to each trick.

## 4. The Play of the Cards

The only rule is that you must **follow suit** (play a card of the suit led) when you can. When you have no cards in the suit led you can play any card you like – you can ruff (play a trump), overruff, underruff, or **discard** any card from another suit.

When each player has played a card (declarer tells dummy which card to play) we have a **trick**.

A trick is won by the highest card in the suit led (unless someone ruffs, in which case the highest trump wins)

The rank order of cards in Bridge is as follows: the ace is the highest card, then king, queen, jack, ten, nine...down to two.

The honour cards are denoted by the letters: A, K, Q, J

## 5. Hand Evaluation

In Bridge we allocate points to high cards to help judge how strong a hand is, and so build a bidding system to share that information with partner. The high cards (ace, king, queen, jack) are called **Honours**.

They are awarded points as follows:

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

Each suit thus has 10 points, so there are 40 in the whole pack

## 6. Choosing a Contract

In the scoring some contracts get a bonus, so that it is important to bid to the right level. The point count helps you decide how many tricks your side is likely to make.

- Part score 24 points or fewer (adding your two hands together)
- Game 25 points or more in NT (the 3-level) and ♥ and ♠ (the 4-level)  
27 points or more in ♦ and ♣ (the 5-level)
- Small Slam 33 points (the 6-level)
- Grand Slam 37 points (the 7-level)

## Scoring

**When a contract succeeds** declarer scores three sorts of points

### A. Trick points

These are scored for tricks **bid and made**, ie from level 1 to 7

In NT the first trick scores 40 points, each subsequent trick scores 30

In ♥ and ♠ (the **major suits**) each trick counts 30 points

In ♦ and ♣ (the **minor suits**) each trick counts 20 points

### B Bonuses

There are 4 possible types of final contract:

A Grand Slam: a contract at the 7-level in any denomination

A Small Slam: a contract at the 6-level in any denomination

Game: a contract with a minimum of 100 trick points

Part score: a contract with fewer than 100 trick points

Each type of contract has a bonus, which often depends on **Vulnerability**

When you make a vulnerable contract you win more points, and when you fail it costs more.

The bonuses are as follows:

	<b>Nonvulnerable</b>	<b>Vulnerable</b>
Grand Slam	1000	1500
Small Slam	500	750
Game	300	500
Part Score	50	50

### C Premium for Overtricks

When you make a contract, the score for overtricks is the same as the trick points:

NT, ♥ and ♠: 30 points per overtrick

♦ and ♣: 20 points per overtrick

**When a contract fails** opponents gain points for each **undertrick** (each trick by which declarer falls short of his target)

Declarer is	<b>Nonvulnerable</b>	<b>Vulnerable</b>
	50 points per undertrick	100 points per undertrick

## Doubles and redoubles

When a contract is doubled (opponents think it will go down) that affects the points won and lost as follows:

When a contract succeeds trick points for overtricks are greater.

When a contract fails opponents get extra points for undertricks.

## Topic 2 Taking Tricks

### 1 How?

The aim is to take as many tricks as possible. There are 4 ways to take tricks:

- A) With High cards (Aces, kings...; the highest card played to a trick wins it)  
High cards that can take the first or second round of a suit are also known as Quick Tricks.
- B) With length tricks – when you have more cards in a suit than opponents do
- C) With trump: when you play with a trump suit a trump can take a trick
- D) With well-placed cards

### 2 Illustrations

A) These 4 cards are played to a trick: ♥2, ♥7, ♥10, ♥Q: the Queen wins

B) Imagine that North and South have these hearts:

♥ AKQ73	
N	
W	E
S	
♥ J62	

Together they can make 5 tricks in hearts, 4 with high cards and one length trick with the three

C) Assuming that spades are trump, a player with no hearts can take a trick in the above example by ruffing with a (low) trump

D) Well-placed cards

	♥ AQ3	
	N	
♥ K94	W	E
	S	
	♥ 852	

South can make 2 heart tricks by leading ♥2 towards dummy because West has ♥K (a finesse)

	♥ Q73	
	N	
♥ K94	W	E
	S	
	♥ A82	

Again, South makes 2 tricks by leading ♥2 towards ♥Q in dummy

### 3 Effects on hand evaluation

High cards take tricks by force: KQ is a sure trick; KQJ makes 2 tricks

- A) Suit length: a 6-card suit is worth more than a 4-card suit. The longer a suit, the stronger the hand, particularly if that suit is trump!
- B) Short suits: when you have enough trump you may add points for shortages as follows:
  - 3 points for a 0-card suit (a **void**)
  - 2 points for a 1-card suit (a **singleton**)
  - 1 point for a 2-card suit (a **doubleton**)

These are called **Distribution points**.

We do not also count points for queens and jacks in these suits

C) High cards in the same suit offer the possibility of a finesse. They are worth more than isolated honours

## Topic 3 The Opening Bid

The opening bid is the first bid, the one that gets the auction underway.

The auction continues until a bid is followed by three passes

These are the possible opening bids:

### 1 1NT

This shows between 12 and 14 points, in a **balanced hand**. That is a hand with one of these distributions: 4-3-3-3; 4-4-3-2; 5-3-3-2.

Only honour points count when considering an opening of 1NT – distribution points are counted only when there is a trump suit.

**NB:** *Never open 1NT with a singleton!*

### 2 One of a Suit

This shows from 12 to 19 points, and

a) a hand unsuitable for opening 1NT (which is a more precise opening bid)

b) a hand with at least 12 points and at least 2 Quick Tricks and/or a good suit (you must NOT pass when you have the option of opening the bidding)

How to decide which suit to open:

- 1) Open your *longest suit*. Always open a 5-card suit before a 4-card suit, even when it is much weaker in high cards.
- 2) With 2 4-card suits open the *major* suit – with both majors open 1♥.
- 3) With 3 4-card suits open the suit below the singleton
- 4) With 2 5-card suits open the *higher* suit

The idea is to find a **Fit** – a suit where the partnership has at least 8 cards

### 3 2♦, 2♥ and 2♠

These openings show 8 or 9 **playing tricks** with at least 6 cards in the suit opened.

Playing strength can be calculated in two ways: either by tricks you expect to make by power; or by counting losers. (A singleton means there is just one loser in a suit.) You need 8 or 9 tricks, a maximum of 4 or 5 losers

### 4 2NT

20-22 points with a balanced distribution – the same constraints as for 1NT

### 5 2♣ opening

All strong hands which expect to make game on their own.

This bid is called **game-forcing** – neither partner can pass before game is reached.

It is also used for balanced hands with 23+ points, too strong for any other opening.

### 6 Pre-emptive openings (3 or 4 of a suit)

These openings are not strong in high cards, but in length tricks. A 7-card suit is normal. You do not expect to make your contract, but hope to escape for 3 down nonvulnerable; 2 down vulnerable. The idea is to make it hard for opponents to reach their best contract

#### Summary

1NT	12-14 HCP balanced
1 of a suit	12-19 points, unsuitable for 1NT, at least a 4-card suit
2 of a suit	8 or 9 playing tricks, at least a good 6-card suit
2NT	20-22 HCP balanced

2♣

Game-forcing or 23+ HCP balanced

3/4 of a suit Pre-emptive, weak with a long suit of 7+cards

## Topic 4 The First Response

### 1 Forcing Bids and Conventional Bids

Some bids require a response from partner: they are called **Forcing Bids** (or Forcing Responses). Partner may not pass such bids.

Other bids are **Nonforcing** which partner may (but need not) pass.

A bid can have a **conventional** meaning when it does not show length in the suit bid. For example, a 2♣ opening says nothing about clubs – it may have no clubs.

**Conventional Bids** are allocated a meaning by partnership agreement.

### 2 Responses to the 1NT opening bid

Since this bid is a **Limit Bid** (showing a precise point range) responder immediately knows whether game is possible or not. His aim is to find the best place to play, in particular to find an 8-card **major suit**.

There are some conventional bids designed to find a fit in a major – by definition a conventional bid is also forcing.

#### Stayman

When responder has 4 cards in hearts and/or spades, he wants to know whether partner has 4 cards in the same major – the 4-4 fit usually plays well.

He asks partner whether he has a 4-card major by bidding 2♣. This bid says nothing about clubs, it is a **conventional** enquiry, known as the Stayman convention. The bid is Forcing: opener must reply.

If opener has a 4-card major he bids it (2♥/2♠). With no major he bids 2♦.

When should responder use Stayman? When his hand is strong enough to be interested in game (at least 11 points) and he has a 4-card major.

Exception: do not use Stayman with a 4-3-3-3 distribution – with no ruffing values you may as well play in NT.

#### Transfers

When responder has a 5-card major he needs only 3 cards from partner for an 8-card fit. He tells partner about his 5-card major by bidding the suit below.

Thus, with 5+ hearts he bids 2♦, and with 5+ spades he bids 2♥.

These conventional bids are called **transfers**. The 1NT opener must now bid partner's suit (2♥ or 2♠).

The only requirement for a transfer is a major suit of at least 5 cards.

There are no high card point requirements: responder can be weak and think that 1NT cannot make, but 2♥ or 2♠ will have better chances.

Why do we use a transfer rather than just bidding our suit?

- it makes the 1NT opener declarer, hiding his hand from the defenders.
- it increases our options in the bidding: responder can pass the completed transfer, or bid on to show various types of hand.

### The scheme of responses to 1NT

Hand type	Bid	Further Bidding from the 1NT opener
>8 HCP with 4cards in ♥ or ♠	2♣	2♦ No 4-card major
		2♥ 4 hearts (may have 4 spades also)
		2♠ 4 spades
At least 5 cards in hearts	2♦	2♥ Compulsory!
At least 5 cards in spades	2♥	2♠ Compulsory!
0-7 HCP	Pass	

8-9 HCP	2NT	Pass (or bid 3NT with a maximum 17HCP)
10-15 HCP	3NT	Pass
Good 6+card suit >10HCP	3 of your suit	(See Slam Bidding, Lesson 12)

### 3 Responses to an opening bid of 2NT

The bidding is analogous to an opening of 1NT. Stayman and Transfers are used, with the only difference that the bids are at the 3-level. Since partner is much stronger you need only 4 points to use Stayman, but you still need a 4-card major. Transfers still require a 5-card suit.

<b>The scheme of responses to 2NT</b>			
<b>Hand type</b>	<b>Bid</b>	<b>Further Bidding from the 2NT opener</b>	
>4 HCP with 4cards in ♥ or ♠	3♣	3♦	No 4-card major
		3♥	4 hearts (possibly 4 spades also)
		3♠	4 spades
0-3 HCP	Pass		
At least 5 cards in hearts	3♦	3♥	Compulsory!
At least 5 cards in spades	3♥	3♠	Compulsory!
4-11 HCP	3NT	Pass	
12-16 HCP	6NT	Pass	
17+ HCP	7NT		

## Topic 5 Responding to an Opening Bid of 1 of a suit

This lesson contains a summary of the possible responses to an opening bid of one of a suit (assuming that opponents do not interfere)

What do we know about opener's hand?

- 12-19 points
- NOT a balanced hand with 12-14 points
- At least 4 cards in the suit opened

There are three distinct types of response:

1. Weak Responses – these are limited to very few points
2. Limit responses – also with a known number of points
3. Constructive responses

### 1 Weak Responses

These are **non-forcing**: opener may pass with no interest in game.

With 0-5 points responder should pass the opening bid; with 6 or more points he should respond.

A responding hand with 6-9 points is designated **weak**. There are two possible bids:

- a) With 4 cards in the suit partner opened, raise partner's suit to the 2-level
- b) With fewer than 4 cards in partner's suit bid 1NT – but only when you cannot bid a new suit at the 1-level (see No3). We should always try to make the most economical bids!

### 2 Limit Responses

- A) A jump raise in partner's suit: at least 4-card support, and  
10-11 points (including distribution points) – jump raise to the 3-level  
12-15 points (including distribution points) – jump raise to the 4-level
- B) Jump in No-trump: with a 4-3-3-3 distribution (generally 4 clubs), and  
10-11 points (Honour points only) – bid 2NT  
12-15 points (Honour points only) – bid 3NT

### 3 Constructive Responses

1. **Bidding a new suit** (changing the suit) **at the 1-level** – eg 1♥ - 1♠  
This response shows at least 4 cards in the suit bid, and a hand with 6-27 Honour Points. The bid should be preferred to a 1NT response even with 6-9 points. It is the start of further communication with partner, and as such is absolutely *forcing*.
1. **Bidding a new suit at the 2-level** (without jumping a level) - eg 1♠ - 2♣  
This is a bid made at the most economical level for that suit (it cannot be bid at the 1-level). The bid is forcing, and begins an exchange of information. It promises at least 4 cards in the bid suit, and a hand with 10-27 Honour Points. Note that a **2-over-1 response** requires more points than a 1-over-1 because it raises the level
2. **Jumping in a new suit** (a jump shift) – eg 1♥ - 2♠  
This bid shows a strong hand, because it is made at a higher level than necessary. It shows a hand with at least 6-cards in the suit bid, and at least 12 Honour Points. The bid is **forcing to game**, communication with partner does not stop until game is reached!

## Summary of responses to an opening bid of one of a suit

### ***With Trump Support*** (at least 4 cards in hearts or spades)

0-5 points	Pass
6-9 points	Raise to the 2-level (a single raise)
10-11 points	Raise to the 3-level (a jump or double raise)
12-15 points	Raise to game

### ***Without Trump Support***

0-5 points	Pass
6-27 points	Bid a new suit at the 1-level if possible
6-9 points	1NT (assuming you cannot bid a new suit at the 1-level)
10-27 points	Bid a lower-ranking new suit at the 2-level
10-11 points (4-3-3-3)	2NT
12+ points (and a good 6+card suit)	Jump in a new suit
12-15 points	3NT (assuming you cannot bid a new suit at the 1-level)

## Topic 6 Declarer Play

In Lesson 2 we looked at 4 ways of taking tricks:

- Top tricks with honours
- Length tricks
- Ruffing
- Well-placed cards (for example the finesse)

After the opening lead is made dummy lays his cards face up on the table. Declarer now sees all 26 cards at his disposal. He should **plan the play**. He starts by making some calculations:

- a) winners: the number of sure tricks that he can take right now  
 b) potential winners: tricks that can be established after giving up the lead  
 c) losers: sure losers, tricks that have to be lost to opponents' winners; and possible losers – for example a finesse that might lose

Next declarer analyses how many tricks he can take, and how, and what is the best line of play to lose as few tricks as possible. Only after making a plan should he play the first card from dummy

### Tempo

A vital element in making a plan is **Tempo**. Look at this example:

	♥ A ♦ KQ
♥ KQ ♦ A	<p style="text-align: center;">N W       E S</p>

We show only the cards of North and West

Which player will take 2 tricks?  
*Whoever is on lead*

To win the race for tricks you must develop a plan to create the extra tricks you need. It is very important to remember this rule: do not lead out your aces and kings – these are winners that control suits and prevent opponents from making length tricks. Start with your long suits, where you can drive out opponents' winners and so develop tricks for your side.

## Planning the play in No-trump

	♠ KJ54 ♥ 642 ♦ A973 ♣ A4	
♠ 62 ♥ Q1098 ♦ 1064 ♣ 10862	N W     E S	♠ A1093 ♥ 753 ♦ J82 ♣ 975
	♠ Q87 ♥ AKJ ♦ KQ5 ♣ KQJ3	

In this example South is declarer in 6NT. West leads ♣8.

Before making a plan, we count our tricks:

- a) Top winners:                      0 in spades (we do not hold ♠A)  
    2 in hearts (♥AK)  
    3 in diamonds (♦AKQ)  
    4 in clubs (♣AKQJ)  
    **Total: 9**
- b) Potential winners:                2 in spades. (Play an honour to force out the ace, establishing two top tricks)
- c) Losers:                                there is a sure loser in spades (♠A),  
    and a second possible loser in hearts if the finesse fails.

**Conclusion:** declarer has 11 sure tricks, and 1 sure loser.

Where can he make his twelfth trick?

He has several chances: he could finesse against the ♥Q to make an extra trick with the jack; he might make a length trick in spades or diamonds if either suit breaks 3-3.

What should he try first?

If the heart finesse loses he has two losers and will go down. So he leaves that till last, testing for length tricks without risk. The play proceeds as follows:

win the first trick with ♣A	1 <sup>st</sup> trick
play a spade to the ♠K and East's ♠A	1 <sup>st</sup> loser
East plays a second club – win ♣K	2 <sup>nd</sup> trick
Cash 2 more clubs (discard hearts from dummy)	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> tricks
Cash ♠Q and ♠J (spades do not break)	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> tricks
Play 3 diamonds ♦K, ♦Q, ending with ♦A	7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> tricks
Diamonds break, so cash the length trick	10 <sup>th</sup> trick
You no longer need the heart finesse, cash ♥AK	11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> tricks

## Planning the Play in a Trump contract

	♠ J4 ♥ K96 ♦ A8765 ♣ A43	
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	N W     E S	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣
	♠ A3 ♥ QJ1053 ♦ K103 ♣ K76	

South is declarer in 4♥. West leads ♠K.

- a) Top winners      1 in spades (♠A)  
 0 in hearts (we do not hold ♥A)  
 2 in diamonds (♦AK)  
 2 in clubs (♣AK)  
**TOTAL: 5**
- b) Potential winners    4 in hearts (once ♥A is forced out)
- c) Losers                1 in spades (the rest will be trumped)  
 1 in hearts (♥A)  
 1 in diamonds (after ♦AK are played)  
 1 in clubs (after ♣AK are played)

So we have 9 winners and 4 possible losers (one of them a Sure Loser)  
 How shall we make the extra trick?

From trump? If we could ruff something in the North hand that would bring an extra trick, but there is nothing to ruff. Ruffing in the South hand does not add to our trick total – we have already counted 4 hearts.

**NB:** ruffing in the long hand does not bring any extra tricks.

From a well-placed card? There are no finesse positions

We must look for a length trick, which can come only from diamonds.

It is useful to know what the chances are of an even break in a suit where we need length tricks. With 8 diamonds we are missing 5, and these are the probabilities

3-2 break – 68%

4-1 break – 28%

5-0 break – 4%

So we have very good chances of a 3-2 break, thus extra length tricks in diamonds

The Play:

Trick 1	West leads ♠K, taken by the ace	1 <sup>st</sup> trick
Trick 2	Heart to the king, taken by West's ace	1 <sup>st</sup> loser
Trick 3	West cashes ♠Q	2 <sup>nd</sup> loser
Trick 4	West leads a club, taken by declarer with ♣K	2 <sup>nd</sup> trick
Tricks 5 & 6	Draw trump with ♥9 and ♥Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> tricks
Tricks 7 & 8	♦K in hand, ♦A in North	5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> tricks
Trick 9	Small diamond: East makes ♦Q	3 <sup>rd</sup> loser
Trick 10	East plays a spade, ruffed by South	7 <sup>th</sup> trick
Trick 11	Small club to North's ace	8 <sup>th</sup> trick
Trick 12	Small diamond from North, discarding a club	9 <sup>th</sup> trick
Trick 13	South makes the trick with his last trump	10 <sup>th</sup> trick

### Comment:

At trick 4 North played a small club, and South won the King. That meant that at trick 11 declarer could **enter** dummy with ♣A to make the winning diamonds. We call this **preserving an entry**.

If declarer wins ♣A at trick 4 he wastes dummy's entry, but can still make the contract.

At trick 7 he plays the ♦K. But at trick 8 he plays low diamonds from both hands, allowing East to win the trick. This is called a **duck** – losing a trick you could win to keep communication between the hands

Declarer ruffs a spade at trick 9 and plays his last diamond to dummy's ♦A. When East's queen drops declarer is in dummy to make his length trick.

**Conclusion:** *a good declarer takes care of his entries*  
**Topic 7** **Opener's Rebid**

After opening with one of a suit, and hearing partner's response (See Lesson 5) opener finds himself in one of the following situations:

- he is compelled to make another bid (after a constructive = forcing response)
- he may choose whether or not to make another bid (after a nonforcing response = weak or limit)

When opener makes a second bid he uses it to describe his hand further to his partner. He can define

- strength – through the level at which he bids
- distribution – by bidding new suits

We divide opening bids into 3 categories of strength

- weak: 12-14 points
- intermediate: 15-17 points
- strong: 18-20 points

**Some general rules about bidding:**

- look first for a fit in a Major suit – hearts or spades
- when a Major suit fit is found, set that suit as trump
- when game is clearly not an option, stop bidding at as low a level as possible
- with a strong opening hand bid at a higher level than necessary

**1 Opener's rebid after a 1over1 response in a new suit** (eg 1♥ - 1♠)

**A** *Rebids with a weak opening hand (12-14HCP)*

- 1 Raise partner's suit by one level = a **single raise** (eg 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♠)  
This shows 4+ cards in partner's suit (including distribution points)  
(NB: after 1♣- 1♦ bid a 4-card major first if you have one)
- 2 Bid a new suit at the 1-level (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 1♠)  
If you have a 4-card suit you can bid at the 1-level that takes priority  
(choose an economical bid whenever possible)
- 3 Rebid the suit you opened (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♦)  
This shows a 6-card suit, and no other 4-card suit you can bid
- 4 Bid a new, lower-ranking suit at the 2-level (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣)  
Bidding a second suit means you have at least 5 cards in the suit opened.

**B** *Rebids with an intermediate opening hand (15-17HCP)*

- 1 Raise partner's suit by two levels = a **jump raise** (eg 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♠)  
This shows 4+ cards in partner's suit and 15-17 points (including Distribution points).
- 2 1NT (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT)  
A balanced hand that cannot raise partner, or bid a new suit at the 1-level
- 3 Jump rebid in the suit you opened (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦)  
Shows a 6+card suit with no other 4-card suits
- 4 Reverse bid (eg 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥)  
This is a bid in a higher-ranking suit that is not economical. It shows at least 5 cards in the suit opened, and it is forcing for one round.

**C** *Rebids with a strong hand (18-20HCP)*

- 1 Raise partner's suit to game
- 2 Jump rebid in a new suit (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♠; 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♣)

This bid is **forcing to game**. It shows 4+ cards in the new suit, and, by implication, at least 5 cards in the suit opened

3 2NT (eg 1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT) A balanced hand without support for partner.

## 2 Opener's Rebid after Responder's Raise

A After a single raise in a major (eg 1♥ - 2♥)

You have found a fit, so the final contract is decided and you can count distribution points.

Partner has 6-9 points, so you can immediately tell whether game is possible.

12-15 points	Pass
16-18 points	Bid 3 of your suit (partner will pass 3♥ with 6-7; bid game with 8-9)
19-20	Bid game (4♥)

B After a single raise in a minor (eg 1♦ - 2♦)

If partner has 4 cards in a major suit he would bid that rather than support a minor. So the final contract will be in NT or the minor.

12-16 points	Pass
18-20 points	2NT
18-20 points, 6+cards	Bid 3 of your minor (with stronger hands and good distribution you can bid 4 or 5 of the minor)

C After a Limit Raise (eg 1♥ - 3♥)

Partner has shown 10-11 points, so with 14+ you should bid game

## 3 Opener's Rebid after a 1NT response

With a balanced hand:

Up to 16 points	Pass
17-18	2NT
19-20	3NT

With an unbalanced hand:

A Weak hand (13-15)

Pass; or (whenever possible)

rebid a lower-ranking suit at the 2-level (this means you have 5 cards in the suit opened) ;

or rebid your first suit at the 2-level (promising at least 6 cards)

B Strong hand (17-19)

Jump in a new suit (eg 1♠ - 1NT - 3♥); or reverse into a higher-ranking suit (eg 1♥-1NT -2♠);(which has the same meaning as in 1B).

Bid out your shape in search of the best game.

#### 4 Opener's Rebid after a 2-over-1 Response (eg 1♥-2♦)

Partner's 2-over-1 response shows at least 10 points. We divide opener's rebids into 2 groups: non-forcing, or weak, rebids; and forcing, or strong, rebids.

##### A Nonforcing rebids

- 1 Rebidding your suit (eg 1♥-2♦ - 2♥)

This shows a 6-card suit in a minimum hand. Responder may pass with up to 12 points

- 2 Raising partner(eg 1♥-2♦ - 3♦)

##### B Forcing Rebids

- 1 Bidding a new, lower ranking suit (eg 1♥- 2♣ - 2♦)

This shows at least 4 cards in the new suit, and at least 5 cards in the suit opened. This bid is unlimited, and does not promise another bid, but it is forcing as far as a 2 of the suit opened (here 2

- 2 2NT. This shows a balanced hand too strong to open 1NT. (15-19)

Since it has a minimum of 15 points, and responder has 10, it is forcing to game.

- 3 Bids which take the auction so high that responder cannot return to partner's first suit at the 2-level: that makes the auction forcing to game – no-one can pass till game is reached!

Examples:

- A new suit at the 3-level 15+ eg 1♥- 2♦ - 3♣
- Jump rebid in your first suit 15+ eg 1♥- 2♦ - 3♥
- Reverse Bid 17-20 eg 1♥- 2♦ - 2♠

##### C Other rebids

- 1 Jump to game in your own Major (eg 1♥-2♦ -4♥) shows a strong single-suiter (but not strong enough to open 2♥)

### Some General Principles:

- 1 When you bid a suit you promise at least 4 cards.  
There is one exception: the auction 1♠-2♥ promises at least 5 hearts. This means that opener can raise hearts with just 3-card support
- 2 An Opening Bid opposite an Opening Bid = Game
- 3 Never lie about your strength – if you must lie, lie about your distribution
- 4 Do not rely too much on Rules, which in practice are more indications  
It is better to choose the best bid by logic, since your hand will seldom conform to the ideal for your chosen bid. That is what makes bridge exciting!

## Topic 8 Responder's Rebid

After three bids responder should know how strong opener is, and his approximate distribution. He may be able to choose the final contract, or he may need more information to decide.

These are his possible choices

### With a WEAK hand

If opener has made a nonforcing rebid, responder can pass

With a long suit of his own, rebid it at the lowest possible level: eg 1♥-1♠-2♦-2♠

If opener has bid a second suit, return to opener's first suit: eg 1♥-1♠-2♦-2♥

(this is called 'giving preference': with 2 hearts and 3 diamonds give 'false preference' to hearts)

### STRONG bids

When he knows where to play responder can simply bid game, ending the auction.

With a long suit of his own responder can rebid it, jumping a level: eg 1♥-1♠-1NT-3♠

He can raise partner's second suit: eg 1♥-1♠-2♦-3♦

He can give jump support to partner's first suit with 3-card support: eg 1♥-1♠-2♦-3♥

Or he can use the **Fourth Suit Forcing** convention

All these bids mean that the auction cannot stop till game is reached.

#### Fourth Suit Forcing

Imagine that the bidding has gone: 1♥-2♣-2♦- and you have:

You want to play in game (your partnership has at least 26 points) but which game?

♠	542
♥	K4
♦	QJ8
♣	AKJ64

You could bid 3NT, but that will not go well if opponents cash 5 tricks in spades.

You want to know whether partner has a **stopper** in spades so that he can prevent this.

So you bid 2♠. This does not mean you have 4 spades – you would bid 1♠ last time.

So when you bid the fourth suit:

- The bid is NOT natural, it does not show 4 cards
- You ask partner to describe his hand further – in particular, has he a spade stopper for NT?
- The bid is absolutely forcing to game
- Partner bids NT with a spade stopper, without one he tells you more about his distribution

## General Principles

- 1 Opening Bid + Opening Bid = Game  
Strong opening Bid + response at the 2-level = game  
Maximum Opening Bid + weak response = game
- 2 When opener bids 2 suits pick the one where your partnership has greater length: trump quantity is more important than trump quality.
- 3 Do not be afraid to offer a better spot, even when your hand is very weak  
Eg 1♥-1♠-1NT-2♦ shows 5 diamonds, and asks partner to choose between 2♦ and 2♠ as the final contract.



## Topic 9 Overcalls

Up till now we have looked at bidding where, when someone opens, opponents pass. This will not always be the case. We call a bid made by an opponent an **overcall**.

### Reasons to overcall

- 1 Obstructive – an overcall may prevent responder from making an economical bid.
- 2 Constructive – to play a contract your side can make. After an opening bid there are still 27 points to account for, so you may even have game!
- 3 Lead-directing – to tell partner where your strength lies so he can make a good lead

### Requirements for an overcall in a suit

You need a good suit of at least 5 cards, and playing strength. Honour points are less important. The stronger the suit, the fewer points you need

### Examples of the various types of overcall

- 1 Simple overcall in a suit  
Eg 1♦ -(1♠)

♠ KQJ94
♥ 85
♦ 92
♣ KQ94

Eg 1♥ -(2♣)  
At the 2-level you need to be a little stronger – at least 10 HCP

♠ KQ2
♥ 85
♦ 92
♣ AKJ942

- 2 The 1NT overcall

This shows 15-17 points, balanced distribution, and stoppers in the suit opened.

Eg 1♥ -(1NT)

♠ QJ2
♥ AQ8
♦ Q654
♣ AJ10

- 3 Jump overcall in a suit

Promises at least a 5-card suit and at least opening strength

Eg 1♥ -(2♠)

♠ AQJ954
♥ 85
♦ 92
♣ AK9

- 4 Double Jump Overcall in a suit

Promises a hand similar to a 3-level opening: lots of playing strength, little defence.

Eg 1♥ -(3♠)

♠ AQJ10985
♥ 85
♦ 972
♣ 7

- 5 Double

The **takeout double** is covered in Topic 11



## **Further Bidding after an Overcall**

### **1 Partner made the Overcall**

Partner has shown a good suit and considerable playing strength.

You can pass, but there are other possibilities:

- A) Raise partner's suit. (3-card support is enough when partner has at least 5)  
How high to raise depends on how good your fit is, and whether you have shortages in side suits.  
Take account of the vulnerability – when vulnerable partner will usually be stronger
- B) Bid a suit of your own  
This means you think there is somewhere better to play. You need a very good suit and not much support for partner
- C) Bid NT.  
This needs more points than opposite an opening bid, and stoppers in opener's suit

If partner makes a jump overcall you can obviously raise with less. In principle a jump overcall means that partner expects to go no more than 2 down vulnerable, or 3 down nonvulnerable. That allows you to work out your combined playing strength.

### **2 An Opponent Overcalls**

- A) With a weak hand that can no longer respond at the 1-level you should pass (you can have 6 points here)
- B) The 1NT response is slightly stronger: 7-10 with a stopper in opponent's suit
- C) A 2-over-1 response may be slightly weaker, 8-11 points with a 5+card suit (so it is no longer absolutely forcing )

***The best rule to follow is always: common sense!***

# Topic 10                      Defence

In Lesson 6 we looked at declarer play. Card play is equally important for the defenders. The partners must work together to defeat declarer's contract, so it is very important that you understand partner's carding, and that partner plays cards that help you work out what to do.

This Lesson gives an outline of defensive carding.

## 1.     **The Opening Lead**

The opening lead must be made before you see dummy, so it is difficult to know what is best. Yet it is one of the most important cards that you play – the wrong choice may let declarer home in an unmakeable contract...

There are two aspects to the opening lead: deciding which suit to lead, then choosing the best card in that suit.

### ***Which suit?***

In order to choose the best suit you must analyse the bidding. A few pointers:

- Partner has bid a suit: if this is an overcall you are more or less obliged to lead his suit. Partner has promised a good suit with high cards, and may be upset if you lead something else! In general is it a good idea to lead partner's suit.
- You have a strong sequence of cards (eg KQJ84). Lead the king – if it loses to the ace you have developed two tricks. Against a suit contract try to develop tricks as quickly as you can.
- Lead from length. Against NT lead your longest suit (unless partner has bid!) You hope to develop length tricks in your suit. When your side has winners in other suits to gain the lead and continue the suit, this is an effective defence.
- A short suit: against a trump contract you may lead a singleton when you hope to get a ruff.
- Trump leads. When the bidding suggests that dummy has a short side suit so that he can score ruffs, and you have no better lead to make, lead trump to stop declarer making his trump separately.

### ***Which card?***

- Lead the highest card from a sequence of honours (eg KQ10, QJ10). This tells partner you have the card immediately below the card you led
- "*Low encouraging*" – when you lead a low card you show that you have one or more honours in the suit; partner may be able to work out what they are.
- Lead the higher card from a doubleton – this may tell partner you are looking for a ruff
- When leading partner's suit
  - With 3 or more cards headed by an honour – lead the lowest
  - With 2 cards – lead the higher
  - With 3 cards but no honour – lead the middle card, follow with the highest, then the lowest (=MUD, 'middle-up-down')

## 2.     **Later Leads**

When you gain the lead later in the hand it is easier to decide what to play: you can see dummy, partner has had the chance to signal, and you may have an idea of declarer's plan. But the same basic rules apply:

- Low encouraging
- Top of touching honours
- Complete a MUD signal

- When playing a new suit with no honour – lead a high card (6-9)

### 3. Cover an Honour with an Honour

When declarer plays an honour card it is often important to **cover** with an honour of your own. Here is an example:

Declarer leads the jack from dummy. If East plays a low card declarer makes 4 tricks in diamonds – he runs the jack, then plays low to the ten. If East covers the jack with his queen declarer makes the ace, king and ten, but West's nine is promoted into a winner and declarer makes just 3 tricks

	♦ J6	
♦ 9843	W      N E S	♦ Q52
	♦ AK107	

### 3. Third Hand Plays High

When partner leads, and dummy plays, the next player is third to play. A good rule is: third hand plays high, playing the highest card he can afford. Partner has led this suit for a reason, and it is your job to support him as best you can

West leads the two of diamonds (low encouraging). If East does not play the king declarer makes 2 tricks in diamonds – the jack and the ace. If East plays Third Hand High declarer makes 1 trick.

**NB:** if East held QJ6 he should play the jack, not the queen – playing the lower of touching honours allows partner to work out who has the queen. But with KJ10 play the king.

	♦ 653	
♦ Q872	W      N E S	♦ K109
	♦ AJ4	

### 4. Signals

When declarer sees dummy he can make a plan, but the defenders have a different problem. They do not know their combined suit lengths, or point count, or where partner's high cards are. By analysing the bidding, and observing the cards played, they can deduce a lot about the hidden hands, and work together as a partnership to defeat the contract. Just as a partnership communicates in bidding, so defenders can communicate during the play by the cards they choose. These are called **signals**.

#### High-Low Signals

When partner leads a suit and you play a higher card than necessary, you **encourage** him to continue playing that suit. A low card is **discouraging** and suggests he try something else. West leads the three. If North plays the ace East plays the nine, a higher card than necessary, to encourage partner to continue the suit when he regains the lead. (If North played the six you would play the queen: Third hand High takes precedence)

	♦ A6	
♦ KJ73	W      N E S	♦ Q952
	♦ 1084	

#### Count Signals

These are a way of telling partner how many cards you hold in a suit:

Playing low, then high indicates an odd number of cards

**High-low** shows an even number

This does not apply in the trump suit, where length signals are less important

Note that whenever you give a signal to partner declarer sees it also. Signal only when necessary. (When partner leads a suit, or has bid it, you should signal as clearly as you can.)

## Topic 11                      Doubles

The Double is a special type of overcall. You can double only when an opponent has bid. There are two types of double:

- 1 Takeout Doubles
- 2 Penalty Doubles

### 1. The Takeout Double

When an opponent opens the bidding, and you also have an opening bid, you want to take some action. Sometimes you cannot make any of the overcalls from Lesson 9: you have no five-card suit, so cannot overcall; and you are not suitable for a 1NT overcall (15-17 points, balanced, with a stopper in opponent's suit).

So there is an extra 'overcall' – the takeout double. It shows:

- At least opening strength (12 points or more)
- A 4-4-4-1 distribution with the singleton in the suit bid by your opponent
- The more your hand deviates from this perfect distribution, the more strength you need to double

It is very important that you are short in opponent's suit, so that your side has somewhere good to play.

Your double tells partner: even though an opponent has opened the bidding I have enough points to open myself, and I think we should play the hand.

Partner **must** respond by bidding his best suit. Even with no points, he must not pass (unless his right hand opponent bids, in which case he may pass with a weak hand and bid only with some values)

### **What might partner respond?**

He bids his best suit (the doubler has promised, in principle, 4-card support for all the unbid suits)

0-7(8)	bid a suit at the cheapest level (lower of 2 4-card suits, higher of 2 5-card suits, just like responding to an opening bid)
7-9 with a stopper	1NT
9-11	jump in his best suit
10-12 with a stopper	2NT
A stronger hand	<b>cuebid</b> – bidding opponent's suit is not natural, it shows strength and makes the auction forcing to game.

### **Further Bidding by the Doubler**

Partner was compelled to bid, so over a minimum response you should be very careful (usually pass!!!!) partner may have no points!

If partner makes a positive response you know how many points your partnership has, and can bid accordingly. (Over a positive response pass only with a minimum double, fewer than 15 points)

## 2. The Penalty Double

When partner bids, and the next hand overcalls, double is **Penalty**.

This means you think the contract is going down, and you want to raise the stakes.

A penalty double requires trump tricks in opponent's suit, Quick Tricks, and preferably a shortage in partner's suit.

A few special cases....

### ***Double of 1NT***

This shows at least the minimum strength of the 1NT opener – 15HCP balanced.

Partner should pass with 6 points or more, making the double a penalty double. With a weaker hand he bids his longest suit.

### ***Double of 3NT***

When partner is on lead this is a ***lead-directing double***.

It asks partner to lead the first suit bid by dummy, or, if dummy has not bid a suit, to lead his weaker major.

### ***Double of an opening bid of 4 of a suit***

This is only penalty over a 4♠ opening. Over 4 of any other suit it is still takeout.

## **General Rule**

A double of a bid in a suit is takeout whenever partner has not made a bid.

## Topic 12 Slam Bidding

It does not happen very often, but when you have good cards you will look beyond game to investigate slam (there is an extra bonus). Two conventional bids can help you find out if slam can be made.

### 1. The Blackwood Convention; asking for aces

There is nothing sillier than to bid slam missing two aces (unless you have a void), or a Grand Slam missing an ace... When you have the values for slam it is important to know you have enough aces between the two hands.

Blackwood uses 4NT to ask for aces. Partner responds as follows:

5♣	0 aces, or 4 aces
5♦	1 ace
5♥	2 aces
5♠	3 aces

After bidding 4NT, asking for aces, you can use 5NT to ask for kings (same responses but a level higher).

Be sure there are no aces missing before you ask for kings – if an ace is missing you should sign off!

### 2. Cuebidding

Suppose you hold this North hand, and the bidding goes:

1♥ - 2♠ - 3♠ - 4♠

♠ K642
♥ AK1087
♦ 53
♣ A6

If you use Blackwood and find that partner has one ace, then you have a problem. If partner's ace is the ace of spades you might have two quick losers in diamonds. So you bid 5♣. This does not say you have length in clubs (you have already found a fit) it says that you have the ace of clubs, a **control** in clubs. Now it is up to South to bid his lowest control – if he has the ace of diamonds he bids 5♦. (Otherwise he bids 5♠) Other controls are cuebid in the same way.

### **3. Responding to an opening bid of two of a suit**

Traditionally raising partner to game suggests that is high enough. Raising one level (eg 2♠ - 3♠) is stronger, leaving room for cuebids.

You will hardly ever bid a suit of your own, since opener has shown a strong 6-card suit. So you only bid a new suit with a strong hand and a good suit of your own.

### **4. Responding to Pre-emptive Opening Bids**

Here you should calculate your losers, to decide whether to raise opener or not.

Bidding a suit of your own shows a very strong hand – opener is known to be weak.

### **5. Responding to a 2♣ opener**

This bid shows a very strong hand, usually worth game on its own. If partner opens this bid you must not pass. Given that the opener is so strong, it is best to allow him to describe his hand. So we have another conventional bid: 2♦, which says nothing about diamonds, but invites opener to describe his hand. We make the cheapest available bid, and it means absolutely nothing. We make this bid with up to 7 points.

If we have a good suit of our own, at least 5 cards, and at least 8 points we can bid it. Note that with good diamonds, and 8+points, we have to bid 3♦, since 2♦ has a special conventional meaning.

With 8+points and a balanced hand (no good suit of our own) we can bid NT.

2NT shows 8-9 points; 3NT 10+