

How to play contract bridge

Contract bridge is a strategic card game for four players, divided into two partnerships. It involves bidding, playing, and scoring phases. Here's an overview of how to play:

Objective

The goal is for your partnership to score points by fulfilling a contract (a bid indicating the number of tricks you aim to win) or by preventing the opponents from fulfilling theirs.

Setup

1. Players and Teams:

- Four players form two partnerships. Partners sit opposite each other.
- The players are referred to as North, South, East, and West.

2. Deck:

- A standard 52-card deck is used (no jokers).

3. Card Ranking:

- From highest to lowest: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10...2.
- Suits are ranked: Spades (♠), Hearts (♥), Diamonds (♦), Clubs (♣), though this matters mostly in bidding.

Phases of Play

1. Dealing

- The dealer shuffles and deals all 52 cards, so each player gets 13 cards.

2. Bidding

- **Purpose:** Determine the contract and establish which suit (if any) will be the trump suit.
- **How it Works:**
 1. Bidding starts with the dealer and proceeds clockwise.
 2. Each player bids or passes. A bid must specify:
 - A **level** (1–7): Indicates the number of tricks above six your partnership will take (e.g., a "2" bid means 8 tricks).
 - A **suit** (♠, ♥, ♦, ♣) or **No Trump** (NT): Indicates the trump suit or no trump.
 3. The bidding ends when three players pass consecutively.
 4. The **final bid** becomes the **contract**. The player who first mentioned the winning suit or NT becomes the **declarer**.

3. The Play

- **Purpose:** Try to take tricks (rounds of four cards) to fulfil the contract or defeat it.

- **How it Works:**
 1. The player to the left of the declarer makes the **opening lead** (plays the first card).
 2. The declarer's partner, called the **dummy**, lays their cards face-up on the table. The declarer plays both their own hand and the dummy's.
 3. Play proceeds clockwise, with each player following suit if possible. If you can't follow suit, you may play any card.
 4. The trick is won by the highest card in the suit led, unless a trump card is played, in which case the highest trump wins.
 5. The winner of a trick leads the next one.

4. Scoring

- **Fulfilled Contract:** If the declarer's partnership takes at least as many tricks as the contract specifies, they score points based on:
 - **Trump Suit:** Major suits (♠, ♥) and No Trump score more points than minor suits (♦, ♣).
 - **Overtricks:** Tricks taken above the contract level score additional points.
- **Failed Contract:** If the declarer's partnership fails to meet the contract, the opponents score points based on the number of tricks the declarer fell short.

Strategies

- **Bidding:**
 - Communicate your hand's strength and suit preference to your partner within the bidding rules.
 - Evaluate your hand using the High Card Points (HCP) system:
 - Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1.
- **Play:**
 - Declarer: Plan your play to maximise tricks by combining your hand and the dummy.
 - Defenders: Cooperate to set the declarer by leading strategically and signalling your partner.

Bridge can be complex but is deeply rewarding as you master bidding conventions and strategies! Many players enjoy using guides or joining clubs to learn and refine their skills.

[The_Beginnings_of_Bridge.pdf](#)

[Starting_the_Bidding.pdf](#)

[Continuing_with_NT.pdf](#)

[Bridge_Cheat_Sheet.pdf](#)

Bridge_course_from_start_to_finish.pdf

Practice, practice, practice

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