

VUBC UNIT 547 WHAT IS BRIDGE?

What is bridge? Bridge is a game of cards that is known as the “chess” of card games, because it requires strategy and skill. Bridge is played with a partner, against another partnership. Partners sit opposite each other at the bridge table. Using the “language of bidding,” the partners communicate with each other during the first phase—the auction / bidding.

The game begins. A deck of 52 cards having four suits (Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades) is shuffled and dealt to the four players, each getting 13 cards. The players count their points. High cards have value (A, K, Q, J). Sequences have value (J, 10, 9, 8). Distribution is important, like a long suit (K, Q, J, 9, 7, 6, 2).

Each partnership bids for the contract. The highest bid wins the contract and the bid itself either names a “trump suit” where players can “trump” opponents’ cards in a suit they don’t hold, or names “no trump” where each suit has equal value.

The pairs bid for the number of “tricks” they think they can make. What is a *trick*? An example: a heart is led. All players follow in hearts. The highest heart wins. EXCEPT, if a player no longer has any hearts, the player may choose to play a trump card and win the trick. Of course, players cannot do this if the contract is No Trump.

When a partnership makes their bid, they receive points for this and any extra tricks made (overtricks). If they do not make their bid, their opponents get points.

A peculiarity of bridge bidding and play is the assumption of the first six tricks in the bidding process. An opening bid of 1 No Trump means that the bidder is promising to take six tricks (which is called “Book”) and one more. If this person’s partner answers 3 No Trump, the partnership is saying they intend to win **at least** nine tricks. In No Trump, nine tricks is “game.” Making a game contract earns the partnership bonus points. In the four suits, here are the minimum bids needed to reach game: 4 Hearts and 4 Spades (an intention to win at least 10 tricks); 5 Clubs and 5 Diamonds (an intention to win at least 11 tricks). Bidding and making Small Slam means taking 12 tricks, and a Grand Slam means that we take **all** of the tricks! There are additional bonus points for making a small slam and even more bonus points for making a Grand Slam.

The auction/bidding is often quite competitive with both sides bidding. Often neither pair reaches game, and the side that plays the contract will receive some points if the partnership makes their bid. This is called a part score.

Bridge players are-always learning. Bridge challenges you and stimulates the mind. Players develop focus, concentration, deduction and reasoning skills. And you will meet new friends! Try it!