

# WIN AT BRIDGE

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Make the best to opening bids Test your (page play at (page Avoid an (page 114) trumps (page two-level openings



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INSIGHTS**  
FROM A GRANDMASTER

# Win at Bridge

David Bird



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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*: a catalogue record  
for this title is available from the British Library.

*Library of Congress Catalog Card Number*: on file.

First published in UK 1980 by Hodder Education, part of  
Hachette UK, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH.

First published in US 1992 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

This edition published 2010.

Previously published as *Teach Yourself Bridge*.

The **Teach Yourself** name is a registered trade mark of Hodder Headline.

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Typeset by MPS Limited, a Macmillan Company.

Printed in Great Britain for Hodder Education, an Hachette UK  
Company, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH, by CPI Cox &  
Wyman, Reading, Berkshire RG1 8EX.

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Impression number 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year 2014 2013 2012 2011 2010

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# Meet the author

## Welcome to *Win at Bridge!*

Bridge is one of the world's finest card games, a source of endless fascination, and an entry into a world of new friends.

How good a player will you be after absorbing the contents of this book? The game consists of two parts – the bidding and the play of the cards. Bidding is easily learned from a book. By the time you have turned the final page, your bidding will be better than that of the majority of bridge players. Learning to play the cards well is more difficult and takes time. We cover the basics here. You will find that your cardplay improves gradually, every time that you play.

One thing is certain. You will never regret the day that you first took up bridge, the king of card games.

David Bird



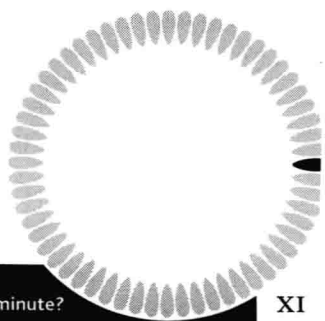
# *Only got a minute?*

Bridge is a very social game, enabling you to make new friends wherever you go. It is a game for four players, two playing in partnership against the other two.

A deal of bridge consists of two parts: the bidding and the play. During the bidding, which takes the form of an auction, the players describe their hands with bids such as One Spade ('I think I can make seven tricks with spades as trumps') and Two No-trumps ('I think I can make eight tricks without a trump suit'). In this way a partnership can decide which suit, if any, should become trumps. They decide also how many tricks they think they can make.

The play comes next, where the partnership who won the auction attempts to make the target number of tricks that they set themselves. Meanwhile, the two defenders will try to prevent this target being reached. A defender makes the opening lead and the next player lays his hand,

known as the dummy, face-up on the table. The player known as the declarer will then make the plays from both the dummy and his own hand. If he succeeds in 'making the contract', he will score points for his side. If instead he 'goes down', the defenders will collect some penalty points.





# 5

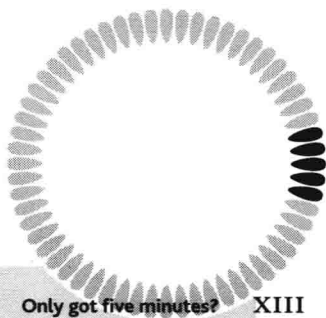
## Only got five minutes?

A deal of bridge consists of two parts: the bidding and the play. During the bidding the players describe their hands with bids such as One Spade and Two No-trumps. Thirteen tricks will be available during the play. It is assumed that the side that eventually plays the hand will score at least six tricks. A bid of One Spade therefore means that you think you can make seven of the 13 tricks (six plus one).

All four players can make bids and the so-called 'auction' circles around the table. At their turn players may either Pass or make a bid that is higher than the previous one. When three consecutive players Pass, the bidding is over. The side that made the last (highest) bid sets the trump suit (a trump, however small, is more powerful than any card in a different suit). It also sets the 'contract', the number of tricks that will have to be made in the play. For example, if the highest bid was Four Spades, the side that won the auction will have to make ten tricks with spades as trumps. If they achieve this aim, they will gain a large score. If they fail, perhaps by making only nine tricks, they will score nothing and the other side will score a penalty.

To encourage players to set themselves a high target, a large bonus is offered for scoring a 'game'. This can be achieved by scoring 100 points on a hand. Tricks scored when a major suit is trumps are worth 30 each (only those tricks above six are counted in the score). So a contract of Four Spades is worth 120 points and will give you a game, worth a big bonus. A further bonus is awarded if you bid and make a small slam (12 tricks) or a grand slam (13 tricks). In this way players are tempted to set themselves a high target, even though they will score nothing, in fact lose a penalty, if they fall just one trick short.

Let's suppose that a contract of Four Spades has been reached, to be played by the partnership in the North and South seats. South made the first bid in spades, so he will become the 'declarer'. He will play both his own (South) cards and those of his partner (North). The defender sitting on declarer's left (West) makes the opening lead and North then displays the whole of his hand, face-up on the table. This hand is known as the 'dummy' and can be seen by the other three players. The remaining three hands contribute a card to the first trick, which is played in a clockwise direction. Players must always 'follow suit' if they can. So, if a diamond is led, everyone must play a diamond to that trick unless they have no diamonds in their hand. If they cannot follow suit, they may ruff (in other words, play a trump) or discard (throw away a card in some different suit). Whoever wins the first trick will lead to the second trick and play continues in this fashion until all 13 tricks have been played. If declarer manages to make at least ten tricks, he will have fulfilled his contract of Four Spades and will score appropriately. If he ends with nine or fewer tricks, his side will score nothing and the defenders will collect a penalty.





# 10 Only got ten minutes?

A deal of bridge consists of two parts: the bidding and the play. During the bidding the players describe their hands with bids such as One Spade and Two No-trumps. Thirteen tricks will be available during the play. It is assumed that the side that eventually plays the hand will score at least six tricks. A bid of One Spade therefore means that you think you can make seven of the 13 tricks (six plus one).

Players assess how strong their hand is by looking at the high cards and the length of their suits. The method commonly used for evaluating high cards is to score four points for an ace, three for a king, two for a queen and one for a jack. There are 40 points in the pack, so an average hand will contain ten points. When you have about 12 points or more, you are entitled to make an 'opening bid'. (The first bid in the auction is known as the opening bid.) For example, you would open 1♠ on this hand: ♠ A Q 10 8 3 ♥ K 9 8 2 ♦ A 10 5 ♣ 7. The hand contains 13 points, enough to open the bidding.

All four players can make bids and the so-called 'auction' circles around the table. At their turn players may either Pass or make a bid that is higher than the previous one. When three consecutive players Pass, the bidding is over. The side that made the last (highest) bid sets the trump suit (a trump, however small, is more powerful than any card in a different suit). It also sets the 'contract', the number of tricks that will have to be made in the play. This is a typical auction:

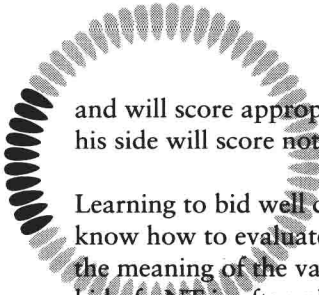
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
—	—	—	1♠
2♦	2♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South opens the bidding with 1♠. West 'overcalls' 2♦ because he has a fairly strong hand with a long diamond suit. North does not have a particularly strong hand but he does have three or four

spades in the trump suit that his partner suggested. He therefore 'raises his partner' by bidding 2♠. A single raise suggests about 6–9 points. With 10–11 points he might bid 3♠ and with more than 12 points he would bid 4♠, which is a game contract. You can see how the players show the strength of their hands by the bids that they make. East has nothing to say and passes. South then jumps to 4♠. Since his partner showed a relatively weak hand, South's hand must be very strong. He doubtless has about 18 or 19 points. You might think that it would be safer to pass, setting himself a target of only eight tricks in 2♠. The reason he bids 4♠ is that this is a game contract and will result in a large bonus, provided he can make ten tricks.

A game can be made by scoring 100 points on a deal. Tricks scored when a major suit is trumps are worth 30 each (only those tricks above six are counted in the score). So a contract of 4♠ is worth 120 points and will give you a game, worth a big bonus. A further bonus is awarded if you bid and make a small slam (12 tricks) or a grand slam (13 tricks). In this way players are tempted to set themselves a high target, even though they will score nothing, in fact lose a penalty, if they fall just one trick short.

After the auction that we have just seen, the contract of Four Spades will be played by the partnership in the North and South seats. South made the first bid in spades, so he will become the 'declarer'. He will play both his own (South) cards and those of his partner (North). The defender sitting on declarer's left (West) makes the opening lead and North then displays the whole of his hand, face-up on the table. This hand is known as the 'dummy' and can be seen by the other three players. The remaining three hands contribute a card to the first trick, which is played in a clockwise direction. Players must always 'follow suit' if they can. So, if a diamond is led, everyone must play a diamond to that trick unless they have no diamonds in their hand. If they cannot follow suit, they may ruff (in other words, play a trump) or discard (throw away a card in some different suit). Whoever wins the first trick will lead to the second trick and play continues in this fashion until all thirteen tricks have been played. If declarer manages to make at least ten tricks, he will have fulfilled his contract of Four Spades



and will score appropriately. If he ends with nine or fewer tricks, his side will score nothing and the defenders will collect a penalty.

Learning to bid well can easily be learned from a book. Once you know how to evaluate the strength of your hand, you must learn the meaning of the various possible bids. For example, an opening bid of 1NT is often played to show a hand with 15–17 points and no suit that contains fewer than two cards. You would open 1NT on: ♠ A Q 8 ♥ K Q 10 4 ♦ K 9 7 3 ♣ Q 5. This is known as a ‘strong no-trump’. Some players prefer to play a ‘weak no-trump’, which shows 12–14 points. Before playing a session of bridge, you have to agree which style of bidding you and your partner will use.

Suppose that your partner has opened a strong 1NT. You know that he has at least 15 points. To make the game contract of 3NT, scoring nine tricks with no suit as trumps, you generally need at least 25 points between the two hands. You will therefore need at least ten points to raise to 3NT — a hand such as ♠ K 9 3 ♥ J 8 2 ♦ A J 4 ♣ J 10 7 2.

Learning to play the dummy well takes time. You must discipline yourself to make a plan at the start of the hand. In a suit contract (where one of the suits is trumps), the general idea is to look at the possible losing cards in your hand. You can avoid losing tricks by ruffing cards in the dummy, by taking a successful finesse (such as leading towards an ace-queen combination and playing the queen, hoping that the king does not lie over the queen), and by discarding losers on winning cards in the dummy. Playing in a no-trump contract, your plan takes a different form. You count the top tricks available and seek the safest way to establish the extra tricks that you need. Suppose you are in 3NT and you hold six top tricks. You will need to establish three more tricks. For example, if dummy has ♦ K Q J 4 and you hold ♦ 10 8 6, you can play diamonds until the defenders take the ♦A, thereby establishing three diamond tricks.

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## If the game is new to you

In this chapter you will learn:

- ***about tricks and trumps***
- ***how a hand is played***
- ***the purpose of the bidding.***

Bridge is the most famous card game in the world, rivalled for the title only by poker. It is a game for four players. The players who sit opposite each other are partners and compete against the other two players.

Thirteen cards are dealt face down to each player and the first task is to 'sort out' the hand. Each player picks up his cards and places together all the cards in the same suit. The rank of the cards is the standard one:

*(highest) Ace King Queen Jack 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 (lowest)*

Within a suit it is normal to sort your cards from left to right in descending order of rank, so you might sort out your hand to look like this:

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

A bridge player, describing this hand, would say 'I held four spades to the ace-queen, three small hearts, four diamonds to the king-queen-10 and king doubleton of clubs.'