

Card Game for 4 Players

BRIDGE

Introduction

These are the rules for Contract Bridge, which is identical to Auction Bridge except for the scoring. Auction Bridge developed from Bridge-Whist, which, in turn, was born of Whist, a game still played today in some quarters. Without doubt, Bridge is the most popular partnered card game in the English-speaking world, and in much of the remainder also.

The bidding process in Bridge has grown to be so complex and the game has been taken so seriously by so many, that I haven't the space to discuss strategy or tactics. The following is a statement of the basic rules, sufficient for the novice to get started, and no more. Those who wish to play Bridge well are encouraged to read several of the many thousands of books offering advanced instructions.

Players

Four. Two sets of partners positioned across from each other.

Objective

A game — which we will call a “session” — of bridge consists of two or three “games.” When a team has won two of these games, they have won the “rubber” and the session is finished. The winner is the team that has the most points at the end of the session. (This is usually, but not always, the team that wins the rubber.)

Deck

The standard 52-card deck. The cards rank: Ace (high), King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 (low). The suits vary in power: no-trump (strongest), then spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs (weakest). Spades and hearts are considered “major” suits; diamonds and clubs “minor” suits.

The Deal

Players should agree on who shall be the first dealer, or else choose by cutting the deck or some other random method. Subsequent hands are dealt by each player in turn in a clockwise rotation. Af-

ter the deck is thoroughly shuffled and cut, the cards are dealt clockwise, one card at a time to each player, face down. Each player thereby receiving 13 cards.

It is customary to have two decks available so that one can be dealt while the dealer's partner shuffles the deck just used. The dealer has the prerogative of shuffling last, but the deck must be cut by the player on the dealer's right immediately prior to the deal.

The Auction

The right to name trump is determined by a bidding process in which players state the number of tricks that they will be contractually obligated to take in excess of six. For example, a bid of 2 hearts is a bid to win eight tricks with hearts as trump.

The dealer bids first, followed in clockwise rotation by the other players. Each may bid or pass until a bid is followed by three passes, at which time the contract is set and play commences.

Each succeeding bid must be higher, in either suit or quantity, than those before it. Thus, a bid of 2 clubs is higher than a bid of 1 club, and a bid of 3 spades is higher than a bid of 3 diamonds.

Instead of making a bid in turn, a player may “double” an opponent's bid. This has no effect on the bidding process (other than the doubler not making a bid in that round) but it does affect the scoring of the hand. When a bid has been doubled, the next player in turn may “redouble” it. Passing or doubling does not affect a player's right to bid at his next turn. A player cannot double her partner's bid.

If the auction starts off with four passes in a row, the hand is quit and the next dealer starts anew.

The Play

Once the contract has been set the person who first bid the winning suit is the declarer. The player to the left of the declarer lays down a card

to initiate the first trick. At this point the declarer's partner spreads his cards face-up on the table. These are called "the dummy" and should be arranged in columns by suit, with the trump suits on his right. The declarer plays in turn from the dummy and from her hand. The declarer's partner does not participate further in the playing of the hand. Play continues (in a clockwise rotation) around the table until four cards have been played.

The winner of each trick leads to the next.

Each player must play a card of the same suit as the card led, unless they have no such card in their hand. If a player is void in a suit, she may play any other card from her hand. It is not necessary to play a higher card than those that have been played (unless it is the only card of that suit available).

A trick is won by the highest trump card played in that trick. If no trump is played, the trick is won by the highest-ranking card of the suit led.

As each trick is won, it is placed with the other tricks taken by that team in such a manner that the number of tricks taken can be clearly seen by all players at all times.

Scoring

Scores are recorded on paper having the common "We – They" columns, with the uncommon addition of a horizontal line about midway down that divides each column. This allows scores to be recorded both "below the line" and "above the line."

A team scores **below the line** only for contracts that it has bid and made. If the declarer fails to make her bid, nobody scores below the line. The score below the line is equal to the number of tricks bid multiplied by the value of the trump bid. This also depends on whether the winning bid has been doubled or redoubled.

Trick Values

	Normal	Doubled	Redoubled
No Trump	40/30*	80/60*	160/120*
Spades	30	60	120
Hearts	30	60	120
Diamonds	20	40	80
Clubs	20	40	80

*first trick/additional tricks

A team is the winner of the first game when its score below the line totals 100 points or higher. Then, another horizontal line is drawn below those scores and a new game tally is begun. If the same team wins the second game, then they have won the rubber and the session is over. If the other team wins the second game, then a third game is played to determine the winner of the rubber. Once the session is over, all points below and above the line are totaled and the team with the highest score wins the overall game (or session).

Points are recorded **above the line** for seven sorts of achievements. Note that being "vulnerable" means that a team has won one game.

For each extra trick taken in addition to those bid, score points according to the above table.

For being dealt four of the five "honors"(A-K-Q-J10) in trump, score 100 points. For all five honors or for all four aces, score 150 points.

For making a doubled or redoubled contract, score 50 points.

For taking all 13 tricks, a "Grand Slam," score 1500 points if vulnerable, 1000 if non-vulnerable.

For taking 12 tricks, a "small slam," score 750 if vulnerable, otherwise score 500.

For winning the rubber in three games, score 500 points. For winning in two games, score 700.

For making more tricks than bid when doubled, score as follows:

Per Overtrick Values

	Normal	Doubled	Redoubled
No Trump, Spades, & Hearts	30/30*	100/200*	200/400*
Diamonds & Clubs	20/20	100/200	200/400

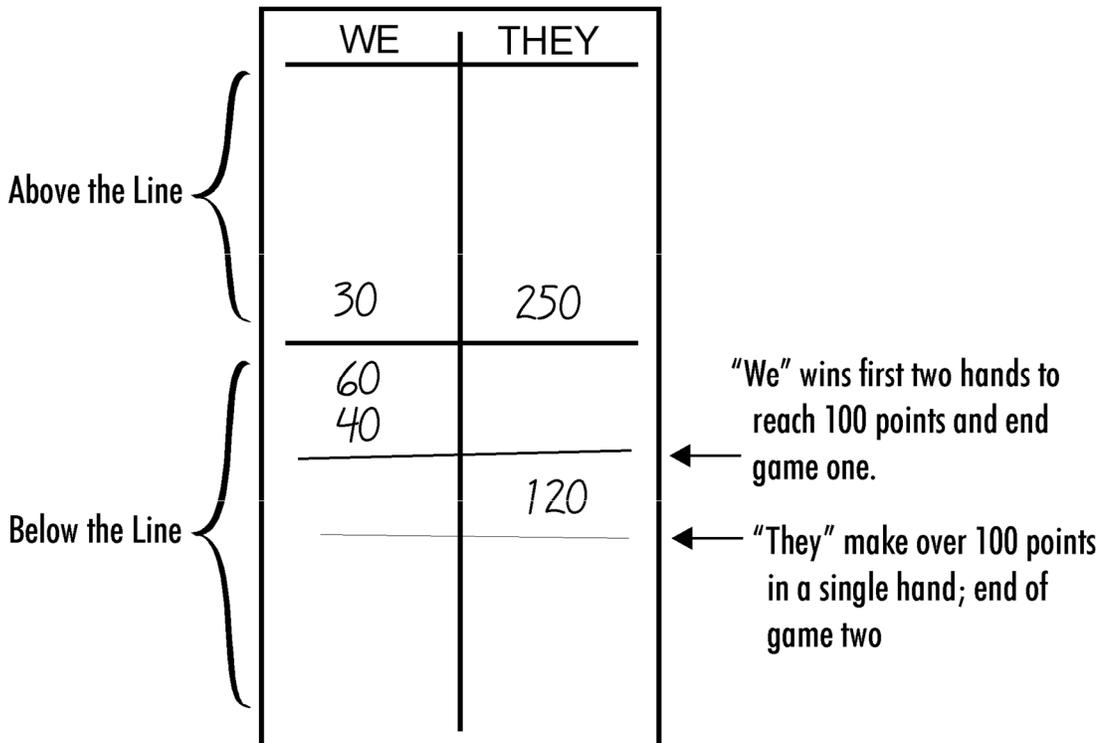
*non-vulnerable/vulnerable

For preventing the declarer from making his bid, the opposing teams scores for each undertrick depending upon whether declarer was vulnerable or doubled.

Awarded to Opponents Per Undertrick

	Vulnerable	Non-Vulnerable
Normal	100	50
Doubled	200/300*	100/200*
Redoubled	400/600	200/400

*first trick/additional tricks



Bidding Guidelines

These are general, but they should prove useful until you can refine them by further study and practice.

Bids are made based on the point value of the cards in one's hand. Aces are worth 4 points each, Kings are worth 3 points, Queens 2 points, and Jacks are worth 1 point each. In addition, a void (i.e. no cards in a suit) is counted as being worth 3 points, a singleton is 2 points, and a doubleton is worth 1 point.

If a hand contains at least four cards of the same suit containing 3 points, or five cards of the same suit, that suit is considered "biddable." For a suit to be rebid, it should consist either of five cards with 7 points or of six or more cards.

To make an opening bid, a player should have 14 points; or 12 points with two biddable four-card suits; or 11 points with two biddable suits, one of which is major. The opening bid generally should be one of whatever suit is longest (i.e., contains the most cards). If the hand is well distributed with 16 to 18 points, bid one no trump. If the hand is worth 22 points or more, bid two of the longest suit or two no trump depending on distribution.

As you play Bridge, you will find that there is lots of information and advice available concerning how to respond to the opening bid, and how to respond to the various responses, and so on. Also, players have established diverse "conventions" that are methods by which partners attempt to communicate the strength and content of their hands. But beyond the opening bid I dare not go. ■

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