



THE BASICS OF BIDDING IN BRIDGE

POINTS: To determine the value of our hand we use the points system. It goes as follows:

- Aces are worth 4 points
- Kings are worth 3 points
- Queens are worth 2 points
- Jacks are worth 1 point
- All other cards are worth 0 points
- There are 40 points in the entire deck.

The first thing we will do after sorting our hand is count the total number of points in our hand.

SUIT RANKS: The suits are ranked from highest to lowest rank as follows:

1. No-Trump
2. Spades
3. Hearts
4. Diamonds
5. Clubs

This ranking is important for the bidding portion of each bridge hand.

THE AUCTION: This is the first step of every bridge hand you will play. The auction consists of a sequence of bids by both partnerships and eventually determines what the **contract** of the hand will be. The auction will always proceed as follows:

1. The Dealer starts the auction
 - a. Each player can either **PASS** or make a **BID** when it is their turn.
 - i. A **pass** is usually used when you do not have a bid to make
 - ii. A **bid** will always show something very specific about your hand
 1. i.e. If we start the bidding with 1 Spade we are showing 12+ points and 5+ spades.
2. After the dealer the auction proceeds clockwise around the table with everyone having a chance to bid at least once.
3. If one person makes a bid the auction will continue until there are 3 consecutive passes
4. After the opening round of bidding 3 consecutive passes will always end the auction period of the hand.
5. The last bid before the 3 passes is what we call the **contract**
6. There are potentially 7 levels of bidding during the auction period.
 - a. Each suit and No-Trump can be bid at 7 different levels
7. The rankings of the suit (see above) determine what level you can make your next bid.
 - a. If one of the players previous to you has made the bid of 1 Heart there are only two bids left at the 1 level of the auction.
 - i. After the bid of 1 Heart only Spades and No-Trump can be bid at the one level.(because they are of higher rank than hearts)
 - ii. If you want to bid Clubs or Diamonds you would need to go to the 2 level to accomplish this.(because they are lower ranking than Hearts)

THE CONTRACT: The contract will always be the last bid of the auction.

- So if the last bid during the auction period was 3 Spades our contract would be 3 Spades

Who plays the hand? Whichever partnership makes the last bid of the auction will play the hand. The player from that partnership who bid the suit of the contract first will play the hand with the other player being the dummy hand.

- So if the East player started the auction with 1 Spade and the west player ended the auction with the bid of 3 Spades our final contract would be “**3 Spades by the East**”.

How many tricks to we need to take? When we finish the auction and find our final contract we will now enter the play period of the hand. The level of your final contract will determine how many tricks you need to take to be successful. The way we determine this is by adding 6 to the level of our contract.

- So in our above example of 3 Spades by the East, East would need to take 9 tricks or more to achieve a plus score.
 - Note if they do not make 9 tricks the opposing pair will get the plus score and the East/West pair will get a minus score.

GAME: Game is a level we can bid to to achieve a **big bonus score**.

Every auction should start with the idea that we want to try to get to the game level. In order to have a reasonable chance of taking enough tricks to make our game we usually need to have the majority of the points in the deck. For most of our games that point total is 25 or more. If our partnership has 25 or more points we should bid to the game level. The game level of each suit/no-trump is as follows:

- No-Trump game is at the 3 Level
 - ◆ So 3 No-Trump is a game contract
 - ◆ If you bid 3NT and make 9 tricks you will always get a bonus
- Heart and Spade games are at the 4 Level

- ◆ So 4 Hearts and 4 Spades are game contracts
- Diamond and Club games are at the 5 Level
- ◆ So 5 Diamonds and 5 Clubs are game contracts.

If our partnership has less than 25 total points we should usually try to stay below the game level.

Some games are better than others (due to scoring and the ease of taking tricks). The best games are usually in Hearts and Spades (the Major Suits) and the worst games are usually in Diamonds and Clubs (the Minor Suits). The list of games and their priority is as follows:

1. MAJOR SUIT GAMES (Spades and Hearts)

- a. 4 Level needed but there is a trump suit to use
- b. Must have a fit to be in these games
 - i. a fit is a combined 8 cards or more in a suit

2. NO-TRUMP GAMES

- a. 3 Level needed but harder when there is no trump suit

3. MINOR SUIT GAMES (Diamonds and Clubs)

- a. 5 Level needed but much harder to take 11 tricks
- b. These are typically to be avoided at all costs.
 - i. No-Trump is usually the best alternative to playing in a minor suit game.