



Bridge Basics — the whole game on one page

Bridge Unlocked teaches all of this in the Bridge Basics path, free. Keep it beside you the first few times.

The table

Bridge is played by **four people in two partnerships**. You sit opposite your partner; the seats are named after the compass, **North and South** against **East and West**. It is never a solo performance — every hand is won or lost by a pair.

A full pack of 52 cards is dealt out, **13 to each player**. You sort your cards into suits and keep them to yourself.

Tricks — how the cards are won

Play goes in **tricks**. One player leads a card; the other three play a card each, clockwise; the highest card of the suit led wins, and the winner leads to the next. There are **13 tricks in every deal**.

Two rules do almost all the work. **You must follow suit** if you can — a heart is led, you hold a heart, you play a heart. **If you can't follow suit, you may play anything** — and in a suit contract that anything can be a **trump**, and the smallest trump beats the biggest card of any other suit.

Within a suit the cards rank **A, K, Q, J, 10, 9 ... 2**. The ace is highest.

The two halves of every deal

The auction. Starting with the dealer and going clockwise, each player either **passes** or makes a **bid** — a number and a suit or no-trumps, like *one heart* or *two no-trumps*. Each bid must be higher than the last; the auction ends when three players pass in a row. The bids are the only conversation you and partner get about your hands.

The contract. The final bid. The number is the tricks **over six** that side promises to win: *two spades* means **eight** tricks with spades as trumps; *three no-trumps* means **nine** tricks with no trump suit. The lowest bid is **1♣** (seven tricks); the highest is **7NT** (all thirteen).

The play. Whoever first named the final suit for the winning side is **declarer**. Declarer's partner is **dummy**: after the opening lead, dummy lays every card face up and takes no further part — declarer plays both hands. The other two are the **defenders**; the one on declarer's left makes the **opening lead**.

Bidding ranks

RANK	DENOMINATION	
highest	NT — no-trumps	no suit is trumps
	♠ Spades	major suit
	♥ Hearts	major suit
	♦ Diamonds	minor suit
lowest	♣ Clubs	minor suit

1♥ outbids 1♦; 1NT outbids 1♠; to beat 1♠ in a suit you go up a level — 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥. Majors and no-trumps score more than minors, which is why so much bidding is a search for a heart or spade fit.

What you're playing for

The side that wins the auction scores if it **makes** its contract; the defenders score if they **defeat** it. Tricks score **20 each in a minor, 30 in a major, 40 then 30 in no-trumps** — and the prize is **game, 100 trick-points**, which earns a large bonus. So the contracts everyone chases are **3NT (9 tricks), 4♥ or 4♠ (10), 5♣ or 5♦ (11)**. Twelve tricks is a small slam; thirteen a grand slam.

SIX THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1 **Follow suit** whenever you can.
- 2 **A bid is a promise** of tricks over six: 2♠ = eight tricks.
- 3 **The final bid is the contract**; the first to name that suit is declarer.
- 4 **Dummy goes face up** after the opening lead; declarer plays both hands.
- 5 **Game is the goal**: 3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ or 5♦.
- 6 **It's a partnership game**. Every bid is a message to the person opposite.

Your first deal, in order

- 1 Deal; everyone sorts their 13.
- 2 Dealer bids or passes; three passes end the auction.
- 3 The defender on declarer's left leads, face up.
- 4 Dummy goes down, in suits, trumps on the right.
- 5 Thirteen tricks are played; everyone follows suit.
- 6 Count the tricks against the promise; score; deal again.

