

“TAKING TRICKS”
(a version of “Mini-Bridge,” common to many beginning bridge classes)

PRELIMINARIES: Place North/East/South/West placards and decks of cards on card tables set up for 4 with several extra chairs available in case the number of students is not evenly divisible by 4.

LAUNCH: *Let’s start out trying a simple trick taking game.*

ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to sit four to a table. [Note: If 1-3 extra students, set up a couple tables of 3 or 5 players <or> ask them to be observers rather than players.]
2. Ask one person at each table to shuffle the deck and deal the cards to self and the other players.
3. Ask players to count their cards to verify they have 13. [17 or 18 cards for tables of 3 players; 10 or 11 cards for tables of 5 players.]
4. Ask players to pick up their cards and arrange them into four suits—the spades together, the hearts, diamonds and clubs together.
5. Explain every player will play their cards on an individual basis, not as partners with the person seated across the table even though that’s the way the actual game of bridge is played.
6. Ask North to choose a card—*any card!*—and place it face up on the table immediately in front of himself/herself (not in the middle of the table). Explain this card, the first card played, is called the “opening lead.”
7. Ask East to play one of the cards in the same suit and place it on the table close to the edge (not in the center). *This is called “following suit.”* If East does not have a card in that suit, East should choose another card to play which is called a “discard.”
8. South and then West should likewise play, placing their cards right in front of themselves.
9. Explain the ranking of cards: Ace is highest, followed by King, Queen, Jack, etc. State that *the highest card in the suit that was led wins the “trick”—a trick is the cards played in one round of 4 cards.* [Note exception for tables of 3 or 5.]
10. Ask players to not mix their cards with other players’ cards on the table. Instead each player should keep the cards they play along the table edge, right in front of themselves.

“Taking Tricks” (Continued)

11. Ask the player who won the trick to turn it face down, vertically close to the table edge “pointed” toward himself/herself. Those who did not win the trick, should turn their card face down horizontally in front of themselves, “pointed” toward the winner. *You will learn why this placement of cards for each trick is important shortly.*
12. Ask the player who won the trick to choose any card to lead for the next “trick.”
13. Ask the player to the left to follow suit if he/she can, if not, play any card but realize that cards from a different suit cannot win that trick. The play continues clockwise until all players have placed a card on the table. Everyone turns the card over and places it overlapping the card played on the first trick—with the winner’s card placed vertically and the other three cards placed horizontally in front of themselves, all cards pointing toward the winner.
14. Remind players that the winner of each trick, leads a card for the next trick. Ask them to play all their cards and to leave the (13) cards lined up in front of themselves when they are finished.
15. After all the tables have finished, remark that this method of keeping track of tricks lets us review what’s been played.
 - a. Ask players to turn face up only their vertical cards (winners) and place them back in the lineup of the cards they played. *Some of you may have none and that’s OK.* Losing cards are to remain face down. Ask players to discuss the winning cards. *Why did those cards “win” their trick?*
 - b. Reassure group that they may have chosen different cards to play if they were being scored BUT “our” purpose is just to analyze which cards win tricks.
 - c. Ask players to check their horizontal cards (losers) and look for high cards. *Any Aces? Kings? Queens? Jacks? Tens? Why did these high cards lose?*

WRAP-UP

16. Invite players to volunteer their observations:
 - a. *Aces, Kings, Queens and Jacks were more likely to win tricks*
 - b. *Low cards in long suits won tricks when others couldn’t follow suit*
17. Ask what bridge terminology has been learned (trick, following suit, discard, opening lead, Review the Rules of Bridge: *An opening lead is made; Everyone must follow suit if they can; the highest card in suit led wins the trick, and the player who wins the trick leads a card for the next trick.*
18. Reinforce: *You’ve already learned the basic principles of playing a “trick taking” game. Next, you’ll learn tips and strategies on how to win more tricks.*