

BRIDGE - BEGINNER'S LESSONS I - 02

Scoring and the Theory of Bidding

SCORING

At the end of each hand, points are awarded based upon the final contract and whether or not the specified contract was indeed fulfilled or defeated. Points can be earned in three ways:

1. Trick Score for Fulfilling a Contract. - For each trick bid and made (in excess of book), the Partnership is awarded points based upon the specific denomination of the final contract.

20 points per trick in Clubs or Diamonds (Minor Suits)

30 points per trick in Hearts or Spades (Major Suits)

40 points for the first trick, and 30 points for each subsequent trick in No Trump

2. Bonuses for Fulfilling Special Contracts. - An additional bonus is awarded when any Partnership bids, and then succeeds, in making a contract worth 100 or more points called a **GAME**. Thus, 5 of either Minor suit, 4 of either Major suit or 3-NT are each awarded these special, **game points** if contracted for, and made. Bonus points are also awarded for bidding and making any 6 contract (a **SMALL SLAM**), or for bidding and making any 7 contract (a **GRAND SLAM**).

Note: A team does not get game or slam bonuses, even if enough tricks are taken, unless the game or slam contracts are bid.

3. Penalties for Defeating the Opponent's Contract. - If a Partnership does not make its bid or declared contract, the Opponents receive points for defeating the contract. The penalty for **GOING DOWN** in one's contract depends upon the number of tricks by which your contract is defeated, as well as whether or not your team is specified as being either **NOT VULNERABLE** or **VULNERABLE**; i.e., either of lesser, or greater, risk, respectively.

THE THEORY OF BIDDING

4. BIDDING OF THE HAND - THE AUCTION: Once a Player arranges his/her cards into suits, he/she then determines the shape and the strength of his/her hand, so as to decide whether or not to open the bidding or, alternatively, to pass; and, if bidding, whether to commit to a Trump Suit Contract or to avoid naming a Trump Suit and to strive, alternatively, for a No-Trump Contract. The Dealer has this first opportunity to bid, and the bidding then proceeds in a clockwise rotation with each Player receiving a chance to bid or to pass. The subjective, relative strength of one's hand is computed by each Player based upon the **POINT COUNT SYSTEM**:

THE 4-3-2-1 POINT-COUNT SYSTEM

HIGH-CARD POINTS - HCP'S

ACE = 4 POINTS
KING = 3 POINTS
QUEEN = 2 POINTS
JACK = 1 POINT

DISTRIBUTIONAL POINTS

A DOUBLETON (Two Cards in a Suit) = 1 Point
A SINGLETON (One Card in a Suit) = 2 Points
A VOID (No Cards in a Suit) = 3 Points

It has been determined that a Partnership needs approximately 26 Points, or more, in combined high-card and distributional point strength, in order to be capable of making a **GAME** for which there is awarded a bonus. The level to which any Partnership bids is, thus, dependent upon the combined Partnership holding: (Approx. 19-21 points to a level of 2 of any suit or 1-NT; 22-24 points to 3 of any suit or 2-NT, 25-27 points to game in a Major suit: 4H, 4S or 3-NT; and 28 points to game in a Minor suit: 5C or 5D.)

SUIT CONTRACTS vs. NO-TRUMP CONTRACTS: When you and your Partner have at least eight (8) combined cards in any suit, think of it as a **GOLDEN FIT**. That is the suit that might well be named as the **TRUMP SUIT**. In the absence of a Golden Fit, since no one suit predominates, **NO-TRUMP** contracts are usually best. Usually hands that hold approximate equal length in all suits are suited for No-Trump contracts, whereas, hands where one or more suits predominate are appropriate for Suit contracts. Hands are considered **UNBALANCED** (favoring a suit contract) if they have one or more voids, one or more singletons, or two or more doubletons. Hands are considered **BALANCED** (favoring a no-trump contract) if they have no voids, no singletons, and not more than one doubleton. In summary, balanced hands contain a **5-3-3-2** (or) **4-4-3-2** (or) **4-3-3-3** distribution. All other distributions are unbalanced.

OPENING THE BIDDING

A. Requirements for Opening the Bidding - 1 OF A SUIT: An unbalanced distribution with, at least, minimum opening point count (Both HCP's and Distributional points are counted since it is advantageous to have an absence of one or more side suits when contemplating a suit contract.) At least 11 HCP's with an unbalanced distribution are required. In general, one tends to bid one's longest suit; i.e., "Length before Strength". (One requires a 5-card Major Suit in today's "Standard American System" of bidding, but only a 4-card Major in the British "ACOL System" of bidding)

B. Requirements for Opening the Bidding - 1 NO-TRUMP: A balanced distribution and the appropriate HCP count are both required (Only High Card Points are counted here, never distributional points, since it is disadvantageous to have suit shortness in any No-Trump contract). 15-17 HCP's are required in the Standard American System with a balanced distribution (12-14 HCP's are needed in the British ACOL System – Some ACOL Partnerships require 15-17 HCP's when the Partnership is Vulnerable). The latter requires Partnership mutual agreement as to which point count level is used.

SCORING AND THE THEORY OF BIDDING

The Scoring

1. The trick-value for various contracts can be scored only when Declarer makes the obligated contract.
Minor suits (Clubs and Diamonds) = 20 points apiece
Major suits (Hearts and Spades) = 30 points apiece
No-Trump = 40 for the first trick, 30 for each additional trick
2. *Game* equals 100 or more points. Game can be earned in one hand for contracts of 5C or 5D, 4H or 4S, and 3-NT. Contracts below these levels can only achieve part of a game, called a *part-score*. Part-scores can be accumulated to arrive at 100 points.
3. Without any game yet scored, the Partnership is *not-vulnerable*. With one game scored it is *vulnerable*.
4. The first side to win two games also wins the match (*rubber*).
5. A *small slam* requires twelve tricks to be won. A *grand slam* requires all thirteen.

The Object of the Bidding

1. The overall goal is to make games and win rubbers.
2. The immediate goal for a particular hand is to describe it accurately and to choose a mutually acceptable *final contract*.

Description

1. All hands are described by their size and shape. Size refers to the general strength. Shape refers to the distribution of the cards among the four suits.
2. Use the point-count system to evaluate the size of a hand.
A = 4 points K = 3 points
Q = 2 points J = 1 point (everything else = 0 points)
3. There are 10 points in each suit and 40 points in the deck. The average hand contains one-fourth of the total or 10 points.
4. Typically, it takes at least 13 points to open the bidding. The Responder, however, needs only six or more points to respond.
5. All suits are described by suit-length rather than strength. The minimum required length to bid a new suit is usually four cards.
6. The shape of a hand is considered to be balanced if it contains a few cards in every suit (one doubleton is allowed). The shape is unbalanced if it has a void, a singleton, or two doubletons.

Selecting the Final Contract

1. An acceptable suit for trumps ordinarily has eight or more cards in the two hands together. If given a choice, No-Trump contracts have the highest priority, Major suits contracts are second, and Minor suits are last.
2. How high to bid depends on the combined number of points in the two hands. With a total of 19-21 HCP's it is safe to play a suit at the 2-level in a suit contract, or 1-No-Trump. With a total of 22-24 HCP's it is safe play at the 3-level in a suit or to 2-No-Trump, and with 25-27 HCP's, bid game in a Major suit (4-Hearts or 4-Spades), or to 3-No-Trump.

OUTLINE FOR BEGINNERS' LESSON TWO

SCORING AND THE THEORY OF BIDDING

Sequence of Topics

- A. Welcome everyone back for the second lesson. Give them a brief review of the first lesson and ask if there are any questions.
- B. Start the new discussion by talking about the scoring.
 - 1. Introduce them to the trick-values for minors, majors, and NT, and to the notion that these scores are earned only for contracts that are bid and made.
 - 2. Explain the following concepts:
 - a) Game = 100 points
 - b) Game contracts
 - c) Part-score contracts
 - d) Vulnerability
 - e) The rubber
 - f) Small slams and grand slams
 - 3. For simplicity sake it is probably unwise to go any further than this into the nuances of scoring.
- C. The object of the bidding
 - 1. Tell them briefly about the overall goal, which is to make games and to win rubbers.
 - 2. For any one hand, however, the objective is more immediate: to arrive at a final contract that both partners are willing to accept. Explain how that creates two separate problems in the bidding:
 - a) First, how to describe the important characteristics of each partner's hand.
 - b) Second, how to use that information for choosing where to play.

D. Describing a bridge hand

1. Explain the following concepts:

- a) There are two main characteristics of every hand - the *size*, which refers to general trick-taking strength, and the *shape*, which refers to the distribution of the cards among the four suits.
- b) Every bid consists of two words that describe these characteristics. The numbers show size, the suits show shape.

2. The next subject you should discuss is hand evaluation as a basis for describing size.

- a) Explain why it is so difficult to count tricks from the perspective of just one hand. Use examples to demonstrate the problem.
- b) Introduce the 4-3-2-1 point-count as a substitute for counting tricks. Be sure to show the class a few practice hands.
- c) Don't forget to mention some of the obvious results of counting points in this manner: 10 HCP in each suit, 40 in the whole deck, 10 points as the average hand.
- d) Finally, you will need to explain why the opening bidder usually starts with 13 points, while the responder only requires six.

3. Moving along, discuss suit-length as a basis for describing shape.

- a) Explain why suits are bid according to length rather than strength.
- b) Explain the following terms:
 - Balanced hand
 - Unbalanced hand
 - One-suited hand
 - Two-suited hand
- c) Explain that it usually requires a minimum of four cards to bid a new suit. In passing, you should mention that there are some exceptions for the opening bidder which will be discussed later.

4. At this point you should introduce the notion of bidding rules as a means for giving the complete description of different kinds of hands. Tell them that you will begin to discuss the actual rules at the next lesson.

E. Settling on the final contract.

1. Reemphasize that it is description first. Settling comes later.
2. Explain how they can put partner's promised count together with their own to figure out how high to bid. Use the following chart as a general guide:

| <u>Combined Count</u> | <u>Maximum Safe Level</u> | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| | Suit. | NT |
| 19-21 | 2 | 1 |
| 22-24 | 3 | 2 |
| 25-27 | 4 | 3 |
| 28-30 | 5 | 4 |

3. Explain what a fit means for agreeing on a suit and why eight or more cards combined is required.
4. Explain the concept of majors first, no-trump second, and minors last for settling on a suit.

Notes

A. Again, there is a lot of material to cover, and you can not linger too long on some of the lesser points. The review and scoring should take no more than 15 minutes, while the final contract part can probably be done in 10. That leaves only 20 minutes for description, including the point-count.

B. If you get students at the second class who did not attend the first one:

1. If they have played before, they will fit right in for Lesson Two.
2. If they have never played before,. give them the first handout as well, and ask them to come to the next class 15 minutes early so you can review the basics with them.

PRACTICE HANDS FOR THE FOLLOW-UP SESSION

BEGINNERS' LESSON TWO

1. Again, there will be two practice hands. When they finish playing the first one, discuss it with the group, and then move on to the second one.
2. Since they will only have had an introduction to bidding theory but no particular rules to follow, let them bid intuitively on their own. When they finish with the auction, such as it is, ask them to consult with you, *before* they begin the play. Correct the denomination, if necessary, to the right suit or NT, but you need not change the level.
- 3 Be sure to compliment them along the way for anything good that they do

HAND - 3

| | | | | |
|------|--------|------|------------------|-------|
| | 1098 | | | |
| | QJ109 | | | |
| | QJ109 | | | |
| | 76 | | | |
| AQJ2 | | 543 | Dealer: | North |
| A54 | | K32 | Declarer: | East |
| 654 | | AK32 | Contract: | 3-NT |
| K32 | | A54 | Lead: | CQ |
| | K76 | | | |
| | 876 | | | |
| | 87 | | | |
| | QJ1098 | | | |

- a) Show them how two experienced bidders would get to 3-NT

P—1D —P —1S

P - 1NT-- P - 3NT

Briefly, explain the basis for each bid.

- b) Discuss the play, demonstrating again how they will fail if they simply cash all the aces and kings. Explain why it is necessary to concentrate on the spades first as the best source of extra tricks.
- c) Be sure to explain and demonstrate what a finesse is and how they can repeat it in this case. Show them as well how the fourth spade becomes a winner.

HAND - 4

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|------------------------|
| | QJ109 | | |
| | 1098 | | |
| | J109 | | |
| | AKQ | | |
| 8 | | A7654 | Dealer: East |
| A76 | | 5 | Declarer: South |
| Q876 | | K5432 | Contract: 4H |
| 65432 | | 87 | Lead: S8 |

K32
KQJ432
A
J109

a) Give the correct auction as:

P — 1H — P — 1S
P — 2H — P — 4H

Briefly, explain the reason for each bid.

b) Tell them why West might choose to lead the S8.

c) Suppose East wins the SA and returns a spade for West to trump. When South gets the lead at trick three, he/she must get the trumps out fast to prevent any more defensive ruffs. Note what happens if declarer tries to cash the CAKQ first. East ruffs and give West another ruff for down two.

d) Explain again what it means to draw trumps (even without the ace) and why it is important.