

MINIBRIDGE: The Rules

Players and Cards

There are four players in two fixed partnerships. Partners sit facing each other. It is traditional to refer to the players according to their position at the table as North, East, South and West, so North and South are partners playing against East and West. The game is played clockwise.

A standard 52-card pack is used. The cards in each suit rank from highest to lowest: A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2.

Play

The object in bridge play is to win tricks for your side. A trick consists of four cards, one from each player in turn, clockwise around the table. Hence, there are 13 tricks to be won on each deal. The first card played to each trick is called the lead.

- **If it is your turn to lead, you may play any card in your hand.**

After the lead, however, the next three players have an obligation:

- **You must follow suit (play the same suit as the lead) if possible.**

For example, if a spade is led and your hand contains any spades, you must play one of them (you can play any spade you want). If you have no spades, the obligation is gone.

- **If you cannot follow suit, you may play any card in your hand.**

Except for the duty to follow suit, card play in bridge is a free choice. You play the cards any way you want, which is one of the reasons bridge is a superior game.

After four cards have been played, the trick is complete. The rules for determining the winner of a trick are explained below, along with a few examples.

If a trick contains no trump card, the highest card of the suit led wins it.

1.

<u>Lead</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>
♠10	♠J	♠K	♠6

Spades are led and the king is the highest spade played, so it wins the trick.

2.

<u>Lead</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>
♦7	♦8	♥9	♥10

Diamonds are led and the 8 is the highest diamond played, so it wins the trick (assuming hearts are not trumps).

If a trick contains a trump card, the highest trump played wins it.

3.

<u>Lead</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>
♣J	♣Q	♣A	♥2

If hearts are trumps, the ♥2 wins because it is the only trump played.

4.

<u>Lead</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>
♠9	♥6	♥7	♠J

If hearts are trumps, the ♥7 wins because it is the highest trump played.

After each trick, one player of the side that wins it should collect the cards and arrange them neatly so the number of tricks won can be counted easily. Play continues this way for all 13 tricks.

Deal

The cards are shuffled by the player to dealer's left and cut by the player to dealer's right. The dealer deals out all the cards one at a time so that each player has 13. Turn to deal rotates clockwise.

It is traditional to use two packs of cards. During each deal, the dealer's partner shuffles the other pack and places it to the right. The dealer for the next hand then simply needs to pick up the cards from the left and pass them across to the right to be cut. Provided all the players understand and operate it, this procedure saves time and helps to remember whose turn it is to deal, as the spare pack of cards is always to the left of the next dealer.

Bidding

The players count their points (A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1) and announce in turn their point count.

The partnership that together holds the most points will play the hand (in the case where both pairs hold 20 points, the cards should be re-dealt). The partner with the most points of the two will become the declarer.

The declarer's partner becomes the dummy and displays the dummy's cards at once, after which the declarer determines:

- a. Whether to play in a trump contract or a no trump contract (look for at least an eight-card fit between both hands).
- b. Whether to be in game (25 or more points) or to go for a part score (fewer than 25 points).
 - To bid for a **part score**, declarer will have to take at least seven tricks
 - To bid for a **no-trump game**, declarer will have to take at least nine tricks
 - To bid for a **major suit game** (hearts or spades as trump), declarer will have to take at least 10 tricks
 - To bid for a **minor suit game** if in game (clubs or diamonds as trump), declarer will have to take at least 11 tricks

Then declarer's left-hand opponent will lead, after which the play procedure is as described above.

Scoring

- **If the required minimum of tricks is reached the declaring side earns:**
 - A) 50 points **plus**
 - B) When trumps are clubs or diamonds: 20 points per trick made after the 6th trick. **Or**
When trumps are spades or hearts: 30 points per trick made after the 6th trick. **Or**
At no-trump: 10 points + 30 points per trick made after the 6th trick. Plus
 - C) When game is bid and made, the playing side will receive an extra 250 points. Bidding game is lucrative, yet riskier!
- **If the required minimum of tricks is not reached the defending side earns:**
 - A) Any down trick costs 50 points for each trick

Examples:

Trump, no game:

- Clubs or diamonds are trump, eight tricks will yield $50+(8-6) \times 20=90$ points
- Hearts or Spades are trump, eight tricks will yield $50+(8-6) \times 30=110$ points
- With only five tricks (two short of the minimum seven), it will cost $2 \times 50=100$ points to the defenders.

Notrump, no game

- Notrump, eight tricks will yield $50+10+(8-6) \times 30=120$ points.
- Notrump, nine tricks will yield $50+10+(9-6) \times 30=150$ points.

Notrump, game

- Nine tricks will yield $50+10+(9-6) \times 30+250=400$ points

Trump, game

- Hearts are trump, 10 tricks will yield $50+(10-6) \times 30+250=420$ points.

- Clubs are trump, 11 tricks will yield $50+(11-6)\times 20+250=400$ points