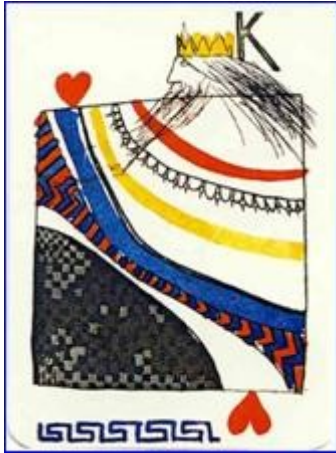


Bridge Basics: Suit Rank in Bidding

Duplicate or, as it is becoming more frequently called, Tournament Bridge took off as an international rage in the 1930s and is considered today by many to be the ultimate card game. Even those who have been playing for decades still find room to learn. Bridge is now recognized as an Official Olympic Event, played in the World Mind Games.



Number of players: Four, playing as two pairs, with partners facing each other. The pairs are referred to as North-South (N/S) and East-West (E/W).

Objective: Following the bidding, the objective is to score points by taking tricks during the play and scoring higher than the other partnerships in the game. **Duplicate Bridge** means that the same deals are played by all players in a tournament or match—just at different times. So no one can ever complain about *never getting any good cards!*

The Cards: Each deal requires a regular 52-card deck. In duplicate bridge, each deal is referred to as a **board**. *Why?* Because in face-to-face bridge at a club, rather than in online bridge, the cards in a duplicate game are placed in a board for the players to take out the specific hands for N/S and for E/W.

The Play: When the bidding is over, the play of the hand begins. The play comprises 13 tricks in all.

Trump suit: The suit named in the final bid. The final bid is made after three players pass. The final bid is the **contract**.

Notrump (NT): A contract played *without* a trump suit. The highest card of the suit led wins the trick.

Suit Rank: The bidding can start with any opening bid. During the bidding, players, in turn clockwise, may *pass* or bid. **Pass** is when you have nothing to tell your partner and, yet, a pass can tell a lot, as we will see!

The suits are ranked with clubs as the lowest, then diamonds, hearts, and spades, with NT being the highest of the available bids. The easiest way to remember the suit ranking is that the four suits rank alphabetically in the English language, with clubs lowest—C D H S—and NT ranks higher than the suits.

Each new bid must be higher than the previous bid. The new bid may be in a higher-ranking suit **without increasing the number of the bid**: ♣'s rank lowest so 1♣ may be followed by a bid of 1♦ or 1♥ or 1♠ or 1NT—all suits ranking higher than clubs may still be bid at the 1 level. **Or, if you want to bid a suit that has a lower rank than the previously bid suit, you must bid a higher number.**

Examples:

1♦, 2♣ (diamonds are ranked higher than clubs so you must bid two clubs)

1♠, 1NT (NT out-ranks all suits so 1NT may be bid over any of the suits that are bid at the one level)

1♥, 2♣ (hearts rank higher than clubs so you must bid clubs at the 2 level)

1♠, 2♥ (spades rank higher than hearts so you must bid hearts at the 2 level)

1♥, 1♠ (hearts are ranked **lower** than spades so you may bid spades at the 1 level over hearts . . . or over diamonds or clubs)

High to Low

NT
Spades
Hearts
Diamonds
Clubs

Spades and hearts are called **major suits** and diamonds and clubs are called **minor suits**. Major and minor suit contracts are scored differently, as we will learn in the first class of ***Bridge 101***.