

Bridge Today University
Learn Bridge 101 with Larry King

SAMPLE First lesson of 101

Lesson 1 - The Basics

Hi. Welcome to Bridge Today University. My name is Larry King. Let me tell a bit about myself before we begin. I live in Grass Valley, California, with my wife Nancy and two children, Sky and Katie. Nancy and I are retired from our former jobs as tennis promoters for the Virginia Slims Women's Tennis Tour. We were also involved with the promotion of Roller hockey and now we are working in two areas. The first, as you know, is Bridge Today University, where I'm teaching this beginners' course. The other is Prizemoney Bridge, a tournament circuit around the USA.

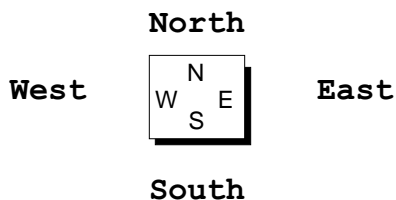
There is nothing I know better for maintaining brain power than the game of bridge. No matter how old you are, you did a very smart thing when you decided to learn this game. Besides being the greatest game in the world today, it's guaranteed to develop and keep your mind strong. Tennis is definitely the best competitive sport for all-round health (swimming is great as an exercise, too), but bridge is *The Mental Sport*. You'll soon see what I mean.

I have to tell you before we start that I'm not a great bridge player - to put it mildly. I may be the longest running "novice" in bridge - I've been sidetracked a lot over the years with other things, like tennis and roller hockey and wives and children, but bridge certainly changed my life. I began playing in college in 1962 at Los Angeles State. I played in the "Inferno," the student lounge. One day, the person who taught me bridge, Marcos Carriedo, said he wanted me to meet someone. Marcos was the top tennis player at LA State and he introduced me to his mixed doubles partner. Her name was Billie Jean Moffitt. So it all started with bridge. A few years later, Billie Jean and I played bridge at the University of Cal Berkeley, in the "Bears Lair." It was a "duplicate" game (where the bridge hands are duplicated at all the tables in order to eliminate the luck factor) that took place once a week in the lounge at night. I think we came in third, but Billie Jean was so nervous, her legs ached from the tension even though I played most of the hands.

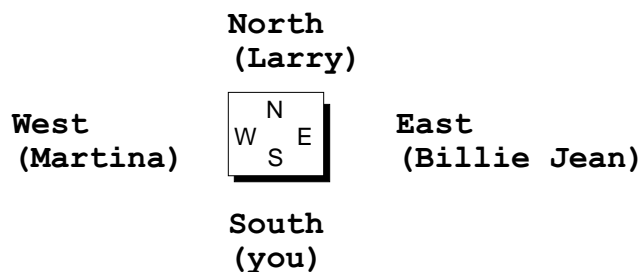
I won't go into my whole life right now (later perhaps), but to make a long story short I married Billie Jean (that's how she became Billie Jean King) and we had a successful career marketing women's tennis. In the 1980's I met and married my present wife,

Nancy, while working together on Virginia Slims events and Bridge Today Magazine All-Star Games. Bridge has now replaced tennis in my life as my number one sport. Enough talk. Let's get to the fundamentals of bridge. What is bridge? Well....

1. It's played with four people (these days you can play against a computer as well, but the computer simulates the other 3 people).
2. It's more like doubles tennis than singles, because you have a partner to contend with (my partners tell me this a lot).
3. Your court is an ordinary square table and four chairs. You sit across from your partner, one side sits North-South and the opponents sit East-West (or vice-versa).



The people sitting North and South are partners. And the people sitting East and West are partners. Let's pretend we are going to deal out one hand. I'll sit North and you can be my partner, South. We can play against Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilovna, sitting East and West. Lucky for us, this is bridge - not tennis.



Now instead of tennis racquet and ball, our equipment includes a deck of 52 playing cards (no jokers) and a scorepad. In this course we are going to be learning by computer, so our equipment is going to be a "virtual deck of cards" and everything will be written on the computer screen. Let's take a look at a deck of cards:

SUITS

Spades ♠	A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Hearts ♥	A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Diamonds ♦	A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Clubs ♣	A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

These are all 52 "pieces." There are 13 cards in each suit, the ace (A) is the highest rank, then king (K), queen (Q), jack (J) and ten (10) down to the 2.

$$13 \text{ times } 4 = 52$$

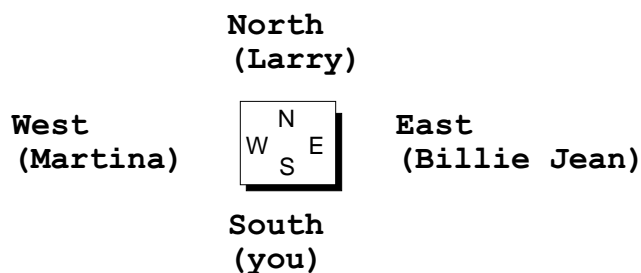
The suits are also listed in rank: Spades ♠ highest, then Hearts ♥, Diamonds ♦ and Clubs ♣. You can remember the ranking of suits by the alphabet: C, D, H, S – clubs (the lowest) up to spades (the highest). What does "rank" mean?

The same as in real life. The higher the rank the more important – usually.

The deck of 52 cards is shuffled at the bridge table (by anyone), or "shuffled" by the computer when you play on your computer. Then the cards are dealt (by the Dealer) clockwise one by one (starting with the person on the Dealer's left) around the table, so that in the end everyone has received 13 random cards, using up all the cards.

$$\text{Again, } 13 \text{ times } 4 = 52$$

The Set-Up



Here we are again. Notice you can't see anybody's cards. After each player has been dealt his 13 cards, the four players sort their cards carefully so nobody else at the table can see them (peeking and talking is absolutely taboo). It's best to sort your cards in suits, so it's easy to visualize "your hand."

"Hand" Has Two Meanings

"Your hand" means the 13 cards you're dealt, but we also use the expression "a bridge hand" to mean all four hands - all 52 cards and everything that took place from the time the cards were dealt until the conclusion, which may take about 10 minutes (for example, someone might say to you: "We played a very interesting hand last night.").

Let's suppose you are playing live bridge at a card table, and you're dealt the following 13 cards (the suits here are identified with "♠," "♥," "♦," or "♣" for "Spades," "Hearts," "Diamonds," or "Clubs," in front of each card):

♠8, ♥7, ♦4, ♥3, ♠K, ♣2, ♦6, ♠J, ♣A, ♥5, ♣Q, ♠A, ♦2

All these different cards can be confusing, so we sort these cards into suits:

♠ K J A 8 ♥ 3 7 5 ♦ 4 2 6 ♣ 2 Q A

We can still do better. Let's put the cards into the correct ranking order with the highest card of each suit to the left and so forth. Now we have:

♠ A K J 8 ♥ 7 5 3 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ A Q 2

Our bridge "hand" is pretty clear. Good news: If we were dealt these cards while playing computer bridge, we wouldn't have to sort them. The computer does this for us. This is one advantage of computer bridge. In this course, we're going to learn how to visualize our "hand" as we see it on many computer bridge games and in newspaper bridge columns. This is the exact same hand again:

A K J 8
7 5 3
6 4 2
A Q 2

This is a bridge hand, 13 cards, distributed into four suits, in four horizontal rows. Which suit is which?

Spades: A K J 8
Hearts: 7 5 3
Diamonds: 6 4 2
Clubs: A Q 2

There are those suits again in the order of rank. But I prefer you go away from today's lesson with the ability to *remember* the suit ranks without seeing the words. So I'm going to lay out the hands *without* labeling each suit. After just a few tries you should be able to know which suit is which.

A K J 8
7 5 3
6 4 2
A Q 2

Without looking back:
Which suit is diamonds?

Answer: the 642

Which suit is clubs?

Answer: the AQ2

Which suit is spades?

Answer: the AKJ8

If I ask you now which suit is hearts and you don't know, I will personally refund your money.

Seriously, if you are having a problem with this just look back one page and read through again. Remember, no one is looking – one of the advantages in learning privately by Email. And trust me, this is a hundred times easier than hitting a tennis ball back over the net on the first lesson. All this will eventually become natural to you.

How We Play Bridge

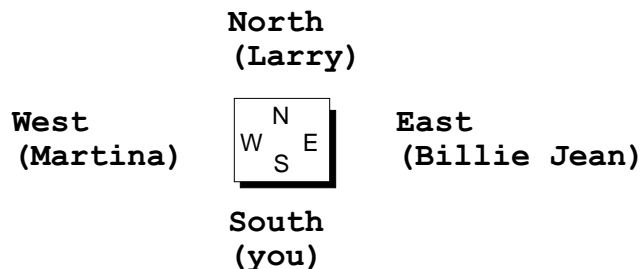
There are two main parts to a bridge deal:

- (1) the bidding; and
- (2) the play of the cards.

In this first lesson, we'll take a look at (2) the play of the cards (we'll get to the bidding in the next lesson).

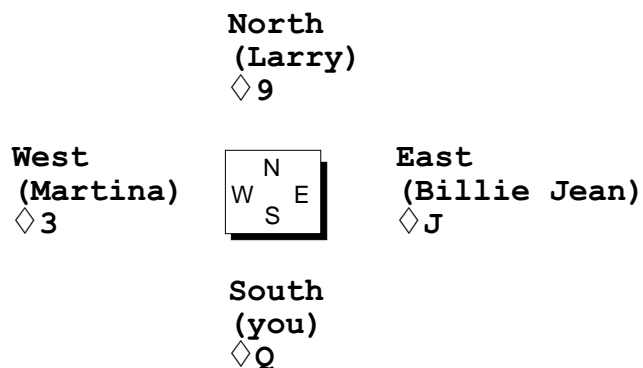
Tricks

In the play of the cards, we keep score of the number of "tricks" won by each side. For example, at our bridge table:

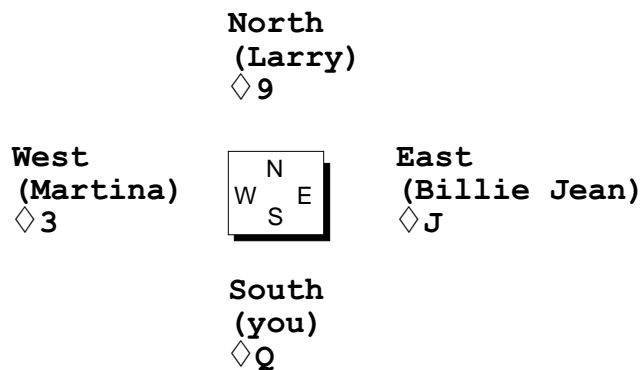


You and I are a pair against Martina and Billie Jean, so if you win a trick and then later I win a trick, it goes on the same side of the ledger.

Here's how you win a trick: Each player puts a card in the same suit face up on the table, and the highest card wins the other three cards, gathered together in a pile, called a "trick." Here's an example.



Suppose the player in the West seat goes first. Martina plays the 3 of diamonds, North plays the 9 of diamonds. East plays the Jack of diamonds and South plays the Queen of diamonds. Who do you think has won this "trick"?



You won the trick! You played the highest ranking card in the suit first led (diamonds). There's more to this, but I just wanted to give you a simple example to start with. After you win the Queen, these four cards are gone from the deal, and it's recorded that North-South (you and I) have won one trick. As South you now get to lead a new card of your choice (from your remaining 12 cards) and when everyone else also plays a card, this will constitute a second trick. This goes on until there are no more cards left. So how many tricks would you calculate are in one bridge hand?

There are exactly 13 tricks in the course of one bridge hand. Why?

Because there are 13 cards in everyone's hand. After 13 plays of putting a card on the table, there are no more cards left. Believe me, this is not complicated - if you want complicated, try tennis scoring, with the dreaded 15-love, moving to the left, then the right and 30-all, and deuce, and lots of expressions that make a lot less sense than bridge terminology. By the way, at the end of this lesson, I'll list for you all the bridge terms from today's class.

Let's Practice

To help you practice what we've learned today, I'm going to guide you through some quiz questions. If you're still not clear on all these points by the end of the lesson, please contact me by Email with any questions you have.

Quiz

In each diagram, can you tell me who wins the trick? In each case, everyone plays a card of the same suit.

(1) North
(Larry)
Q

West (Martina)
J

N
W E
S

East (Billie Jean)
2

South (you)
3

(2) North
(Larry)
9

West (Martina)
4

N
W E
S

East (Billie Jean)
K

South (you)
A

(3) North
(Larry)
10

West (Martina)
9

N
W E
S

East (Billie Jean)
J

South (you)
8

(4) North
(Larry)
2

West (Martina)
A

N
W E
S

East (Billie Jean)
Q

South (you)
K

(1) North
(Larry)
Q

West
(Martina)
J

	N	
W		E
	S	

East
(Billie Jean)
2

South
(you)
3

Answers:

(1) Larry (North) won the trick with the Queen. In diagram (2) it was Larry's turn to play first.

(2) North
(Larry)
9

West
(Martina)
4

	N	
W		E
	S	

East
(Billie Jean)
K

South
(you)
A

(2) You won the trick as South with your ace. Billie Jean almost won the trick with her king, but your ace was higher than her king. It was now your turn to lead a card.

(3) North
(Larry)
10

West
(Martina)
9

	N	
W		E
	S	

East
(Billie Jean)
J

South
(you)
8

(3) Billie Jean (East) won the trick with her Jack.

(4) North
(Larry)
2

West
(Martina)
A

	N	
W		E
	S	

East
(Billie Jean)
Q

South
(you)
K

(4) Martina won this trick with her ace. You almost won the trick, but Martina's ace topped your king.

Question:

After the first four tricks, what is the trick score in your calculation?

Answer on next page....

Answer to question on page 9: 2 for us and 2 for them. Remember, the tricks are not counted individually but in partnerships.

In Lesson Two, we will learn more about tricks and try to understand the play of the cards. Also, I asked Martina and Billie Jean to come to our lesson in person, so we'll get to chat with them a bit as well. Now here's a review of today's lesson, followed by the list of the bridge terms we learned. See you in a few days.

Review of Today's Lesson

* We play bridge with four people, two against two, facing each other at the card table: North-South versus East-West.

* We use an ordinary deck of cards with four suits, Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs.

* Each suit has 13 cards, ace highest, then king, queen, jack, ten and down to the lowest, the 2.

* Someone deals the 52 cards, clockwise, until everyone has 13 cards.

* Each player sorts his hand (or if playing by computer, it comes sorted) in the four suits.

* We are now ready to play. There are two parts: the bidding and the play. The play of the cards begins with one player putting a card face up on the table. Now everyone at the table must follow suit if he can. Each player puts a card face up on the table and the highest card wins the other three cards, called a "trick."

* Whoever wins a trick gets to play first to the next trick. There are 13 tricks in a bridge hand, so at the end of 13 tricks, we have a ledger with the number of tricks won by North-South and the number of tricks won by East-West.

Bridge Terms We Learned Today (in Alphabetical Order)

bidding = the first part of a bridge hand (to be explained next lesson)

C = Clubs, the lowest ranking suit

D = Diamonds, one suit above Clubs in rank

deal = give everyone at the table 13 cards, clockwise, one at a time

dealer = the person who deals the cards

deck of cards = 52 cards, 13 in each suit

duplicate bridge = form of bridge where the hands at each table are duplicated

E-W = East-West, one of the partnerships at the bridge table

H = Hearts, the next-to-highest ranking suit

hand = the cards you hold

hand = a complete "hand" of bridge, from beginning to end

lead = the person who initiates a trick by putting a card on the table is making a "lead."

N-S = North-South, one of the partnerships at the bridge table

opponents = the people who are sitting to your left and right

partner = that nice person sitting across from you who is on your side

play = when you put a card on the table you "play" the card (Someone might say to you: "It's your play.")

rank = could refer to the four suits or the 13 cards of each suit; the four suits are ranked: S, H, D, C. The 13 cards are ranked: A K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2.

S = Spades, the highest ranking suit

shuffle = the dealer shuffles the deck before he deals (in computer bridge the computer does this for you).

suit = there are four suits, Spades, Hearts, Diamonds and Clubs

trick = Each player puts a card face up on the table and the highest card (of the same suit that was led) wins that trick; there are 13 tricks in a bridge hand, and then the hand is over.