

Basic Bridge

Introduction to Standard American

Rank of the Suits	
Clubs	lowest ranking
Diamonds	next highest
Hearts	next highest
Spades	highest suit
Notrump	Outranks all suits

Hearts and Spades are the MAJORS.
Clubs and Diamonds are the MINORS.

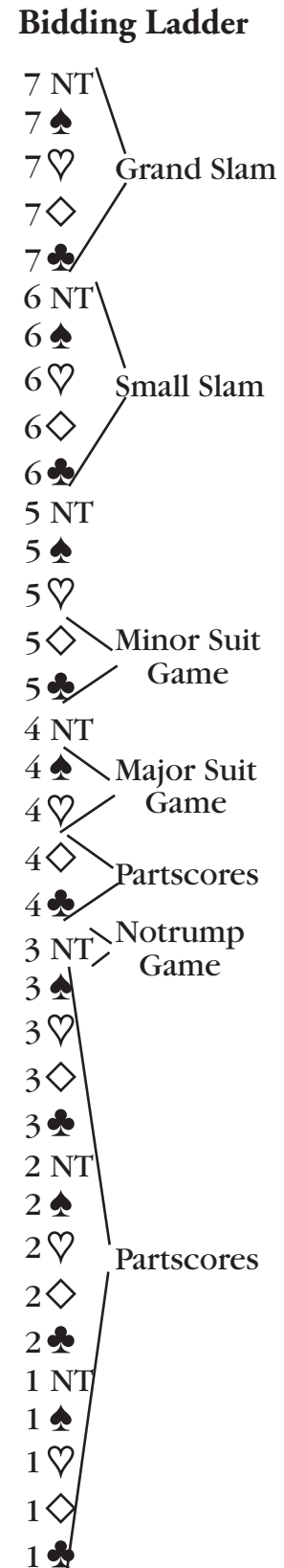
Rank of the Cards	
Ace	highest ranking
King	next highest
Queen	next highest
Jack	next highest
10	
9	
8	
7	
6	
5	
4	
3	
2	lowest

Bidding is an Auction

To buy something at an auction, you must keep making a higher and higher bid until no one wishes to bid any higher.

What you “buy” at a bridge auction is the right to name the trump suit, or else to stipulate that no suit at all will be trump.

The bidding ladder indicates the rank of the bids, from 1 Club, which is lowest, to 7NT, which is highest.



The Auction Creates a Contract

Bids consist of a number and a suit, or else a number and “notrump.”
“Pass” is not a bid, it is a “**call**.”
“Double” is not a bid, it is a “call.”

The final bid establishes what the trump suit is. It is the suit that is named in the bid. Of course, it may be “notrump” instead of a suit.

The number named in the bid establishes the number of tricks that the bidder’s side must win in order to fulfill the “**contract**.” If the final bid, for example, is 4 Spades, then spades are the trump suit, and the bidder’s side must take 10 tricks to fulfill their contract.

The number of tricks needed to make the contract is always the number named in the bid plus six more tricks. The first six tricks won by the bidding side are called “**book**.” To make a contract, you must win the six tricks of a book plus the number of extra tricks named in your final bid.

The Contract and Scoring

If you make your contract, you will score points for your side.

If you do not make your contract, the defending side will score points.

Bidding is a Language

Bidding is not just an auction. The bids (and passes) that you make express certain aspects of your hand. Partners make agreements about what the various bids should mean.

Here is an example of a language meaning being given to a bid. When your partner is the first player to bid and partner says “1 Heart,” partner tells you that she has 5 hearts and a hand of above average strength.

These agreements between the partners about the meanings of the bids make up a “**bidding system**.”

This course teaches a bidding system called “**Standard American**.” Once you know it, you will be able to “speak bridge” with tens of thousands of other bridge players throughout the United States and Canada who also know how to “speak” Standard American.

Because the bidding system gives language meanings to your bids, bidding is a conversation you are having with your partner about what you have in your hand. You may make a bridge statement, partner may make a bridge response to your statement, and you may then perhaps say something further. Some conversations are short, some are longer. Part of conversing is talking. Another part is listening. Bidding is talking and listening.

Bids tell your partner about two things:

- **the lengths of your suits**
- **the power of your hand.**

Evaluating Your Strength

Ace = 4 HCPs (High Card Points)
King = 3 HCPs
Queen = 2 HCPs
Jack = 1 HCP

Later you will learn how to give yourself more points based on having short suits. Points for short suits do not apply at the initial point of evaluating your hand.

Basic Aim of Bidding

Each bid you make will express either the points you possess, or the length of a suit, or both the length of a suit AND your points.

By talking together you and your partner will determine how high to bid and which suit is your best combined suit.

How High to Bid

Based on your bidding conversation with partner, determine your combined total point count, then select your contract level:

Grand Slam	37 points
Small Slam	33 points
Minor Suit Game	29 points
Major Suit Game	26 points
Notrump Game	26 points

Strive to bid games in majors & notrump.

With less than 26 points, try to keep the bidding as low as possible.

Opening at the 1 – Level

There is only 1 opener on each hand. It may be you or your partner. Or, it may be one of the opponents. The **opener** is the first player to make a bid other than Pass.

The guidelines for opening the hand apply to bids made by the opener.

Open all hands with 12 or more High Card Points.

1st Priority: Open 1 heart or 1 spade

You must have a 5-card major suit or longer.

K4 AQJ98 QJ8 984
Open this hand 1 heart

2nd Priority: Open 1 notrump

You must have 15 to 17 HCPs, and your hand must be balanced. (No voids, no singletons, and no more than 1 doubleton.)

K4 AQJ9 QJ8 K1097
Open this hand 1NT (notrump)

3rd Priority: Open your longer minor.

If both minors are only 3 cards long, then open 1 club. If both are 4 cards long or longer, open 1 diamond.

KJ97 A1075 75 A107
Open this hand 1 club

KJ97 A1075 A107 75
Open this hand 1 diamond

KJ97 A107 A107 753
Open this hand 1 club

KJ9 A10 A1075 10753
Open this hand 1 diamond

The Concept of a Fit

Having a fit does not mean stomping your feet while making loud rude noises. It means you and partner combined have 8 cards together in a suit. 8 or more cards together in a suit is called a fit.

Your fit may consist of 5 cards in one hand and 3 in the other, or 4 of the suit in each hand, or some other combination. We may speak of various fits in the following manner:

5 – 3 fits
4 – 4 fits
6 – 2 fits
5 – 4 fits
6 – 3 fits
5 – 5 fits
and so forth

In particular we want to find a fit in a major suit. If we don't have one, we want to head toward notrump.

The QUEST For an 8 Card Major Suit Fit

Your QUEST is to find 8 cards together in a major suit. If you find this 8 card fit, then that suit will be your trump suit.

If you don't find 8 cards together in a major, then play in a notrump contract.

Minor suit games may be bid if you have a singleton, a void, a note from your mother and a note from your doctor.

Responder's Objective

The **responder** is the partner of the opener. If partner was the opener, you are the responder. If you were the opener, partner is the responder. If one of the opponents was the opener, the responder is the other opponent.

Responder will listen to the opening bid and then select a response using the guidelines provided in this lesson. Generally speaking, responder wants to express her point count and assist in the QUEST to find 8 cards together in a major. If a major suit fit does not exist, responder will want to cooperate to find the right level for a notrump contract. Occasionally your side will have to settle for a minor suit contract. Always checkout the majors first and then notrump before deciding to play a contract in a minor suit.

Responder's Point Ranges

0 to 5 points	Subminimal
6 to 9 points	Minimal
10 to 12 points	Invitational
13 and up points	Game Forcing

Responder must learn how to express to Opener the number of points responder holds. You will learn how to express your point count range as shown above.

Pass Opener's bid when you hold the subminimal range of 0 to 5.

You MUST bid with 6 points, even if you don't feel well.

Responding to 1 of a Major

Case 1: You have no fit

6 to 9 points: Stay at the 1 level
 Over 1 spade bid 1NT
 Over 1 heart bid 1NT
 or you can
 bid 1 Spade if you
 have 4 or more
 spades

10 or more points: Bid at the 2 level
 Over 1 spade bid 2 Hearts if you
 have 5 hearts or
 more.
 bid 2 of your longer
 minor.
 Over 1 heart bid 1 Spade if you
 have 4 or more
 spades
 bid 2 of your longer
 minor

Note that the bid of 1 spade over 1 Heart shows 4 or more spades and 6 OR MORE points.

Case 2: You have a 3 card fit

6 to 9 points: Raise to 2 of the suit

10 to 12 points: Bid at the 2 level
 Over 1 spade bid 2 Hearts if you
 have 5 hearts or
 more.
 bid 2 of your longer
 minor.

At your next bid, raise Opener's major.

Over 1 heart bid 1 Spade if you
 have 4 or more
 spades

At your next bid, jump a level in your partner's major.
 bid 2 of your longer
 minor

At your next bid, raise Opener's major.

13 or more points Bid at the 2 level
 Over 1 spade bid 2 Hearts if you
 have 5 hearts or
 more.
 bid 2 of your longer
 minor.

At your next bid, jump to game in partner's major.

Over 1 heart bid 1 Spade if you
 have 4 or more
 spades

At your next bid, jump to game in partner's major
 bid 2 of your longer
 minor

At your next bid, jump to game in partner's major

Case 3: You have a 4 card fit

6 to 9 points: Raise to 2 of the suit

10 to 12 points: JUMP raise to 3

13 or more points Bid 2 Notrump
 (You will get more info on this auction later in the course).

Responding to 1 of a Minor

Case 1: You have a 4 card major

6 or more points Bid 4 card majors
 up the line

Up the line means heart ahead of spades.

Case 2: You do not have a 4 card major

Usually your hand will be balanced, so that you have no singletons or voids. Presuming you are balanced, bid notrump and show your points:

1NT	6 to 10 points
2NT	11 or 12 points
3NT	13 to 15 points

If your hand has no 4 card major and if it also has a singleton or void, you will have to make a bid that will not be explained at this time.

Practicing and Testing

The next page consists of hands for you to practice on. You can practice opening, and you can practice responding. The answers to the practice hands appear on the page following the practice.

You may also look at the practice page as a test page, testing your ability to answer the practice questions. So your first time or two through the practice hands, you are practicing. After that, keep repeating the practice as a test. When you get them all correct, you will have mastered the very basics of Standard American.

Where You are Now? What's Next?

If you have practiced, you now know how to open most bridge hands correctly. This is not trivial knowledge. Many players, even very experienced ones, do not open their hands the right way.

You also know how to make the majority of correct first responses to the opener. This is extremely important knowledge. Many players never become good bidders because they have never properly absorbed these beginning basics. These basics are an absolute prerequisite for good bidding.

Still, even though what you have learned is very important, you are very much a beginner. Please consider yourself fortunate that so many fun discoveries about bridge still lay ahead of you. Learning bridge is challenging. But the rewards of bridge go totally off the chart. Bridge can become a lifelong hobby that brings not only the fun of playing cards, but an entire world of friendships and social interaction. I wish you luck on the journey ahead.

Practice and Test

What do you open the following hands:

1. AJ975 K104 A1086 9 _____
2. 108 AKJ98 AJ8 974 _____
3. AQJ86 KQ842 4 98 _____
4. QJ864 AK1042 84 3 _____
5. AQ4 KJ73 AQ6 1085 _____
6. Q7 AQ6 AQJ84 J106 _____
7. AJ64 K106 KJ54 Q3 _____
8. AJ6 K10 Q874 K984 _____
9. AJ64 K1085 K54 K6 _____
10. AJ64 A85 Q54 K63 _____

With the following hands, respond to an opening bid of 1 Heart:

11. K53 KJ4 98652 86 _____
12. AK84 J105 984 753 _____
13. Q1084 KJ86 A75 75 _____
14. Q106 KQ5 A7542 75 _____
15. A106 KQ5 A7532 75 _____
16. A106 KQ95 A753 K6 _____
17. 1063 AJ753 J642 8 _____
18. A103 KQ753 A84 52 _____
19. AJ75 72 K765 954 _____

20. A5 72 K86532 874 _____
21. A54 Q6 Q975 9854 _____
22. AQ74 A7 A854 K865 _____
23. AQ8732 A7 A84 K5 _____
24. A84 A7 A8753 J54 _____
25. K108754 6 8532 54 _____

With the following hands, respond to an opening bid of 1 Diamond:

26. K62 A542 8754 J62 _____
 27. K632 A542 875 J6 _____
 28. K6532 A542 87 J6 _____
 29. K6532 A5432 8 J6 _____
 30. K108754 6 853 542 _____
 31. K108 Q86 Q53 9854 _____
 32. K108 Q86 Q53 A854 _____
 33. AJ8 K86 QJ64 K65 _____
 34. 8 A75 K754 AQ854 _____
 35. 8 K75 KJ754 7543 _____
 36. 8 AJ5 KQ752 7543 _____
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Answers to Practicing and Test

What do you open the following hands:

1. AJ975 K104 A1086 9

1♠

2. 108 AKJ98 AJ8 974

1♥

3. AQJ86 KQ842 4 98

1♠

4. QJ864 AK1042 84 3

1♠

5. AQ4 KJ73 AQ6 1085

1NT

6. Q7 AQ6 AQJ84 J106

1NT

7. AJ64 K106 KJ54 Q3

1♦

8. AJ6 K10 Q874 K984

1♦

9. AJ64 K1085 K54 K6

1♦

10. AJ64 A85 Q54 K63

1♣

With the following hands, respond to an opening bid of 1 Heart:

11. K53 KJ4 98652 86

2♥

12. AK84 J105 984 753

2♥

13. Q1084 KJ86 A75 75

3♥

14. Q106 KQ5 A7542 75

2♦

15. A106 KQ5 A7532 75

2♦

16. A106 KQ95 A753 K6

2NT

17. 1063 AJ753 J642 8

4♥

18. A103 KQ753 A84 52

2NT

19. AJ75 72 K765 954

1♠

20. A5 72 K86532 874

1NT

21. A54 Q6 Q975 9854

1NT

22. AQ74 A7 A854 K865

1♠

23. AQ8732 A7 A84 K5

1♠

24. A84 A7 A8753 J54

2♦

25. K108754 6 8532 54

2♠

With the following hands, respond to an opening bid of 1 Diamond:

26. K62 A542 8754 J62

1♥

27. K632 A542 875 J6

1♥

28. K6532 A542 87 J6

1♠

29. K6532 A5432 8 J6

1♠

30. K108754 6 853 542

1♠

31. K108 Q86 Q53 9854

2♠

32. K108 Q86 Q53 A854

1NT

33. AJ8 K86 QJ64 K65

2NT

34. 8 A75 K754 AQ854

3NT

35. 8 K75 KJ754 7543

2♣

36. 8 AJ5 KQ752 7543

2♦

2♦

3♦

Master Cheat Sheet: Top Secret

