

Quick Introduction to Bridge

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1 Basic Concepts

1.1 Suit ranking

No Trump (NT) > Spades (♠) > Hearts (♥) > Diamonds (♦) > Clubs (♣)

1.2 Scoring Tricks. Games and Slams. Vulnerability

♣, ♦ (Minor Suit) = 20 points per trick
♥, ♠ (Major Suit) = 30 points per trick
NT(No Trump) = 40 points for the first trick, 30 points for each subsequent one

If a successful contract was doubled, the above scores are multiplied by 2; if redoubled, they are multiplied by 4. Scoring 100 points or more through contracted tricks is called making a **Game**. Bidding and making 12 tricks is called a **Small Slam**, while bidding and making 13 tricks is called a **Grand Slam**. In rubber bridge the side that made a game is said to be **vulnerable**, meaning that higher bonuses and penalties are assessed. In duplicate or Lausanne bridge, the vulnerability of each side for every deal is preassigned.

1.3 Scoring

- **Tricks** are scored as described above. The trick score is not counted unless the contract is successful.
- **Non-doubled** contracts are scored in a simple way: overtricks are counted the same way as tricks; however, each undertrick is worth -50 points non-vulnerable, and -100 when vulnerable.
- **Partial game** bonuses. If a contract is successful, but not enough to be considered a game or a slam, it is called a partial game. A bonus of 50 points is awarded for a partial.
- **Game** bonuses are 300/500 points, when non-vulnerable/vulnerable.
- **Slam** bonuses are: Small Slam, 500/750; Grand Slam, 1000/1500.
- **Doubled** contracts bring more penalties for undertricks and more bonuses for overtricks:
 - Undertricks

	first	second	third	fourth	fifth	...
non-vulnerable	-100	-200	-200	-300	-300	...
vulnerable	-200	-300	-300	-300	-300	...

 - Overtricks in a doubled contract are each 100/200.
 - If a doubled contract is nevertheless successful, an **insult** bonus of 50 points is awarded.
- **Redoubled** contracts are scored in the same way as the doubled contracts, only everything is multiplied by 2 (including the insult bonus).
- **Honors** (optional). If any player (including dummy or a defender) holds all four aces in a NT contract, his side scores an extra 150 points. A player who has any four of the five honors in the trump suit (A-K-Q-J-10) collects 100 bonus points for his side. Holding all five is worth 150 points.

*These notes are based on Stefan Carp and Mihai Ibanescu's "Quick Intro to Bridge", and completed using "Learn to Play Bridge" software by Bridge Base Inc., ©1999; and "Modern Bridge Conventions" by W.S.Root & R.Pavlicek.

2 Bidding (American Standard)

2.1 Counting Total Points

Total Points = High Card Points + Long Suit Points + Distribution Points (for the opening bid distribution points are not counted).

- High Card Points:
A = 4 points K = 3 points Q = 2 points J = 1 point
- Long Suit Points:
Add 1 point if a hand contains a 5-card suit and 1 point for each additional card in the long suit.
- Distribution Points:
These points are added only for a suit contract, where there is a good fit on the trump (the two hands combined have at least 8 cards in that suit). Void (missing suit) = 5 points, Singleton (single card suit) = 3 points, Doubleton (double card suit) = 1 point.

2.2 Recommended Total Points for Games and Slams

If one side wants to bid a game or a slam, here is the recommended minimum sum of total points: 3NT, 4♥, 4♠: 25 points. 5♣, 5♦: 29 points. Small Slam: 33 points. Grand Slam: 37 points. The last two estimates are more precise for no-trump slams. For suit slams, counting losing tricks may be a better idea.

2.3 Opening Bids

- 1NT 15–17 points, balanced distribution (no more than one doubleton, and no singleton or void), and no 5-card major suit.
- 2NT 20–21 points, balanced distribution, no 5-card major.
- 1♥, 1♠ 13–21 (total) points, 5-card suit, no longer suit.
- 1♣, 1♦ 13–21 points, see below.
- **Rules** to open 1 suit: First, make sure it is not 1NT or 2NT. Open your longest suit, if it is 5-card or more. With two 5-card suits, open with the higher-ranking suit. If no 5-card major, open with 1 of the longest minor. With equal length in both minors, open 1♦ with 4-4, and 1♣ with 3-3.
- 3NT 25–27 points, balanced distribution, no 5-card major.
- 2♣ 22+ points, but not suitable for 3NT. It can also be used to open with very strong hands, which can win by themselves 8/9 tricks (non-vulnerable/vulnerable).
- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ 12 or less (total) points, strong 6-card suit (with at least 2 of the top 3 honors). These openings, as well as the next two, are called **preemptive**, or weak.
- 3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ 12 or less points, strong 7-card suit.
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥, 4♠ 12 or less points, strong 8-card suit.
- Openings are all natural, except for 2♣, which is an example of a **forcing** bid. Forcing means that the partner should not pass this bid under any circumstances.

2.4 Responses to opening bids

- To 1M (1 Major suit)
 - **Note:** With support, total points include distribution points. Always respond with 6+ points.
 - 6–9 points, 3+ card support, single raise: 2M.
 - 10–11 points, 3+ card support, jump raise: 3M.
 - 6–9 points, 5+ card support, side singleton or void, preemptive raise: 4M.
 - 12+ points, 3+ card support, bid a new suit, which is a *forcing* bid.
 - 6–9 points, new 4+ card suit, bid new suit at level 1.
 - 6–9 points, and no possibility to raise or bid new suit, bid 1NT.
 - 10+ points, new 5+ card suit, bid new suit at level 2.
 - 13–15 points, balanced, no support, no 4-card major, bid 2NT.
 - 16–18 points, balanced, no support, no 4-card major, bid 3NT.

- To **1m** (1 minor suit): Same as for **1M**, except that support should be increased by 1 card, preferably by 2.
- **Rules** of responding to 1 suit: Raising a major suit when having support is a priority. A new suit shows 4+ cards in that suit. Responding in a 4-card major is preferred to bidding **1NT** or raising a minor. When bidding a new suit, responder should bid the longest new suit first. Respond in the higher-ranking of two 5-card new suits, but make the lowest possible bid with 4 cards in 2 or 3 new suits.
- To **1NT**
 - **Note:** Pay attention to the recommended total points for games and slams.
 - Responder controls the game, since the opening of **1NT** gives a good description of the hand.
 - With balanced distribution, no interest in a major suit: with 0–7 points, pass; with 8–9, bid **2NT** (invitation to **3NT**); with 10–15, bid **3NT** (signoff); with 16–17, bid **4NT** (invitation to **6NT**); with 18–19, bid **6NT** (signoff); with 20–21, bid **5NT** (invitation to **7NT**); with 22+, bid **7NT**.
 - 0–7 points, pass or signoff in **2♦**, **2♥**, **2♠** with 5+ cards in that suit.
 - 8+ points, and one or two 4-card majors, bid **2♣**, the **Stayman** convention (see below for details). This convention also works if responder has a 5-card major.
 - 10–15 points, 6+ card major, bid **4M** (signoff).
 - 10+ points, 5+ card suit, bid 3 of that suit (forcing, interest in slam or contract other than **3NT**).
- To **2♣**
 - **Note:** This opening is forcing—never pass, even if you have few points and long club suit.
 - 0–7 points, bid **2♦**. All other bids are game forcing, with interest in slam.
 - 8+ points, 5+ card suit, bid **2♥**, **2♠**, **3♣**, **3♦**. Two of the top three honors are preferred.
 - 8+ points, balanced hand with high card spread out among several suits, bid **2NT**.
 - After the response of **2♦**, the rebids of the opener are: With balanced hand, and 22–24 points, **2NT**; with 28–30 points, **3NT**. With unbalanced hand, rebid in a suit, with similar rules to the opening in a suit. The rebid in a suit is forcing.
- To **2♦**, **2♥**, **2♠**, **3♣**, **3♦**, **3♥**, **3♠**, **4♣**, **4♦**, **4♥**, **4♠**
 - **Note:** Responder (which controls the game) should count tricks, not points. Side Aces and Kings tend to be very valuable, while Queens and Jacks are often worthless.
 - **2NT** indicates 14+ points, invites to game. Opener responds: 3 of original suit, with minimum; **3NT**, with AKQ or AKJ in original suit; 3 of new suit, with maximum and a top card in that suit.
 - Bid **3NT** only if you have 2+ cards in the opening suit, and the other three suits are strong.
 - After a preempt, a new suit response that is not a game contract is forcing, and indicates 5+ cards. The opener will raise with support, and return to his own suit without support.
 - Consider raising partner’s preempt as a further preempt. Apply **Culbertson’s** rule to decide: to preempt opponent’s game, you can afford to lose 2 tricks when vulnerable, and 3 when not.

2.5 Opener’s rebids after opening 1 of a suit

- With minimum hand (13–15 points)
 - Make a non-jump raise of partner’s suit. First priority is to show support.
 - Make a non-jump rebid in a new suit. Second priority is to find a trump fit.
 - Make a non-jump rebid in the suit you opened. Third priority is to show extra length.
 - Make a non-jump rebid in no-trump. A no-trump rebid says: none of the above.
- With medium hand (16–18 points; 18–19 if balanced)
 - Make a jump raise of partner’s suit. Jump raise guarantees 4-card support.
 - Make a jump rebid in no-trump with a balanced hand, 18–19 points.
 - Make a jump rebid the suit you opened. Guarantees 6+ cards and limits opener to medium.
 - Make a non-jump rebid in a new suit. Remember, the rebid can be based on a minimum.
- With maximum hand (19–21 points)
 - Raise partner’s suit to game. Guarantees 4-card support.
 - Make a jump rebid in a new suit (jump shift). Can be 4+ card suit.
 - Make a double jump rebid to **3NT**, if long solid suit and stoppers in all unbid suits.
 - Jump to game in the suit that was opened. Select this rebid only if no good alternative.

2.6 Responder's rebids after 3 suits have been bid

- If minimum (6–9 points), responder can: pass a non-forcing bid; rebid **1NT**; rebid the same suit; raise one of partner's suits.
- If medium (10–11 points), responder can: jump raise partner's first or second suit; jump rebidding the same suit; rebid **2NT**. All these responses are non-forcing but highly invitational.
- If maximum (12+ points), responder can: jump one of partner's suits to game; bid his own suit at game level; rebid **3NT**; rebid in a new suit, which is forcing.
- If opener's rebid is **1NT**, responder's new suit jump rebid is forcing to game. Opener is asked to show support for either of responder's suits, or to retreat to **3NT** without support.

2.7 Slam bidding

- **Blackwood** convention: A jump to **4NT** indicates Blackwood, except for the case when it is a response to **1NT** or **2NT** (then it is an invitation to **6NT**). Blackwood asks for the number of Aces. The responses are: $5\clubsuit = 0$ or 4 Aces; $5\diamond = 1$ Ace; $5\heartsuit = 2$ Aces; $5\spadesuit = 3$ Aces. After **4NT** and its response, **5NT** is a question about the number of Kings, with the same type of answers.
- **Gerber** convention (a variant of Blackwood): A jump to $4\clubsuit$ indicates Gerber only when it is a response to **1M**, **1NT**, **2NT**.
- **Cue-bids**: A cue-bid is a bid in a side suit after the trump suit has already been agreed. A cue-bid promises a control (Ace, King, void, or very rarely singleton) in that suit. Typically, the first cue-bid in a suit shows the first round control (Ace, void).

2.8 Overcalls: After opponents opened

- An **overcall** is a bid after one of the opponents opened the bidding. The upper level for an overcall is 17 points. With 18+ points, use takeout double first, then bid your long suit. The rules for overcalls are similar to those for opening the bidding, but there are a few differences.
- A 1-level suit overcall shows at least 5 cards in that suit, while at level 2 shows at least 6 cards (a strong suit is preferable at level 2). Requirements are lower if the hand has many points.
- A 1-level overcall can be made on as few as 10 total points. Overcalls at the 2-level suggest a hand that is strong enough to open the bidding.
- A **1NT** overcall promises a stopper in the opener's suit.
- A jump overcall to level 2, 3 or 4 is like a preemptive opening bid at level 2, 3 or 4.
- Responses to overcalls are similar to responses to the opening bid.

2.9 Takeout Doubles: After opponents opened

- A double is takeout when: neither the doubler nor his partner have previously made a bid (previous passes are OK); it is either doubler's first or second turn to bid; the opponents have bid either 1 or 2 suits (no-trump is not a suit). In particular, doubling a no-trump contract is for penalty, not for takeout. Takeout double is forcing.
- A takeout double means enough points for an opening bid (13+ points), and good support (3+ cards) for the other suits. A 4441 distribution (singleton in the opponent's suit) is ideal for a takeout double. The more points the doubler has, the more his distribution is allowed to stray from 4441. With 18+ points, there is no distribution requirement.
- Responses to takeout doubles:
 - Length and strength in opponent's suit, pass, switching to penalty double.
 - 0–7 points, bid longest suit (preferably a major suit) at minimum level.
 - 7–10 points, at least one stopper in opponent's suit, bid **1NT**. Balanced hand not guaranteed.
 - 11–12 points, similar hand as above, jump to **2NT**.
 - 8–11 points, constructive values, make jump bid.
 - 12+ points or when you know best contract, inform partner quickly, e.g. jump to game.
 - 13+ points, strength, unsure which game contract to play, make a **cue-bid**, i.e. bid opponent's suit.

2.10 Negative Doubles: After partner opened suit and opponent interfered

- After a suit overcall of partner's 1-level suit opening, an immediate double (through 3♠) is for takeout—the negative double. Required strength: 7+ point at 1- and 2-level, and 9+ points at 3-level, with no upper limit.
- If there is exactly one unbid major, doubler promises 4+ cards in that major. Notice also: after 1♣ – 1♥, if partner bids 1♠ instead of using the negative double, this promises 5+ spades.
- If there are two unbid majors, doubles promises 4+ cards in one of the majors. Exception: after a 1♦ overcall of partner's 1♣, doubler promises 4+ cards in *each* major.
- If both majors have been bid, doubler promises 4+ cards in each minor.
- Rebids by opener:
 - Any minimum bid (below) game is natural and indicates a minimum hand (13–15 points). This is not forcing and often ends the bidding.
 - Any jump bid is natural and indicates a medium hand (16–18 points). Invitational to game.
 - Cue-bid in opponent's suit indicates maximum hand (19–21 points) and is game forcing.
 - Pass (rare) converts negative double into penalty. Used only at 2-level and above.
- Rebids by negative doubler (with enough points, or after cue-bid):
 - 1NT, new suit, or simple preference (back to partner's suit) indicates 7–10 points.
 - 2NT, single raise, or jump preference shows 11–12 points (or good 10 points), invites to game.
 - Cue-bid in opponent's suit (2- or 3-level) shows 13+ points and is game forcing.

2.11 Stayman

- In response to partner's opening of 1NT, 2♣ is Stayman. It shows 8+ points and at least one 4+ card major. Responses by opener are:
 - 2♦, no 4-card major.
 - 2♥, 4 hearts, possibly 4 spades.
 - 2♠, 4 spades, at most 3 hearts.
- Rebids by the Stayman (2♣) bidder:
 - With 4-card support, single raise with 8–9 points, or raise to game with 10–15 points.
 - If no 8-card trump fit, bids in NT are under the same rules as direct no-trump responses to 1NT.
 - 8–9 points, 5+ card major, bid major at 2-level.
 - 10+ points, 5+ card major, bid major at 3-level (game forcing).
 - 10+ points (usually more), 5+ card minor, bid minor at 3-level (game forcing, interest in slam).
 - 4♣ is Gerber (see above); 4M is a natural signoff.
- After interference by opponents:
 - If 1NT is doubled, Stayman is off, 2♣ is a weak rescue showing clubs.
 - If 1NT is overcalled, Stayman is usually off. However, with 9+ points, cue-bid is Stayman.
 - If 2♣ is overcalled, Stayman is still on, but opener can pass if the usual bid is not possible.
- Stayman works also after 2NT, but responder needs 4+ points to bid 3♣.

2.12 Jacoby transfers (optional)

- In response to partner's opening of 1NT, 2♦ and 2♥ require **transfer** to 2♥ or 2♠, respectively.
- If this convention is used, responses to 1NT have to be altered accordingly. When using transfers, 2♠ after 1NT can be chosen to indicate 5–5 in the minors.
- After opener transfers, these are some possible rebids by the transfer bidder:
 - Pass, if game is out of reach.
 - The other major at minimum level is game forcing and indicates 5–5 in the majors.
 - 2NT invites to game. Responder usually has 5-card major and at least a semi-balanced hand.
 - 3 of a minor shows 4+ card suit and is game forcing, often a slam try.
 - Raise opener to 3-level with 6+ card suit, invitation to game if opener is maximum (17 points).
 - Raise to 4 (game) is signoff. 4NT is not Blackwood, but invitation to small slam.
- Transfer can be bypassed by opener at the 3-level (3♥ or 3♠). This shows maximum hand, 4-card support, and at least a side doubleton. Invitation to game.

2.13 Michaels Cue-Bid (optional)

- After opponent opened with 1 of a suit, a cue-bid of 2 of the same suit is Michaels. This indicates a 5-5 shape or 5-4 with 4 in a major, and it must be usually either weak (at most 13 points) or strong (18+ points). With medium strength (13-15), it is better to overcall.
- Over 1♣ or 1♦, cue-bid shows both majors. Over 1♥, 2♥ shows spades and an undisclosed minor. Over 1♠, 2♠ shows hearts and an undisclosed minor.
- Responses to Michaels assume that the cue-bid is weak, and go as follows:
 - Bidding a suit shown by partner indicates support (3+ cards), but no interest in game.
 - Jump to a suit shown by partner shows good support. If below game, preemptive.
 - 2NT after a major suit cue-bid asks for partner's minor.
 - Cue-bid (again) in opponent's suit is game forcing and often a slam try.
 - New suit not shown by partner shows an independent and is not forcing.
 - 2NT after a minor suit cue-bid is game forcing. 3NT is natural, signoff.

2.14 Other useful conventions

- **Splinter bids:** Use an unusual jump bid to show a singleton or a void in that suit, and excellent trump support for partner's last bid suit. Game forcing, with slam interest.
- **Weak jump overcalls:** Use a jump overcall in a suit to show a weak hand with a good suit (6+ cards). Jump directly to the contract you think optimum.
- **Unusual no-trump overcalls:** Use a jump overcall to 2NT to indicate the presence of a 5-5 distribution. Over a minor, 2NT shows 5 hearts and 5 of the other minor. Over a major, 2NT shows 5-5 in the minors. Requirements and responses are similar to those for the Michaels cue-bids.
- **Astro:** Used after opponent opened with 1NT, needs 10-15 points (or less if extreme distribution). The overcall of 2♣ indicates 4+ hearts and 5 of a minor; 2♦ indicates 4+ spades and 5 of a minor. Responses are similar to those for the Michaels cue-bids.
- **Lead-directing doubles:** Typically they are used as the doubling of an artificial bid (for example doubling 2♣ during Stayman), and requires a lead from partner in that suit.
- **Redoubling a takeout double:** Indicates 4-4 in the majors and 8+ points.
- **Gambling 3NT opening:** Open 3NT with 16-21 high card points, a 7-card solid or semi-solid minor suit (with AKQ,AKJ,AQJ), and outside stoppers in at least two (often all three) suits. Furthermore, opener should never have a void or small singleton. A very solid 6-card is also accepted. Partner should pass most of the time, any other declaration being interpreted as a slam try.

3 General advice

3.1 For bidder

- Be honest! Don't try to fool your opponents with strange bidding. More often than not, you will only manage to fool your partner, with disastrous results.
- For partial games and games, count points. For preemptive bids and slams, count losing tricks.
- Try always to find the optimal contract, even if it is below a game or a slam, and even if it means letting your opponents play. Scoring is very important in deciding on the optimal contract.

3.2 For declarer

- Plan your game at the beginning. Watch for circulation between declarer and dummy.
- Account for unfavorable distributions: playing the hand hoping you will be lucky is a bad strategy.
- Memorize the cards that were played, try to picture the ones that have remained.

3.3 For defence

- Be careful in choosing the leading card, or, if partner leads, try to understand the lead. Often, failing opponents' contract depends on the lead and an initial good coordination of the defence.
- In a suit contract, playing a high card and then a low card by defender usually signals a doubleton.