

## Teaching your child MiniBridge - 4



In our last lesson we explained the idea of trumps and how they work. Having now covered the basic mechanics of the game, just practising playing hands will probably be the most beneficial thing for your child's development. Like driving a car, you learn by doing, not by being told how to do it! And of course, actually playing is more fun than lessons anyway.

Best is to play using prepared hands, so that you reinforce the principles we covered earlier about how to make as many tricks as possible from various holdings. Sets of prepared hands are available from the EBU website ([www.ebu.co.uk/education/schools/minibrIDGE.htm](http://www.ebu.co.uk/education/schools/minibrIDGE.htm)) covering a number of topics – these could be managed at this stage:

At no trumps:

- Cashing top tricks
- Cashing top tricks when a blockage might occur
- Giving up the lead to establish a winner
- Giving up the lead twice
- Recognising when small cards in long suits are winners
- Losing the lead to make a small card a winner

At trumps:

- Cashing top tricks after drawing trumps
- Taking a ruff for the extra trick
- Driving out a high card to set up tricks
- Getting to a position where ruffs can be taken.

Don't underestimate how long it can take to grasp things that seem obvious to you - it is easy to forget how long it took you to learn bridge. And whilst children are adept at learning, the younger they are, the more difficult it is to comprehend the logic and inferences in the play of the cards.



When you are ready to move on, the next important thing to explain is the scoring, introducing the idea of game and part-score contracts. (Note that scoring in MiniBridge is exactly as at duplicate bridge when non-vulnerable). Declarer now has to announce their choice of game or part score, as well as their choice of trumps, before play begins, and you need to explain what the game contracts are. This is a complicated business, as you need to cover:

- how the value of tricks won changes according to whether you are playing in no trumps or with trumps, and with the trump suit chosen.
- the need to score tricks to the value of at least 100 points to win a 'game'. Thus 9 tricks are needed for game in no trumps (40+30+30), 10 tricks for game in hearts or spades, the 'major' suits (4 x 30) and 11 tricks for game in clubs or diamonds, the 'minor' suits (5 x 20). As they will have played quite a few hands with trumps, your students will already have discovered that it is generally easier to make more tricks in a trump contract. So they will readily understand that fewer tricks are required to make game in no trumps, but the distinction between the major and minor suits is new and has important implications. Now often difficult decisions have to be made, whether to aim for 9 tricks in no trumps or 11 in a minor suit. All of a sudden, no trumps become a lot more attractive – just like in bridge!
- how the gains and the risks are both greater when you go for game. It is well worth trying for the big 300 point bonus, but if the game target is not met, declarer not only scores nothing, but the defenders earn 50 points for each undertrick.

Encourage your students to try for game with 25 or more points in the combined hands. Some of these games may fail, but they should still win more than they lose. Advise them to choose their longest combined suit as trumps, assuming it consists of at least eight cards, whenever they are **not** trying for game, but when they have a long minor suit and game is an option, always to consider whether game in no-trumps might be a possibility.

If you'd like a quiz to make sure the scoring is understood, try this:

Sarah and Vijay play Kim and Jason at MiniBridge. The table below summarises what happens. What are the scores for each partnership on each deal?

Hand	Declarer	Declarer says	Tricks made	Score	
				S & V	K & J
1	Kim	game in ♥	10		420
2	Vijay	part score in ♠	11	200	
3	Vijay	game in NT	8		50
4	Sarah	part score in ♣	8	90	
5	Kim	part score in ♦	6	50	
6	Sarah	game in ♦	11	400	
7	Jason	game in NT	9		400
8	Kim	part score in ♠	9		140
9	Jason	game in ♣	12		420
10	Vijay	part score in NT	7	90	
11	Sarah	game in ♥	9		50
12	Kim	part score in ♦	9		110

(Don't forget to delete the answers in the last column before you give the quiz, of course!)



A practical need when teaching children is to keep them interested and occupied, even when they are dummy. One option that has already been suggested is to encourage dummy to come around the table and sit with declarer, playing the cards as a team. Another option is to give dummy tasks to do to keep them involved in the play. The sort of things you might ask are:

- watch the trumps as they are played, and say at the end of the hand how many were held by each player
- count the cards played in each suit by declarer, so at the end of the hand you can say how many cards were originally held in each suit ie. declarer's original distribution
- watch the honour cards played by one of the defenders (perhaps the one who announced the fewest points) and four tricks from the end of the hand, say how many points are left in the remaining four cards.

Practice at tasks like this will be terrific in helping to develop card counting skills. Just make sure you know all the answers yourself before getting caught out by your child!