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4th Edition

# Bridge

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**Eddie Kantar**

*Grand Master in the World  
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by **Eddie Kantar**

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## Bridge For Dummies®, 4th Edition

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# Introduction

**B**ridge, quite simply, is the best card game ever. No other game even comes close. Of course, I may be a little biased. I've been playing since I was 11 years old, when my best friend's father asked our gambling group, "Why don't you guys find a good game to play?" What I found was a great game, and I've never looked back.

What exactly is it about bridge that fascinates countless millions, has fascinated countless millions, and will continue to fascinate countless millions? Let me count the ways:

- » **Bridge is a social game.** You play with a partner and two opponents. Right off the bat, you have four people together. Inevitably, you meet a host of new friends with a strong common bond, the game of bridge. Bridge is not an "I" game — bridge is a "we" game.
- » **Bridge is a challenging game.** Each hand is an adventure; each hand presents a unique set of conditions that you react to and solve. You have to do a little thinking. Studies have proven that playing bridge keeps the brain cells active, which is helpful when you get a bit older.
- » **Bridge is a game of psychology.** If you fancy yourself a keen observer of human behavior, look no further. You have found your niche. Players aren't supposed to show any emotion during the play, but the dam always has a few leaks.
- » **Bridge is fun.** Hours become minutes! Playing bridge can mean endless hours of pleasure, a host of new friends, and many laughs.

## About This Book

If you're an absolute beginner, this is the book for you. I take you on a hand-held tour explaining the fundamentals in terms you can understand. I walk you through the different aspects of the game, showing you real-life examples so you can feel comfortable with the basics before you start to play.

If you have played (or tried to play) bridge before, this book still has much to offer you. I condense my years of experience with the game into tips and hints that can make you a better player. And you don't have to read the book from start to finish if you don't want to; just flip it open and find the chapter or part on the topic that you want to know more about.

If you're a bridge novice, eventually you'll have to play a few hands to feel like a real bridge player. This book offers an easy-to-follow path that will increase your comfort zone when you actually have to play on your own!

This edition includes an appendix that covers the bidding system most commonly used in the United Kingdom, called *Acol*. This appendix is a big help to up-and-coming players throughout the United Kingdom. The play of the hand sections in the main part of the book are standard fare throughout the world, and the section on defensive carding is also played by the majority of players worldwide as well.

## Conventions Used in This Book

No, not bridge “conventions” yet! The conventions in this section are the ones I use to help you navigate this book with maximum ease.

For example, I use a few symbols when referring to cards and bids. In a deck of cards, you have four suits: spades (♠), hearts (♥), diamonds (♦), and clubs (♣). When I refer to a particular card, I use abbreviations. For example, the six of spades becomes ♠6, and the jack of hearts transforms into ♥J. However, when discussing a bid or contract, I use 6♠, not ♠6.

I talk a lot about cards in this book. Sometimes I want to show you all the cards in your hand, and sometimes I want to show you the cards in every player's hand (that's 52 cards). Instead of listing those cards in the text, I set them aside in figures so you can more easily see who has which cards. The cards in a hand are separated by suit, making it even easier to see each player's holdings.

In these figures, you may notice that each of the four players has a designated direction: You see a North, a South, an East, and a West. These directions make it easier for you to follow the play as it goes around the table. For most of the book, you are South. If I want you to see something from a different perspective, I tell you where you're seated.

When I talk about bidding (especially in Parts 3 and 4), I use a table like the following to show you how a bidding sequence progresses.

South	West	North	East
1♣	1NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Don't worry about what this bidding means. For now, I just want you to understand that you read these tables starting at the upper-left corner, continuing to the right until the fourth player, and then going to the next line, the first player's second bid. For example, for the preceding sequence, the bidding starts with the first player, South (who bids 1♣) and continues to the right until the fourth player, East (who passes). Then the sequence goes back to South, the first player, who passes.

To top it off, I use a few other general conventions:

- » *Italics* highlight defined terms.
- » **Boldface** text highlights keywords in bulleted lists and the action part of numbered steps.
- » Monofont is used for web addresses.
- » If you're short on time, you can skip the information in sidebars (the shaded boxes). Those bits are interesting but nonessential.

At times, you may think I overrun you with rules, but I'm just giving you guidelines, something to get you started. When you begin to play, you'll see occasional exceptions to these guidelines. In bridge, "always" and "never" don't apply. Just remember that bridge is based most of all on common sense. After reading this book, you'll have a good idea of the basics and what to do when you encounter new situations.

## Foolish Assumptions

I'm assuming that you're not going to understand everything you read the first time around. Nobody does. Think of bridge as a foreign language. Patience, patience, patience.

I'm also assuming that you will go out and find three other people who want to play bridge so you can practice. This is the ultimate bliss for a beginner.

And I'm assuming you're either someone who wants to understand the basics of bridge or a seasoned player who wants to pick up a few new techniques. I hope I'm not foolishly assuming that I can help both groups.

## Icons Used in This Book

The icons used in this book highlight important topics and help you pick out those that interest you.



REMEMBER

If you can't remember everything you read in this book, don't worry; you're not alone. But do try to keep these items in mind.



TIP

This icon flags helpful hints that make you a smarter player, faster.



WARNING

Watch out! You could lose many tricks or something equally disastrous if you ignore items marked with this icon.

## Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that gives you a rundown of the four phases of a bridge hand, bidding tips, bridge etiquette, and a chart of the points scored when you make your contract. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and search for "Bridge Cheat Sheet" in the Search box.

## Where to Go from Here

You can start anywhere you like and read the chapters in any order. If you are completely new to bridge, your best bet is to head straight to Chapter 1 so you can get a feel for the game.

I describe many plays and sample hands throughout this book. To get a real feel for the game, try reading the book with a deck of cards nearby. In fact, you can save yourself weeks or months of time if you lay out the cards that you see in the example diagrams and play the cards as I suggest.

Better yet, try to find three other players who want to play this exciting game. You can read the book together and actually practice playing the hands as you read. Experience is the best teacher, and if you're not ready for a real hand, you can use the material in this book as a kind of dry run.

If, during the course of reading this book, you feel like you just have to get in on the action, feel free to jump into any game you can find. Play as often as you can. It's the best way to learn. You can find information about bridge clubs and tournaments in Chapter 21.

Finally, log on to the Net for more bridge info or even online play. Yes, you can play online! Check out Chapter 22 for more on this topic.





# 1

## **Getting Started with Basic Notrump Play**

### **IN THIS PART . . .**

Get an idea of what you need to play bridge plus an overview of how the game should be played.

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Become familiar with the concept of sure tricks and how they can help you in the play of the hand.

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Discover how to establish winning tricks at notrump play.

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Pick up additional techniques to refine your notrump play.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

Gathering what you need to play bridge

Taking a quick look at the basic points of the game

Building your bridge skills with available resources

## Chapter 1

# Going to Bridge Boot Camp

**Y**ou made a good choice, a very good choice, about learning to play bridge. Perhaps I'm biased, but bridge is the best card game ever. You can play bridge all over the world, and wherever you go, you can make new friends automatically by starting up a game of bridge. Bridge can be more than a game — it can be a common bond.

In this chapter, I talk about some basic concepts that you need to have under your belt to get started playing bridge. Consider this chapter your first step into the game. If you read this whole chapter, you'll graduate from Bridge Boot Camp. Sorry — you don't get a diploma. But you do get the thrill of knowing what you need to know to start playing bridge.

# Starting a Game with the Right Stuff

Before you can begin to play bridge, you need to outfit yourself with some basic supplies. Actually, you may already have some of these items around the house, just begging for you to use them in your bridge game. What do you need? Here's your bottom-line list:

- » Four warm bodies, including yours. Just find three friends who are interested in playing. Don't worry that no one knows what he's doing. Everyone begins knowing nothing; some of us even end up that way.
- » A table — a square one is best. In a pinch, you can play on a blanket, on a bed, indoors, outdoors, or even on a computer if you can't find a game.
- » One deck of playing cards (remove the jokers).
- » A pencil and a piece of paper to keep score on. You can use any old piece of paper — a legal pad, the back of a grocery list, or even an ancient piece of papyrus will do.



TIP

I've been playing bridge for a long time now, so let me offer you a few hints on how you can make getting started with the game a little easier:

- » Watch a real bridge game to observe the mechanics of the game.
- » Follow the sample hands in this book by laying out the cards to correspond with the cards in the figures. Doing so gives you a feel for the cards and makes the explanations easier to follow.

## Ranking the Cards

A deck has 52 cards divided into four suits: spades (♠), hearts (♥), diamonds (♦), and clubs (♣).



REMEMBER

Each suit has 13 cards: the AKQJ10 (which are called the *honor cards*) and the 98765432 (the *spot cards*).

The 13 cards in a suit all have a rank — that is, they have a pecking order. The ace is the highest-ranking card, followed by the king, the queen, the jack, and the 10, on down to the lowly 2 (also called the *deuce*).



REMEMBER

The more high-ranking cards you have in your hand, the better. The more honor cards you have, the stronger your hand. You can never have too many honor cards.

## Knowing Your Directions

In bridge, the players are nameless souls — they are known by directions. When you sit down at a table with three pals to play bridge, imagine that the table is a compass. You're sitting at due South, your partner sits across from you in the North seat, and your opponents sit East and West.

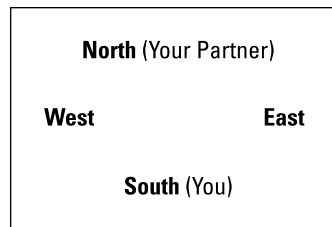


REMEMBER

In Parts 1 and 2 of this book, you're South for every hand, and your partner is North. Just as in the opera, where the tenor always gets the girl, in a bridge diagram, you're represented as South — you are called the *declarer*, and you always get to play the hand. Your partner, North, is always the *dummy* (no slur intended!). Don't worry about what these terms mean just yet — the idea is that you play every hand from the South position. Keep in mind that in real life, South doesn't play every hand — just in this book, every newspaper column, and most bridge books!

Figure 1-1 diagrams the playing table. Get acquainted with this diagram: You see some form of it throughout this book, not to mention in newspaper columns and magazines. For me, this diagram was a blessing in disguise — I never could get my directions straight until I started playing bridge.

**FIGURE 1-1:**  
You're South, your partner is North, and your opponents are East and West.



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## Playing the Game in Four Acts

First and foremost, bridge is a partnership game; you swim together and you sink together. Your opponents are in the same boat. In bridge, you don't score points individually — you score points as a team. (I cover scoring in Chapter 20, and I suggest you just ignore keeping score until you have a handle on the ins and outs of the game.)



REMEMBER

Each hand of bridge is divided into four acts, which occur in the same order:

- Act 1. Dealing
- Act 2. Bidding
- Act 3. Playing
- Act 4. Scoring

## Act 1: Dealing

The game starts with each player seated facing his or her partner. The cards are shuffled and placed on the table face down. Each player selects a card, and whoever picks the highest card deals the first hand. The four cards on the table are returned to the deck, the deck is reshuffled, and the player to the dealer's right cuts the cards and returns them to the dealer. (After each hand, the deal rotates to the left so one person doesn't get stuck doing all the dealing.)

The cards are dealt one at a time, starting with the player to the dealer's left and moving in a clockwise rotation until each player has 13 cards.



TIP

Wait until the dealer distributes all the cards before you pick up your hand. That's bridge etiquette lesson number one. When each player has 13 cards, pick up and sort your hand using the following tips:

- » You can sort the cards in any number of ways, but I recommend sorting your cards into the four suits.
- » Alternate your black suits (clubs and spades) with your red suits (diamonds and hearts) so you don't confuse a black spade for a black club or a red diamond for a red heart. It's a bit disconcerting to think you're playing a heart, only to see a diamond come floating out of your hand.
- » Hold your cards back, way back, so only you can see them. Think vertically. Winning at bridge is difficult when your opponents can see your hand.

## Act 2: Bidding for tricks

Bidding in bridge can be compared to an auction. The auctioneer tells you what the minimum bid is, and the first bid starts from that point or higher. Each successive bid must be higher than the last, until someone bids so high that everyone else wants out. When you want out of the bidding in bridge, you say "Pass." After three consecutive players say "Pass," the bidding is over. However, if you pass and