

Introduction to Bridge with MiniBridge

The Game of bridge is played in 2 distinct phases:

The Auction

The partnerships compete to win the contract

The Play

The winning partnership must now fulfil the contract

The Auction *(we will skip over blue-coloured parts of this section for now, as when playing MiniBridge we don't have an auction. More on the auction later in the course.)*

NOTE: *Blue-coloured sections of notes like this are more advanced &/or to be covered later.*

- We use compass directions (**NS/EW**) for the four players.
- The **DEALER** is the 1st player to call. A player may call **PASS** or make a positive bid.
- A positive bid **must** be higher than the previous bid.
- The first person to make a positive bid is called the **OPENER** and their partner is called the **RESPONDER**.
- After the first call, the auction continues **clockwise** until there are 3 consecutive passes.
- The **CONTRACT** is the last bid made before those passes.
- The player who first bids the final contract suit will be the **DECLARER**.

The play of the hand

- The **DECLARER** is the player who plays the hand
- **DUMMY** (this is Declarer's partner) places their cards face up on the table
- The faced cards on the table are also referred to as the dummy
- The **OPENING LEADER** is the opponent on declarer's left. They lead to the 1st trick.
- Declarer makes **all** decisions in the play of the hand, playing **both their own and Dummy's cards**
- Dummy cannot suggest a play to Declarer or touch a card until instructed by Declarer
- A **TRICK** is a collection of 4 cards – 1 from each player in turn
- A player must follow suit if possible
- If a player can't follow suit, they can play any other card
- Highest card of the suit led wins the trick (unless a **TRUMP** is played)
- The next trick must be played from the hand which won the previous trick

How the cards are placed

- The cards are placed individually in front of each player
- The cards are placed vertically (towards us) if we win the trick
- The cards are placed horizontally (towards opponents) if we lose



← The cards placed on the left here show we have won 7 tricks, and the opponents have won 4. There are 2 tricks yet to play.

Ranking of Cards in a Suit

A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Ranking of the Suits

Notrumps	NT		
Spades	♠	}	Spades and Hearts are also called the MAJOR suits
Hearts	♥		
Diamonds	♦	}	Diamonds and Clubs are also called the MINOR suits
Clubs	♣		

(Memory aid: Suits are ranked alphabetically upwards)

Naming a suit

- Naming a suit declares that suit to be **TRUMPS** (the dominant suit)
- Any card from the trump suit beats cards from any other suit
- **NOTRUMPS** means that there is **no** dominant (trump) suit

Value of the Honour Cards (HCP – High Card Points)

- The top cards of a suit (A, K, Q, J and 10) are called honours. HCPs for honours are:

A = 4	
K = 3	Each suit totals = 10 HCP
Q = 2	Each deal totals = 40 HCP
J = 1	

What is the Partnership looking for in a Contract?

Their aim is to find the best contract at the correct level. There are 3 levels to bid to:

Part-score	combined points less than 25	
Game	combined points 25-32	<i>Bid & made games score a big bonus</i>
Slam	combined points 33+	<i>Bid & made slams score an even bigger bonus</i>

What is Game?

You get a large bonus when you make a Game, but you must make a certain number of tricks to succeed. The number of tricks varies according to the trump suit or NT.

Game is:	3NT – 9 tricks
	4♥/♠ – 10 tricks
	5♣/♦ – 11 tricks

Rules of MiniBridge

Who becomes Declarer?

- Each player, starting with the **DEALER**, adds up their HCP.
- You can write the HCP in the top left box of the bidding pad in front of you. Check that the total HCP from all 4 hands adds up to 40 – and re-count if it doesn't.
- The pair with the majority of points becomes the declaring side.
- The player of that partnership with the most points is the **DECLARER**.
- If there happen to be equal HCPs between sides and/or players, resolve who is Declarer by starting with the DEALER first and then rotating clockwise.
- That is the end of the abbreviated MiniBridge “auction” phase.

What happens next?

- Declarer's partner, who is called **DUMMY**, lays out their cards set out in suits on the table so all players can see them (this only happens at this stage in MiniBridge).
- Declarer studies the dummy cards and their own hand and decides what the contract should be – first they decide whether to play in one of the **SUITS** or **NOTRUMPS (NT)**.
- Declarer looks for a **SUIT FIT** which is 8+ cards between the two hands. Look for a **MAJOR FIT** first (♥ or ♠) as this scores better than a minor (♣ or ♦) suit fit.
- If there is a **fit**, then Declarer chooses this as the trump suit.
- Trumps are then placed on dummy's right.
- If no good **fit** is possible, then choose a NT contract.
- Declarer now decides whether to bid Game, which gives a significant bonus score.
- If the combined high card point tally of both hands is **25** or over, the contract is declared in Game. Otherwise, declarer plays at the minimum level in a part-score and needs to make **7** or more tricks, which is the minimum number to make any contract.

Then what?

- The opponent on Declarer's left leads a card to start the play.
- A **TRICK** is a collection of four cards – 1 from each player in turn.
- The player who wins this first trick then leads to the second trick, and so on.
- Play continues until all 13 tricks have been completed.

Module 1: Companion Topic A – Leads

General guidance on leads:

The defenders aim to establish tricks in their longest or strongest suits. This especially applies to leading vs NT contracts. *More guidance on leads in the next module and later in the course.*

Which suit?

1. Lead the top card of a contiguous sequence of honours from a long suit. This may either win or establish tricks that you can win later.
2. If you don't have a sequence, then lead low from a long suit you have honours in (**low=like**).
3. *If you choose to lead a suit with no honours in it, lead your highest card (**high=hate**).*

Which card?

The recommended lead with a sequence of honours is **bold underlined**:

1. Lead top of a sequence of 3 or more honours:

KQJ3 KQ109 QJ97 J1097 AKJ10 10987

Tip: Later we learn more about leads. The general rule is, if you don't have an honour sequence:

- *Lead your lowest card if you have honour(s) in the suit.*
- *Lead your highest card if you have nothing of value in the suit.*

A consolidated list of recommended leads is planned for inclusion in the supplementary notes.

Module 1: Companion Topic B – Playing the Contract

Basic guidance for Declarer play – finding those extra tricks:

- Before you play anything, count how many sure tricks you have and work out how many more you need.
- Try and work out how to establish the extra tricks you need.
- You can establish extra tricks in a suit by forcing out the opponent's high card(s). For example, if you have KQJ10 in a suit – then you can create 3 extra tricks by forcing out the opponent's Ace.
- If you are in a suit contract (8+ card fit) it is usually best to “draw” trumps – i.e. play out your trumps until you have exhausted the opponents' ones.

Establish suits for extra tricks:

Example: Contract 3NT by EAST – lead ♦ Q by SOUTH

WEST	EAST
♠ J75	♠ A842
♥ AQ4	♥ K75
♦ K832	♦ A6
♣ 976	♣ KQJ10

Declarer should plan the play before playing to any tricks:

- You can see with top tricks that you can make 3 tricks in ♥s, 2 tricks in ♦s and the ♠A for a total of 6 top tricks.
- You need 3 more tricks to make your contract.
- These tricks are available from the ♣ suit, so win the ♦A and then play on your ♣ suit to establish those 3 extra tricks by forcing out the opponents ♣ A

Module 1 QUIZ

Introduction to MiniBridge

1. What is the rank of high cards in each suit?
2. What are the high card points for the four top honours?
3. In MiniBridge, who becomes the Declarer choosing the contract?
4. What do you need to bid game?
5. What are the game contracts?
6. What is a trick?
7. What do you need to choose a trump suit?
8. When do you bid no trumps?
9. What is the minimum number of tricks you need to make a contract?



In the photo above:

10. Who is the dummy?
11. Who is the declarer?
12. Who made the opening lead?
13. North won the 1st trick with the ♠A, who leads to the next trick?
14. Opening lead vs 4♠, what do you lead from ♠A52 ♥532 ♦KQJ9 ♣J83?
15. Opening lead vs 3NT, what do you lead from ♠J10972 ♥532 ♦A9 ♣J83?

Module 1 Quiz - Model Answers

1. What is the rank of high cards in each suit?	AKQJ1098765432
2. What are the high card points for the four top honours?	A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1
3. In MiniBridge, who becomes the Declarer choosing the contract?	Whoever has the most HCP from side with most HCP
4. What do you need to bid game?	25+ HCP (High Card Points)
5. What are the game contracts?	3NT 4♥ 4♠ 5♣ 5♦
6. What is a trick?	Collection of 4 cards, one from each player
7. What do you need to choose a trump suit?	A fit of at least 8+ cards
8. When do you bid no trumps?	When you don't have a fit in a suit
9. What is the minimum number of tricks you need to make a contract?	7 tricks



In the photo above:

10. Who is the dummy?	West
11. Who is the declarer?	East
12. Who made the opening lead?	South
13. North won the 1 st trick with the ♠A, who leads to the next trick?	North
14. Opening lead vs 4♠, what do you lead from ♠A52 ♥532 ♦KQJ9 ♣J83?	♦K
15. Opening lead vs 3NT, what do you lead from ♠J10972 ♥532 ♦A9 ♣J83?	♠J