**LESSON 1: STUDENT NOTES**

Introduction to Bridge

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 parts of this section for now. More on the auction 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.*
* *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 this 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
* Declarer makes **all** decisions in the play of the hand; **both their own and DUMMY’s cards**
* Dummy cannot suggest a play to 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

A group of blue playing cards

Description automatically generated

**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 | ♣ |  |

*(Tip: 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:

**Partscore** combined points less than 25

**Game** combined points 25-32

**Slam** combined points 33+

**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 Mini-Bridge**

**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 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 the partnership with the most points is the **DECLARER**.
* If there happen to be equal HCPs between sides and/or players, resolve by starting with the DEALER first and then rotating clockwise.
* That is the end of the MiniBridge abbreviated “Auction” phase, at this stage.

**What Happens Next?**

* Declarer’s partner, who is called **DUMMY**, lays out their cards in suits on the table.
* Declarer studies the dummy cards and their own hand and decides what the contract should be – 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 they choose a NT contract.
* Declarer now decides whether to bid Game, which gives the 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 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.
* Play continues until all 13 tricks have been completed.

<https://graemetuffnell.com/play/wellington/MiniBridge/MiniBridge1-Declarer>.

<https://graemetuffnell.com/play/wellington/MiniBridge/MiniBridge1-Leader>

**Lesson 1: *Companion Topic – Leads***

**General Guidance on Leads**

The defenders aim to establish tricks in their longest or strongest suits. Especially applies to leading vs NT contracts. *More on leads vs suit contracts next week.*

***Which suit?***

1. Lead the top card of a sequence. This may win or establish tricks for the defence to win later.

2. If you don’t have a sequence, then lead low from a long suit that 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 is* ***underlined***

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

**K**QJ3 **K**Q109 **Q**J97 **J**1097 **A**KJ10

2. Lead a low card - a low card promises an honour(s):

AJ87**5** K93**2** Q6**4**

3. Lead top from small cards - a high card denies an honour:

**8**742 **6**54 **8**3 **Q**7

4. Lead top of an interior sequence of honours:

K**J**103 Q**10**94 A**J**104