

Minibridge

A manual for teachers



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INTRODUCTION

What is Minibridge?

Minibridge is a simplified version of the game of bridge. Bridge has been played throughout the world for many decades and is currently played by around two million people in Britain. Duplicate Bridge, the organised form of the game, has been an Olympic demonstration sport and is intellectually demanding and performance-orientated. It is a game of skill with an ethical code and rules that are defined and controlled by the World Bridge Federation.

Minibridge is the route into bridge recommended by the English Bridge Union, the national governing body for bridge in England. Minibridge was first developed in France and the Netherlands as an introduction to bridge for schoolchildren and was soon acknowledged as an excellent game in its own right.

Even the very young love to play cards, which helps them identify numbers, colours, similarities and sequences. By the age of six or seven, many children own or have access to a computer in the home or at school, and the first thing they often try to do by themselves is play the card and other games available. Children love being clever and working things out – and winning. These are all things they will do as they play Minibridge, but because it is a partnership game they will also learn that they need to co-operate, share information and combine as a team to beat the opposition.

But Minibridge is not just a game for the younger age group. It can be taught to any age, to pupils and students in primary, secondary and tertiary education right through to adults. It is widely used as a precursor to learning bridge for all ages and is universally found to be both effective and enjoyable. As a teacher, we are sure you will enjoy Minibridge too!

An educational aid

This manual describes how to teach young people to play Minibridge, so as to help them develop numeracy and reasoning skills while having fun playing a sociable, competitive and interactive game. The focus is on children of primary school age, but Minibridge is equally effective within secondary schools. Minibridge can be used in the classroom as part of mathematics or other lessons, or introduced as an after-school activity.

How to use this manual

It is recommended that, before embarking on teaching Minibridge, teachers should read just the first section on *How to Play Minibridge* thoroughly, then try playing the game themselves, so as to gain an understanding of how the game works. It will be helpful to enlist the participation of other players who are familiar with bridge or Minibridge or even whist. But this manual is intended to be useable by all teachers, regardless of whether or not they have played Minibridge or other card games before – it may just take a little longer for the inexperienced teacher to appreciate the full potential of the game.

Do not despair if expert proficiency is not attained right away! When teaching, the features of the game will be introduced gradually. There will be plenty of time to develop understanding and playing skills.

Care has been taken not to use unexplained jargon when describing the game of Minibridge. Teachers who are themselves already bridge players should beware of slipping into bridge terminology inadvertently, so as not to confuse their students.

Exercises have been provided for use with some topics – these (pages 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 44, 47) may be photocopied for classroom use, as may the sample score sheet (see page 12).

The Minibridge software

A recent advance, and an added bonus, is the special Minibridge software which has been developed by Blue Chip Bridge for the English Bridge Union, to help students learn by way of an alternative medium and to provide extra practice material. As well as providing an effective way of improving proficiency, the software greatly adds to students' general enjoyment.



Support from the English Bridge Union

Teachers who would like further help in introducing Minibridge into their schools should get in touch with the English Bridge Union, which has a well-established Teachers' Association providing on-going training and support for all teachers of bridge and Minibridge. The Union offers a one-day training course for teachers of Minibridge in schools and is also in contact with a network of volunteer helpers who may be able to provide local assistance. The Education Department will be pleased to offer advice to anyone needing it and can be contacted by telephone on 01296 317217 or by e-mail at john@ebu.co.uk.

HOW TO PLAY MINIBRIDGE

Outline of the game

The game of Minibridge is played with a standard pack of 52 playing cards with the jokers removed. There are four players, who sit round a table and are usually identified by the points of a compass: North, South, East and West. They play as two partnerships, North-South and East-West. Partners can be agreed or designated, or the cards can be cut to determine who plays with whom.

Minibridge is a trick-taking game. One player starts by 'leading' or playing the first card to a trick. Each player in turn clockwise contributes one card to each trick and the highest card played wins the trick. Aces are high, followed in order by the king, queen, jack, ten, nine and so on down to the two, the lowest card in each suit. There are four suits of these 13 cards:

Clubs  and Spades  (the black suits)

Diamonds  and Hearts  (the red suits)

When playing to a trick, each player must 'follow suit' with a card of the suit led if possible. Otherwise they may discard any card they like, but a discard cannot win the trick, however high the card chosen. The winner of a trick makes the lead to the next trick.

Deals may be played in 'no trumps' or with a trump suit – one which is more powerful than the others. Say spades are trumps – then any spade beats any card in the other three suits. Players must still follow suit to each trick if they can, but when unable to follow, instead of discarding, a trump may be played which will win the trick (unless another player later plays a bigger trump card to the trick).

The main feature of Minibridge which distinguishes it from whist and other similar trick-taking games is the existence of a 'declarer' who decides the 'contract' – that is, the choice of trump suit and a target number of tricks to be won by the partnership. The contract must always be for at least 7 of the 13 tricks available, but a higher target can be set, known as a 'game' contract, for which the declaring side scores more if it is met. Scoring is spelled out in full later (see pages 9-10).

The full game of Minibridge is described below, step by step, although when learning the game the students will take it in easy stages to master these.

The steps in Minibridge

1 Shuffle and deal

The pack should be shuffled (randomly mixed) and cut for dealer (highest deals). Dealer deals out the cards clockwise one by one to the players, so that they have 13 cards each. Dealer for the second game will be the next player clockwise and so on.

2 Sorting the hand

The players sort the cards in their own hand into suits and into sequence within each suit, without showing the cards to the other players.



3 Counting points

The value of the hand is worked out by counting up the high card points held, using the following scale: Ace = 4 points, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1, Note that there are 40 points altogether between the four hands in each deal.

4 Announcing points

Beginning with the dealer, and then in clockwise order, each player announces how many points his or her hand contains. The partnership with the most points becomes the declaring side who decide the contract. The other pair are the defending side, who try to prevent the contract being made by making tricks themselves. There is a re-deal if the point distribution between the partnerships turns out to be 20:20.

5 The declaring side

The player with the higher number of points in the declaring side becomes 'declarer', and his partner becomes 'dummy'. If they both have the same number of points, the player who announced points first is declarer. Dummy then lays his or her hand down face up on the table to face declarer, with the suits arranged in columns.



Declarer (on the left of the picture) looks at the dummy hand to decide the contract

6 Deciding the contract

Declarer calculates how many tricks might be won in the combined hands and then chooses and announces the contract that seems likely to bring in the best score for the partnership.

Declarer may choose no trumps or a trump suit, and 'part-score' (at least 7 tricks) or 'game'. The number of tricks required for a game contract varies according to the trumps. In no trumps, game means winning 9 tricks. In a suit contract, where spades or hearts are trumps it means 10 tricks, and where clubs or diamonds are trumps it means 11 tricks. Game contracts score lots of extra points when made, but if the target is not met, then the declaring side scores nothing and the opponents score points instead. Choosing the best contract is therefore a critical part of the game which needs skill and judgement.

If declarer chooses a trump contract, the cards in dummy in the chosen suit are moved to be on the dummy's right hand side (the left hand end as declarer looks at them).

7 Play begins

The player on declarer's left plays the first card, i.e. makes the 'opening lead'. Play is in clockwise order and players must follow to the suit led whenever possible. The highest card played wins the trick (unless, in a suit contract, it is beaten by a trump, since trumps outrank the other three suits). If several rounds of a suit are played and a player runs out of cards in that suit, he or she may discard a card from another suit (which cannot win the trick), or in a trump contract can choose to play a trump (which will win the trick unless it is beaten by a higher trump).

8 Taking tricks

Each card is played face up in front of each player in such a way that everyone can see the cards clearly. When a trick is complete, the cards are turned over, players placing the 'quitted' cards from their own hands face down on the table in front of themselves in a neat row. To make it easy to see how many tricks have been won or lost, cards in tricks won are placed upright, and cards in tricks lost are placed sideways on. The winner of the first trick leads to the second and so on.



Defenders concentrate on the play

9 Dummy play

Declarer controls the play of dummy's cards, telling partner which card to play when it's dummy's turn. Declarer's partner must always play dummy's cards as instructed, and must keep the cards already played from dummy in correct order and formation. Otherwise dummy takes no part in the play of this particular deal.

10 Play ends

When all the cards have been played, the tricks for each side are counted and agreed, and the result is calculated and scored. Players record their score on a score sheet. The session can end when an agreed total has been reached by one side, or after a set number of deals has been played.



Declarer counts the tricks won

11 The next deal

The position of dealer moves clockwise round the table for each game.

It is a good idea to have two packs of cards available so that the second pack can be shuffled by the dealer's partner while the first is being dealt. Before starting dealing the next set of hands these cards should be cut by the player on the new dealer's right.

Alternatively, deals can be pre-prepared and stored in duplicate 'boards' or 'wallets' as used in the competitive form of bridge. The boards have four pockets to hold the four hands of cards and have a board number along with an indication of who is the dealer. (You can see one in the middle of the table in the picture above). These are available from the English Bridge Union.

Minibridge scoring

Each deal is scored independently, and the winners of the session are the partnership that scores the most points overall. The score for the deal should be recorded at the end of play of each deal, preferably by each of the players. (A suitable score sheet is shown on page 12. This page may be photocopied to create sheets for use at the table).

Points are awarded to the declaring side for tricks made over and above six. The seventh and each subsequent trick earn points which vary according to the denomination chosen for the deal – no trumps or a particular suit as trumps. Bonus points are awarded for part-score or game contracts.

Declaring and making 'game' scores best, because a large 'game bonus' is added. 'Part score' contracts are not so profitable, but extra tricks (called 'overtricks') are awarded points whether a game or a part score contract is played. There is thus always good reason to play the cards skilfully to make as many tricks as possible. Game is only made and the game bonus earned where a game contract has been chosen and declared; game is not made where numerous extra tricks have been made in a part score contract.

If declarer fails to make the required number of tricks – that is at least 7 for a part score or the appropriate target number for a game contract – the declaring side score nothing and the defending side get 50 points for each trick short (called 'undertricks').

The precise values are as follows:

1 Scoring tricks

Whatever the contract, the first six tricks won do not count towards the score. The seventh trick is the first scoring trick, and for each scoring trick points are won depending on the contract chosen, as follows:

No-trumps contracts	40 for the first scoring trick 30 for each subsequent trick
Spades or hearts contracts	30 for each scoring trick
Diamonds or clubs contracts	20 for each scoring trick

*Examples: With ♣ as trumps, the trick score for 8 tricks is 40 points
With ♠ as trumps, the trick score for 10 tricks is 120 points
In no trumps, the trick score for 9 tricks is 100 points*

2 Game contracts

Game contracts are those where the trick score totals 100 or more.

Game in no trumps requires 9 tricks, i.e. $40 + (2 \times 30) = 100$ points.

A game bonus of 300 is then added, so the total points earned are 400.

If more than 9 tricks are won, each overtrick scores an extra 30.

(When calculating the score for a no trump contract, it is often easier to multiply each trick won by 30, then add 10 points at the end)

Game in spades or hearts requires 10 tricks, i.e. $30 \times 4 = 120$ points.

A game bonus of 300 is then added, so the total points earned are 420.

If more than 10 tricks are won, each overtrick scores an extra 30.

Game in diamonds or clubs requires 11 tricks, i.e. $20 \times 5 = 100$ points.

A game bonus of 300 is then added, so the total points earned are 400.

If more than 11 tricks are won, each overtrick scores an extra 20.

Examples:

A game contract in no trumps, making 10 tricks, scores 430 points

A game contract in diamonds, making 12 tricks, scores 420 points

3 Part score contracts

In all part score contracts, 7 tricks have to be made.

A part score bonus of 50 is then added when the contract is made.

Scoring tricks attract points in the same way as game contracts.

Example A part score contract in hearts, 9 tricks are made:

scores 30 for the scoring trick in hearts = 30

plus 60 for the two overtricks at 30 points each = 90

plus the bonus of 50 = 140.

4 Unsuccessful contracts

If declarer does not win the number of tricks required to make the contract, the declaring side get no score and the defending side earn 50 points for every undertrick. For example, if the contract was game in spades and declarer made only 8 tricks, the defending side would score 100 points.

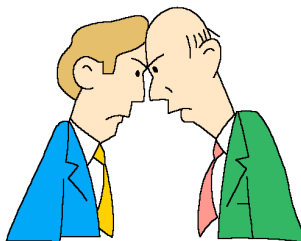
Examples:

A part score in no trumps makes 5 tricks. The defenders get 100 points.

A game contract in hearts makes nine tricks. The defenders get 50 points.

What to do if things go wrong

From time to time, inevitably players' attention wanders and someone fails to follow the rules properly as described above. Some simple regulations are laid out below to cope with these circumstances, though you needn't bother with these too much at the learning stage.



Lead out of turn

If the wrong player leads to a trick, either opponent (but not dummy) may say they accept the lead, or the next opponent may play a card, which accepts it. Otherwise the card is returned to the player's hand and the correct player leads instead.

Revokes

If a player fails to follow suit to a trick when holding a card of that suit, he/she is said to revoke. If this is discovered before either the player or his/her partner plays to the next trick, then the play should be corrected by playing a legal card and taking the wrongly played card back into the hand. Any cards played after the incorrect card may now be changed.

If a player fails to follow suit to a trick when holding a card of that suit, and this is not discovered until after he/she or his/her partner has played to the next trick, then the revoke has become established and the incorrect card remains as played. One trick is transferred to the opponents at the end of the deal.

Exposed card

If a player accidentally exposes a card that he/she does not mean to play at that time (e.g. by dropping a card on the table), it can be picked up without penalty.

Card played out of turn

If a player plays a card out of turn (that he/she intended to play) then it stands as played.

Sample score sheet

Personal score sheet for:

Deal No.	Seat (N, S, E or W)	Points held by				Total points of declaring side	Contract (Game or Part-score, suit or NT)	No. tricks made by declarer	Score our way	
		N	S	E	W				+	-
1										
2										
3										
4										

Personal score sheet for:

Deal No.	Seat (N, S, E or W)	Points held by				Total points of declaring side	Contract (Game or Part-score, suit or NT)	No. tricks made by declarer	Score our way	
		N	S	E	W				+	-
1										
2										
3										
4										

TEACHING MINIBRIDGE

When teaching Minibridge to young people, it is generally best to adopt a staged approach. The game lends itself well to the features being introduced gradually, but benefits from being interesting and exciting for new players right from the start.



The suggested sequence of topics given here is not the only way in which the introduction of Minibridge may be staged. Teachers may wish to alter the order and no doubt many will have their own ideas about how best to teach Minibridge and introduce it into their own particular school environment.

In particular, the lessons on card play techniques may be tackled in a different order. Teachers may want to talk about particular techniques when opportunities for their use crop up at the table.

The lessons are followed by a set of question and answer exercises, which can be used as classroom resources or as extra exercises to be done outside the classroom. The exercise question sheets may be photocopied if you wish. Suggested stages at which to use each resource are given with the teaching tips for each topic. Also included is a set of Minibridge practice hands, each with a particular theme.



Teachers who find they would like further resources, such as more straightforward hands for students to play or additional advice on play techniques, may find suitable hands and guidance on play from bridge books available from libraries or good book shops. A particularly useful text book is *Really Easy Play in No Trumps* published by the English Bridge Union and retailing at £9.99 plus 50p p&p. A discount price of £7.75 inclusive of p&p is available to schools – call the Bridge Shop on 01296 397851 to order a copy.



The programme of twelve lesson topics follows.

1 THE BASICS

The student learns to:

- recognise the four suits;
- recognise the relative rank of the cards;
- understand how a trick is won at no trumps;
- understand that the winner of one trick leads to the next trick;
- deal the cards and sort a hand.



Teaching tips

Use only some of the cards

It may be a good idea not to use the full pack of cards initially. Younger children in particular often have difficulty managing cards and have to get used to dealing and handling them.

You can start the play with just one suit, removing the 2 so that play consists of three tricks to which everyone will follow suit. Encourage the students to observe the cards played. After two tricks have been completed, the person holding the highest outstanding card should be able to predict that they will win the third trick.

Then add a second suit, so that students learn about discarding. Remove the two again so that you have 24 cards in play. Note that however many cards are in use, there are always 4 cards per trick and the number of available tricks = no of cards in play/4.

Sorting hands

Get the class to practise sorting the cards into ordered suits of alternating colours with the high cards to the left. A step-by-step guide to how to sort a hand is provided on the next page, which may prove useful.

Trick taking

Some students may not have come across a trick-taking game before and may not be familiar with the principle of following suit. They will soon catch on, but keep to no trumps at this early stage. In effect, you are just playing a version of whist at this point.

SORTING A HAND

1. Pick up the dealt hand and group all the cards together, with the backs of the cards facing out.
2. With one hand tightly on the bottom, using the thumb and first finger of the other hand, spread out the top corners of the cards so that you can see the number or picture letter (J, Q, K or A) to form a fanned shape.
3. Now, take the lowest diamond from the hand and place it behind all the other cards, so that you cannot see it any longer.
4. Take the next lowest diamond and place it behind all the other cards, so that you cannot see it any longer.
5. Continue with step (4) above with all the diamonds.
6. Repeat steps (3) to (5) with the club suit.
7. Repeat steps (3) to (5) with the heart suit.
8. Repeat steps (3) to (5) with the spade suit.
9. You will now be looking at the lowest diamond, the first card you moved. Spread out the cards as in step (2) above and your hand will be sorted.



2 PLAYING AS PARTNERS

The student learns to:

- co-operate with partner in the play;
- manage the played cards correctly.



Teaching tips

A partnership game

Explain that in Minibridge you are always playing as a partnership – like ‘doubles’ in tennis. A trick won by one player is a trick for the partnership – both players are credited with it. So players need to work together and co-operate to achieve their goals. Identify pairs of students and have them sit at tables as North-South or East-West. Designate where ‘North’ is, and keep that orientation for all the lessons. It may take some time for the defenders in particular to learn not to try and win a trick already won by partner.

Quitted cards

Show students how to arrange their played cards in a neat row face down in front of them with tricks won placed upright and tricks lost placed sideways. Explain how this makes it easy to count and agree the tricks at the end of play.

Those who have played trick-taking games before may instinctively want to pool all the cards in the middle of the table. Minibridge tricks can be played like that, but it is best to establish early on the style of play where hands can be reconstructed at the end. You will want to do this later and it is better to ‘start as you mean to go on’.

You may like to note that lost tricks look like a ‘minus’ sign, and a won trick, placed on top, looks like a ‘plus’ sign.

Counting tricks at the end of play

Always agree the number of tricks won by each side before the cards are mixed up at the end of the play of a deal. When you are playing with a full deck of cards, note that the total number of tricks won by the two sides together is always 13. One side therefore always wins more than the other – there can’t be a draw!

3 WINNING TRICKS

The student learns to:

- understand that honour cards (aces, kings, queens and jacks) are valuable assets;
- recognise that sometimes a 'small' card will win a trick and calculate when this is likely;
- recognise that there can be an advantage in being 'on play' i.e. having the choice of suit to lead to the next trick.



Teaching tips

High Cards

Play should now be with a full deck of cards. Students will quickly appreciate the value of aces and the other picture cards. You can begin to show how the kings and queens become winners once the higher cards have been played. Encourage observation and memory, so the players know whether the picture cards they hold as play progresses are winners or not.

Suit length

In developing card play, demonstrate how small cards can sometimes become winners. Start with a suit containing AKQ2 and three cards in each of the other hands – the 2 becomes a winner after everyone follows suit for three rounds when the AKQ are played. But how likely is it that the cards will be distributed like this? (Only about 40% of the time in fact!).

With more cards in a suit, though, the chance of making the small ones gets much better. If you hold AKQxxx opposite xxx (where x indicates any small card) you can win 6 tricks at least 90% of the time.

Retaining the lead

Point out that if you are 'on lead' having won the last trick, you get to choose the suit to be played next. This is clearly an advantage, especially if you have set up some winning small cards. So sometimes it is right to save your high cards, not win them at the first opportunity. This goes against the grain, so is an interesting idea to introduce quite early on!

4 BEGINNING MINIBRIDGE

The student learns to:

- count high card points;
- play with a dummy;
- count tricks won and start to score.



Teaching tips

Counting high card points

Now is the time for students to start counting the high card points held, using the scale:

Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1

Plenty of exercises in the simple arithmetic involved will soon make them able to do this quickly and accurately. Note that there are 10 points in each suit, 40 points altogether. The average hand holds 10 points – anyone holding more has a good hand.

Deciding who's who for the play of the deal.

Players now announce their points, starting with the dealer then in correct clockwise order. If the total isn't 40, try again! Now identify the side with the majority of points as the declaring side, those with less than 20 as the defence. Explain that there has to be a re-deal if the point distribution is 20:20. Identify declarer (or boss) and dummy (or puppet) as the players in the declaring side with more and fewer points respectively. If they have equal numbers, the player who announced first becomes declarer.

Dummy

After declarer and dummy are identified, explain how dummy's hand should be laid out on the table and that dummy's part in the proceedings is limited to playing the cards as instructed by declarer and keeping dummy's played cards in proper order. At this stage of learning, though, it is often a good idea to get dummy to come round the table and help partner to play the hand as declarer. This takes the pressure off declarer and keeps dummy involved in things.

Play of the hand

At this stage play in no trumps only, with declarer's target being 7 or more tricks. Point out that it is reasonable for the side holding the most points to have to win more than half the tricks.

Recording the tricks won

Right from the start, get the students to write down for each deal the number of points held by the declaring side and the number of tricks won. (The score sheet shown on page 12 can be used for this purpose). They will soon see for themselves how many tricks can usually be won with different point counts. Whilst there will be many hands not fitting this pattern exactly, the following scale should emerge:

21 - 22	points will produce	7	tricks
23 - 24		8	
25 - 26		9	
27 - 28		10	
29 - 32		11	
33 - 36		12	
37 +		13	

Defending

Compared with the excitement of being the declaring side, defending may seem like getting the flip side of the deal. In fact, defence is fascinating stuff, as students will find out later (remind them that they'll be defending twice as often as declaring), but try to make sure everyone gets a fair crack of the whip as declarer, particularly in the early days.

Simple scoring

Do not introduce the concept of trying for game as yet. Let declarer's only objective be to make seven or more tricks in no trumps. Use a simplified form of the scoring, whereby the declaring side scores 30 points for each trick won over and above the first six, plus a bonus of 50 points. If they fail to win seven tricks, then the defenders score 50 points for each 'undertrick' – each trick short of the goal. Make sure that everyone records the scores properly. Make sure no-one is confused by the terminology – scoring points and high card points are usually both just referred to as 'points' in Minibridge but are of course quite different beasts.

EXERCISE 1 – Starting Minibridge can be used with this topic.

5 THE VALUE OF LONG SUITS

The student learns to:

- appreciate the value of 'long' suits;
- calculate how many tricks can be expected from certain holdings;
- understand that it may be necessary to lose tricks in a suit in order to set up winners;
- make an informed choice of opening lead.



Teaching tips

Long suits

The trick-taking power of a long suit should by now have started to become evident to the students, but it is worth stating explicitly. Encourage students' natural inclination to win tricks by pointing out that leading a long suit early in the play is often a good idea. At this stage, (and probably henceforth) it will be helpful to start using prepared deals containing hands with suitable long suits to demonstrate the points to be drawn out.

Calculating the number of expected tricks

Point out that declarer can calculate the number of tricks expected to be made in a suit which is headed by the top honour cards, as follows:

Add together the number of cards in the suit held by the partnership. Take this from 13 and divide the answer by 2 to give the most even break between the defenders. You need at least enough top cards to cover the higher resultant number to be hopeful of winning all the available tricks.

Example:

A Q x x x opposite K x x – an eight-card fit.

Five cards are missing which hopefully will break 3-2. You have enough high cards to win the first 3 tricks with this break, so the suit should produce 5 tricks.

$$\begin{array}{r} 5 + 3 = 8 \\ 13 - 8 = 5 \\ 5 / 2 = ? \end{array}$$

Setting up winners

It is natural to want to win tricks early in the play of a deal, so students usually start off by playing out their aces and kings. But this is likely to be a mistake in Minibridge – it is often right to play a suit where some of the honour cards are missing first. You may need to lose a trick early on in order to set up winners.

For example, if you hold KQJ10 in a suit, you will be able to win 3 tricks after losing to the ace in an opponent's hand, so long as you are able to regain the lead. An ace in another suit may be useful for gaining the lead, so should be kept for later use.

Point out how it can sometimes pay to save your top cards, using them to win tricks later in the play when they give a greater advantage. This is known as 'ducking' or 'holding up' winners. For example, holding AKxxxx, you may win only two tricks by cashing the ace and king. But if you play a small card in this suit first, then if it is played again you can probably win your top cards and cash out 5 tricks.

The opening lead

The things that work for declarer work just as well for the defenders. So it is usually right to lead a long suit in the hope of setting up winners. If the leader has a really poor hand that doesn't expect to take many tricks, suggest leading a suit which may be partner's long suit. Looking at dummy will help in deciding which suit to try – the plan should be to attack dummy's weak suits.

EXERCISE 2 – Counting tricks can be used with this topic.

6 TRUMPS

The student learns to:

- understand the concept of a trump suit;
- choose the best trump suit.



Teaching tips

Playing with trumps

The salient points to emphasise are:

- you can lead a trump at any time;
- any trump will beat any card of any other suit led;
- if another suit is led and you are able to follow suit, you are not allowed to play a trump, but if you are **not** able to follow suit, you can choose to play a trump (to 'ruff'), though you are not obliged to do so;
- if the suit led is trumped more than once, then the highest trump played wins the trick.

Which suit should be trumps?

When looking for a trump suit, the magic number is eight – a holding of eight cards in declarer's and dummy's hands. Students should appreciate that with eight trumps declarer usually has a good chance of getting rid of the defenders' trumps and will still have some left over with which to do something useful. This might be trumping the opponents' winners or gaining entry to a particular hand in order to cash side-suit winners.

There are certain to be some students who will want to choose a short, strong trump suit rather than a longer but weaker suit. The best way to show the effectiveness of a long trump suit is get them to play the same hand twice, first with the short strong suit as trumps and then with the longer suit as trumps. A revelation!

Drawing trumps

It is usually right for declarer to 'draw trumps' i.e. to play out a few rounds of trumps in order to remove all those held by the defenders. If the declaring side has at least 8 trumps, the defenders will have at most 5 and they can be drawn in 3 rounds most of the time. Declarers should be encouraged **always** to do this calculation before the start of play in trump contracts – that is, to work out how many trumps the defenders hold, how they are likely to be divided and how many rounds of trumps will be needed to draw them.

7 GAME CONTRACTS

The student learns to:

- decide whether to go for game or not;
- choose between no trumps and a trump suit;
- use the complete Minibridge scoring system.



Teaching tips

How Minibridge scoring works

In order to understand about game contracts, explain that you need to understand the scoring. Explain 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. Also in no trumps, tricks have different values.

Explain 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).

Explain the bonus of 300 points for game contracts instead of the 50 point bonus for part score. This is well worth going for, but if the game target is not met the defenders earn 50 points for each undertrick below game. So both the gains and the risks are greater!

Students by now will have noticed that with plenty of trumps, trump contracts are often easier than no trumps. So it is reasonable that game in no trumps should require fewer tricks than one with a trump suit. But the difference between the majors and minors is purely arbitrary – it just adds interest to the game and makes Minibridge more like real bridge.

Trying for game

Encourage the students to try for game with 25 or more points in the combined hands. A lot of these games may fail, but they should enjoy the challenge.

Advise students to choose their longest combined suit as trumps, assuming it consists of at least eight cards, whenever they are **not** trying for game. When they have a long minor suit (diamonds or clubs) it is often better to try for game in no-trumps, where only 9 tricks are needed, rather than game with the minor suit as trumps, where 11 tricks are needed.

EXERCISE 3 – Scoring Minibridge can be used with this topic.

8 DECLARER PLAY

The student learns to:

- make a plan as declarer before playing to the first trick;
- play out winners so as to avoid blocking suits;
- recognise the value of entries.



Teaching tips

Planning the play

When dummy comes down, declarer has to decide on a trump suit and whether to go for game or part score. In order to do this, explain how to count up the likely tricks that will be made by looking at the combined holding of the two hands of the declaring side in each of the suits, one suit at a time. Declarer needs to work out where extra tricks may come from, perhaps by establishing winners or by ruffing if playing in trumps.

Avoiding blockages

Explain how you must always be in the right hand to cash any winners in it. This means you must take care when cashing winners to take them in the right order. E.g. with A Q J x opposite K x it is important not to cash the ace first, then the king, otherwise you will be in the wrong hand to cash the queen and jack. Point out that it is always right to *cash the high cards in the shorter holding first*.

Watching entries

Sometimes it is unavoidable that a suit is blocked e.g. holding A K opposite Q J x x.

In this case you can cash the high winners in the short holding (the ace and king) first, then you need an entry in another suit to the other hand to be able to cash the queen and jack. Point out how it may be important to preserve an entry in a hand like this, not take such a winner too soon.

EXERCISE 4 – Planning the play can be used with this topic.

9 PLAYING COMPETITIVELY

The student learns to:

- recognise the value of overtricks, especially in part score contracts;
- understand some of the proprieties of the game.



Teaching tips

How about a competition?

By now the students will be playing Minibridge with some confidence and above all need practice to gain competence. They may well now be ready for a competition, either on a pairs or an individual basis. Indeed, if you have enough students to make up several tables, you can even run a competition with all the North-South players competing against one another, and all the East-Wests doing likewise, with a number of duplicated deals circulating amongst the tables. The comparison of their own scores with those achieved by other players will give much enjoyment and excitement and probably an edge to their performance. If one player makes one more trick than other holding the same cards, they will feel a justifiable sense of achievement.

You will need a set of duplicate boards and probably some help to organise this, though. Please contact the Education Department at English Bridge Union for advice.

Keeping dummy involved

In a competition, it is best to keep dummy in his/her own seat rather than helping declarer. But you can keep dummy alert and involved by setting questions or tasks to be answered at the end of play, such as:

- how were the trumps divided between the four players?
- what was the shape of declarer's hand?
- who held the ace of spades? Or the three of clubs?
- what was the opening lead? How many tricks did the defenders win later in the suit led?
- how were the points held by the defender with the lower total made up? i.e. which high cards were actually held to make up the total?

These are all calculations and observations that will help with play both as declarer or as a defender. Good players watch for these sorts of things all the time!

Proprieties

A competition is a good time to introduce some ideas about the 'right way' to play. Things that should be discouraged include:

- showing whether or not you like partner's lead by expressions, facial grimaces etc;
 - making comments about the play, especially to partner;
 - failing to arrange quitted cards in an orderly manner;
 - mixing the cards at the end of play before the number of tricks or an alleged revoke has been agreed;
 - turning over and inspecting quitted cards before the end of the deal.
-



10 COUNTING, REMEMBERING & PLACING POINTS

The student learns to:

- observe points as they are played and calculate how many remain in the opponents' hands;
- use the information about the points held to place the unseen high cards;
- make plays based on the expected or hoped-for position of unseen cards.



Teaching tips

Counting the points

Explain that because you know how many points each hand started off with, you can work out how many remain in each hand at any stage of play. You have to watch carefully and take away the values you see played from each of the hidden hands. You can do this as declarer or a defender.

You can often use this information about the number of points each hand holds to place the missing high cards. This may be very useful in deciding what to do next.

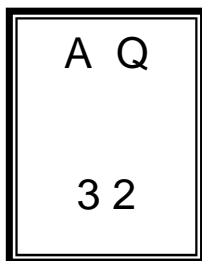
Using the information about the position of high cards

By now the students will have realised that sometimes they win a trick with an unsupported king (i.e. in a suit where they don't have the ace or queen as well) and sometimes they don't. But suppose as declarer you hold $\spadesuit K$ x in dummy and $\spadesuit x$ x in your own hand and you have worked out that your left hand opponent (lho) must hold $\spadesuit A$ for his four points. You can play a small card from hand and see what lho does. If the ace appears, you play small, winning the king later, or if lho plays small you can play the king, confident of winning the trick. You will always make the king sooner or later, provided you play the cards this way. This is called 'leading towards an honour'.

Similarly, if you hold $\heartsuit A$ Q in your hand and $\heartsuit x$ x in dummy and you have worked out that rho must have $\heartsuit K$, you can play a small card from dummy and choose to play the ace or queen according to whether or not the king appears from rho. You will always make two tricks now with this holding. This technique is called 'finessing' or 'taking a finesse'. You can finesse against any missing card e.g. with KJ10 in dummy opposite xxx you can lead from the small cards in hand and play the ten or jack. You

will always lose one trick to the ace, but if lho has the queen you need not lose another trick.

Explain that these techniques are very useful even if you aren't sure where the missing high cards are. You have a 50:50 chance of winning when the card is where you want it to be, but if you play out the ace and then the queen from a holding of AQ you can be sure you will always lose to the king!



11 THE OPENING LEAD

The student learns to:

- choose the best card to lead from particular holdings;
- avoid leads which are likely to give away tricks.



Teaching tips

Choosing the suit to lead

When you make an opening lead, point out that you are trying to do several things. You want to make or set up tricks for the defence, not give tricks away unnecessarily, but also to give partner information about your hand.

When leading against no trump contracts, remind the students that they should try to lead the best suit that is held by the partnership - generally the longest suit. Usually that will mean leading their own longest suit, but if dummy has a good holding too in this suit, think again! Also, if the opening leader has a very weak hand, it is probably a good idea to try and work out which is partner's best suit.

Leading against suit contracts you can cash winners, but explain that you shouldn't do so if this would let declarer win tricks (s)he's not entitled to. For example, don't lead out an unsupported ace, or declarer may make the king when it wasn't due to win a trick. Otherwise try to set up high card winners in a suit, or else lead a short suit in the hope of creating a void and getting partner in to give you a ruff. Point out that this will only work if partner has a few high card points, though.

Choosing the card to lead

A good lead is from a sequence of honour cards – you may take tricks straight away or set them up to cash later. If you have KQJ10 it doesn't really matter which you play to force out the ace, but explain how we always lead the top card of a sequence as a message to partner. It says "I don't have the card above the one I'm leading but I do have the one below".

With no sequence of honour cards in the suit you are leading, explain to the students that there are similar agreements about which card to play. From a suit which has no honours at all, lead the second highest card – a high card sends the message that this is not a good suit.

For example, from 9 8 5 3 lead the 8 or from 8 7 2 lead the 7. From a suit which does have an honour or two, lead the fourth highest card. For example, from K 10 7 4 3 lead the 4.

If leading a doubleton in the hope of a ruff, lead the top card. Explain that when you later play a smaller card the second time this suit is played, partner should be able to work out that you started with just two cards in the suit.

Returning partner's lead

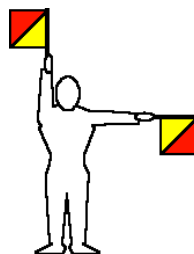
Do remind students, when they are the partner of the opening leader, that partner has usually led his/her best suit. Unless you have a very good suit of your own to play, when gaining the lead it is usually best to continue playing the suit partner led. Remember it's a co-operative, partnership game!

EXERCISE 5 – What to lead? can be used with this topic.

12 DEFENSIVE PLAY

The student learns to:

- play the correct card when following suit;
- understand that defenders are allowed to send signals to one another via the cards they play.



Teaching tips

Playing the correct card third in hand

Explain that whilst there are always exceptions to the rule in bridge, it is usually a good idea for the person playing third to a trick to play a high card, trying to win the trick for his/her side. (This of course assumes that first and second hands played low cards). The card played should only be as high as needed though. Holding a sequence such as QJ107 when partner leads the 2, you should play the ten. This denies holding the nine, and if say declarer wins with the ace and partner has led from the K, partner knows that you must hold the queen and jack (otherwise declarer would have played one of these to win the trick).

Other defensive signals

Point out to the class that in a competitive environment it is essential for defenders to co-operate effectively to try to defeat the contract. They are allowed to send signals to one another via the cards they play, and should do so. As most of the defenders' small cards do not take tricks, some of them can be used to send messages to one another. This is perfectly legal, so long as declarer is in the picture – defenders are not permitted to have secret systems or understandings that are known only to themselves. There are two types of signal that can be used in different circumstances:

Attitude signal

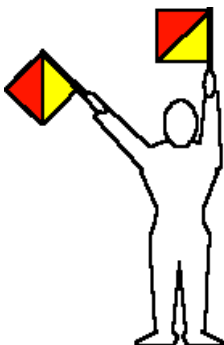
When partner leads a suit, playing a *high* small card (e.g. a seven) says 'I like this suit, please continue playing it when you can'. Playing a very *low* card (e.g. a two) says either 'I don't like this suit', or 'I like some other suit better'.

Suit length signal

When playing to a trick led by declarer or dummy, a defender should play the lowest card with an odd number of cards in the suit. With an even number, the second lowest should be played, followed when the suit is led again by the lowest. Thus with an odd number the play is 'bottom up', and with an even number 'high-low'. Partner can then work out how the cards in this particular suit are distributed and use that information to help defeat the contract.

In the meantime, as declarer you have no active partner during the play, so you are perfectly entitled to mislead the defenders in any way you like by playing whichever card from hand you choose!

EXERCISE 6 – Discovering partner's cards) can be used
EXERCISE 7 – What to play on partner's lead?) with this topic.



Exercise 1 – STARTING MINIBRIDGE

These hands were dealt in a game of Minibridge. The dealer was West.

	North	
	♠ A K 6	
	♥ 9 6 3 2	
	♦ A Q 4	
	♣ K 4 2	
West		East
♠ Q 7 4		♠ J 9 8
♥ 7 5		♥ Q J 10 8
♦ J 10 6		♦ 9 7 5 2
♣ Q J 9 7 6		♣ 10 8
	South	
	♠ 10 5 3 2	
	♥ A K 4	
	♦ K 8 3	
	♣ A 5 3	

1. How many points does each player have?
2. Who announces the points first?
3. Which pair are the declaring side?
4. Which pair are the defending side?
5. Who is declarer and who is dummy?
6. Which player makes the first lead?
7. How many tricks can declarer make?
8. Who will be dealer in the next game (next deal)?

You may find it helpful to take a pack of cards and lay out the hand on the table.

Answers to Exercise 1

1. West has six points
North has sixteen points
East has four points
South has fourteen points.
2. As dealer, West announces the points first.
3. North/South are the declaring side. They have thirty points between the two hands whilst East/West only have ten points in the combined hands.
4. East/West are the defenders.
5. North is declarer because North has more points than South. South is dummy because dummy is always the hand opposite declarer.
6. East makes the first lead because East is on declarer's left.
7. Nine tricks are available by cashing top cards. These are two spades, two hearts, three diamonds and two clubs.
8. Dealer in the next game will be North, next clockwise round the table from West, dealer on this hand.

Exercise 2 – COUNTING TRICKS

How many tricks can be made from each of the card combinations shown below?

	Declarer	Dummy	Number of tricks
1	A 4 2	7 6 3	
2	A K 5	7 3 2	
3	A 3 2	K 7 5	
4	A K Q	7 6 3	
5	A K	Q 7 6	
6	A	K	
7	A Q 5 4	K J 3 2	
8	Q J	A K	
9	K Q 2	J 9 7	
10	Q 10 9 4	J 7 3 2	
11	A 10 7 5 4 3	9 8 6	
12	9 8 7 6 5	4 3 2	

Answers to Exercise 2

	Declarer	Dummy	Number of tricks
1	A 4 2	7 6 3	1
2	A K 5	7 3 2	2
3	A 3 2	K 7 5	2
4	A K Q	7 6 3	3
5	A K	Q 7 6	3
6	A	K	1 <i>when you play the ace, you must play the king as well</i>
7	A Q 5 4	K J 3 2	4
8	Q J	A K	2
9	K Q 2	J 9 7	2 <i>when you play the king one of the opponents will play the ace making your queen and jack winners</i>
10	Q 10 9 4	J 7 3 2	2
11	A 10 7 5 4 3	9 8 6	3 or 4 or 5 <i>depending upon how the opponent's cards break</i>
12	9 8 7 6 5	4 3 2	0 or 1 or 2 <i>depending upon how the opponent's cards break</i>

Note on questions 11 & 12

Try the example in question 11 with a pack of cards. When you have nine cards between the two hands, the opponents must have FOUR cards in the suit. These four cards can be divided, either 2-2, 3-1 or 4-0 between the two hands. You will have to play 2, 3 or 4 rounds of the suit respectively to remove the opponent's winners. The ace will win one of these, and your remaining small cards will always win tricks, so you can win 5, 4 or 3 tricks respectively. A similar logic applies for question 12.

Exercise 3 – SCORING MINIBRIDGE

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		
2	Vijay	part score in ♠	11		
3	Vijay	game in NT	8		
4	Sarah	part score in ♣	8		
5	Kim	part score in ♦	6		
6	Sarah	game in ♦	11		
7	Jason	game in NT	9		
8	Kim	part score in ♠	9		
9	Jason	game in ♣	12		
10	Vijay	part score in NT	7		
11	Sarah	game in ♥	9		
12	Kim	part score in ♦	9		

Answers to Exercise 3

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

Totals for session: Sarah and Vijay have 830 points
 Kim and Jason have 1590 points

Exercise 4 – PLANNING THE PLAY

In each of the examples below, West is the declarer. How should West plan the play?

You might find it helpful to make up the hands from a pack of cards.

	West	East	
1	♠Q 2 ♥A K Q ♦A K 4 3 ♣A 10 8 3	♠A K J 3 ♥7 6 4 2 ♦5 2 ♣9 7 6	Game in no trumps Lead: ♦Q
2	♠A 3 ♥A K 4 2 ♦9 7 5 2 ♣J 8	♠7 4 2 ♥8 5 3 ♦Q J ♣A Q 10 9 3	Part score in clubs. Lead: ♦A Why didn't West choose no trumps?
3	♠- ♥A K J 9 6 2 ♦K 7 5 ♣Q J 7 3	♠K 8 5 3 ♥Q 8 5 ♦A Q 2 ♣10 9 4	Game in hearts. Lead: ♠Q Why were hearts chosen, not clubs or no trumps?
4	♠A Q J 9 6 ♥A 5 4 3 ♦A 5 ♣10 6	♠K 10 5 ♥6 2 ♦K 9 4 2 ♣A 5 3 2	Game in spades Lead: ♥K

Answers to Exercise 4

1. You have ten top tricks – four spades, three hearts, two diamonds and one club. You need to play the spades in the right order to be sure of making four tricks in this suit. Play the queen first and then the two, winning with the ace. Play the king and jack, throwing away small cards from declarer's hand. If you play the ace first, you'll find you can't now make four tricks in the suit.

2. It would be unwise to play in no trumps because there are lots of spades to lose, if spades are led and the club finesse fails. Plan to trump the losing spade in the West hand. You will have to lose a spade trick to exhaust the West hand of spades, but you can ruff the third round of spades in the short trump hand. This creates an extra trick for declarer.

You will lose two diamonds, no more because you can ruff the third round, one spade, one heart, one club, making eight tricks. The tricks you win are one spade and a spade ruff, two hearts, no diamonds and four clubs.

There is a possibility of making an extra trick in clubs if North has the king. Start by leading the jack from West's hand. If North covers it with the king, win with the ace. If North does not produce the king, play a small one. If South has the king, this ploy fails but as you don't know where the king is, it's worth trying. If neither player puts up the king, play another club from West's hand and play the queen from dummy. This is called a finesse.

3. It is best to play in hearts because you have nine of them, more than you have in clubs, and spades may not provide a stopper for no trumps. You can ruff (trump) the spade lead and play hearts until the opponents have none left – this is called drawing trumps. Then play high clubs to force out the ace and king to make two tricks in clubs.

4. When the defence lead hearts, you want to trump the little hearts in the short trump hand. Win the first trick with the heart ace and play a heart straight back. When you get on lead again, lead another heart and ruff it in East hand. Ruffs in the short trump hand mean extra tricks for declarer. Note that you can ruff with high trumps, so avoiding any possibility of an over-ruff.

An alternative play is to let the defence win the first heart trick. This is called 'ducking' or 'holding up' the heart ace. You can win the second heart and you'll find the later play is more straightforward.

Exercise 5 – WHAT TO LEAD?

1.	North (Dummy) ♠ Q 6 3 ♥ A K 4 2 ♦ 9 6 3 ♣ 6 5 2	4	North (Dummy) ♠ A K ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ Q 9 4 ♣ K J 10 7 3
	West (you) ♠ 10 4 ♥ 9 5 3 ♦ A K 8 7 2 ♣ 10 4 3		West (you) ♠ 10 7 6 3 2 ♥ A 5 4 ♦ 10 7 5 ♣ 5 4

South says game in hearts. Partner has seven points.

South says game in clubs. Partner has six points.

2.	North (Dummy) ♠ K 9 4 ♥ A Q 6 ♦ K Q 10 9 5 ♣ 5 4	5.	North (Dummy) ♠ A Q J 9 5 4 ♥ 6 ♦ 10 9 8 2 ♣ 5 3
	West (you) ♠ Q J 10 5 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ A 4 ♣ 8 6 3 2		West (you) ♠ 10 6 ♥ A K 7 5 2 ♦ A K 6 3 ♣ 6 2

South says game in no trumps. Partner has four points.

South says part score in spades. Partner has five points.

3.	North (Dummy) ♠ J 6 3 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ K 10 5 2 ♣ 10 6 3
	West (you) ♠ K 10 8 7 5 ♥ A 2 ♦ 9 4 3 ♣ 7 5 2

South says part score in no trumps. Partner has ten points.

Answers to Exercise 5

1. **Diamond ace** – you want to cash your tricks and maybe partner can ruff the third round. In any case it won't give tricks away to declarer.
2. **Spade queen** – you want to establish tricks to cash when your side gets in. Partner's four points might be the spade ace which could mean you can defeat the contract easily. But this lead won't do the defence any harm even if declarer has the ace of spades.
3. **A spade** – you want to establish tricks, so hope that partner has a high card in spades to help establish your suit. From a long suit which doesn't have a sequence at the top, the right card is the fourth one down, in this case the seven.
An alternative is to try clubs in an attempt to find partner's suit. Partner has more points than you do, so will contribute more to the defence. This might be West's only chance to help partner.
4. As quite often happens, there is no obvious best lead on this hand. One option is to lead a small spade. Normally you would lead the three, which cannot give away a trick – let declarer do the guessing. An alternative is the heart ace to make sure you get that trick, but leading an ace when you don't have the king can give declarer an undeserved trick, so this is best avoided.
5. **Diamond ace**. Hearts will only produce one trick, which is disappointing, so try for a diamond ruff to get an extra trick. With only two diamonds, partner can encourage by playing a high-low signal.

If partner does not show a doubleton diamond, you can play a spade to try and stop declarer getting a diamond ruff in the short trump hand. In this case the short trump hand is South's, the one you cannot see. Best plan is to lead the diamond ace and see what card partner plays before deciding what to do next.

Exercise 6 – DISCOVERING PARTNER’S CARDS

It is a good idea to take out the cards in one suit and to set them out as shown in the problem.

1.

You	6 3	
J 8 5 4 2	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	partner plays the ten
		declarer plays the queen

You lead the four.

Who has the ace? Who has the king? Who has the nine?

How many cards did partner start with in this suit?

2.

You	9 5 3	
K 8 4 2	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	partner plays the jack
		declarer plays the ace

You lead the two.

Who has the queen? Who has the ten?

3.

You	A 9 2	
K Q 10 7 3	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	partner plays the eight
		declarer plays the six

You lead the king and declarer plays the ace from dummy and the six from hand.

What do you deduce from partner's card?

4. Against game in no trumps partner leads the queen of spades.

Partner	♠ 10 5 4	You
leads ♠Q	<input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	♠ 7 6 2
		declarer plays the ace

Who has the king? Who has the jack?

Which card should you play?

5. Against game in hearts partner leads the ace of clubs and you can see these clubs.

Partner	♣ Q 5 4	You
leads ♣A	<input type="text"/>	♣ K 7 6 2
	declarer plays the three	

What does partner want you to do?

6. Against part score in clubs, partner leads the seven of diamonds.

Partner	♦ 9 4 3	You
leads ♦7	<input type="text"/>	♦ A K Q 5
	declarer plays the six	

Which card do you play? Why?

When you continue with the diamonds, partner plays the eight. What do you deduce from this?

What would you have thought if partner had played the two?

Answers to Exercise 6

1. Declarer has A K Q 9 and maybe the 7; partner started with one or two cards in the suit.

- If partner had the ace or the king or the queen she/he would have played it, as third player always plays high in this position.
- If partner had the nine (s)he would have played it, since we follow with the lowest of a sequence of cards.
- Being able to read that declarer has the A K Q in the suit places nine of declarer's points. If you know, for example, that declarer started with twelve points, then (s)he only has a king, or a queen and a jack, outside.

2. Partner has the queen, declarer has the ten.

- Declarer would have won the trick with the queen if (s)he held it, so the queen must be in partner's hand.
- If partner had Q J 10 (s)he would have played the ten, so that means declarer has the ten.

3. Partner could have J 8 5 4 or 8 5 or 8 4 or singleton 8.

- Partner would play the four from 8 5 4.
- If you are in a no trump contract, J 8 5 4 is unlikely to be partner's holding, as then declarer would have a singleton in this suit.
- In a suit contract, J 8 5 4 is much more likely. Declarer would choose a suit contract if holding a singleton.

4. Declarer has the king, partner has the jack. You should play the two to tell partner that you don't have the king.

- Partner would lead the king from K Q, so declarer must have the king
- Declarer has the ace because (s)he just played it! This means we can count seven points in declarer's hand. Subtract seven from the points announced and you can make a guess at the other high cards that declarer holds.
- Partner probably has the jack unless (s)he has found a short suit lead hoping to get a ruff.

5. Play the seven to encourage partner to continue. Partner may have only two clubs.

- You can see the king and queen, so it seems likely partner has led a shortage hoping for a ruff.
- Maybe partner has a very long club suit and tried the club ace to cash tricks quickly. In either case you want to encourage so you should play the highest club you can afford.

6. Play the queen. You should play the lowest of a sequence when following to a trick in third hand.

- Continue with the ace. You should always lead the highest card from a sequence. The play at tricks one and two combined tell partner that you started with the A K Q.
- If partner follows with the eight at trick 2 you would deduce that (s)he started with three diamonds. Most likely these were 10 8 7, J 8 7 or 8 7 2. Partner would probably have led J when holding J 10 8 7.
- Playing the two on the second round would show that partner started with the 7 2 doubleton. Note that you can see the 3 4 5 and 6 and so they cannot be in partner's hand. This ability to get a count of the likely number of cards held by partner will often tell you whether the king is a trick that will win or whether it is likely to be ruffed.

Exercise 7 – WHAT TO PLAY ON PARTNER’S LEAD?

1. Against game in no trumps partner leads the ace of spades.

Partner	♠ 7 6 3	You
leads ♠A	<input type="text"/>	♠ 9 8 2

Which card should you play?
Why?

2. Against game in hearts partner leads the ace of spades.

Partner	♠ 7 6 3	You
leads ♠A	<input type="text"/>	♠ K 9 8 2

Which card should you play?
Why? If partner wins with the ace and then plays the four, what does partner want you to do?

3. Against game in hearts partner leads the ace of spades.

Partner	♠ Q 6 3	You
leads ♠A	<input type="text"/>	♠ 8 2

Which card should you play?
Why?

4. Against game in hearts partner leads the eight of spades.

Partner	♠ 7 6 3	You
leads ♠8	<input type="text"/>	♠ A K 5 2

Which card should you play?
Why?
The next time spades are played, partner plays the four. What do you deduce?

5. Against game in no trumps partner leads the two of spades.

Partner	♠ 7 6 3	You
leads ♠2	<input type="text"/>	♠ 10 4 3

Which card should you play?
Why?

6. Against game in no trumps partner leads the seven of spades.

Partner	♠ K 9 8 3	You
leads ♠7	<input type="text"/>	♠ A Q 5

Which card should you play?
Why?

Answers to Exercise 7

1. Play the two. Partner may be able to win tricks in spades but your smallest card says you cannot help.
2. Play the nine to encourage partner to continue with spades. When (s)he continues with the four, this is the lowest card partner can have. So (s)he should have started with two spades. You should win this trick with the king and lead another spade for partner to ruff.
3. Play the eight. This will encourage partner to continue with the king. When you play the two on the king, partner will then know you started with two spades and can ruff a third one. Partner will be able to work out how many spades declarer has because (s)he can count the spades on view in hand and dummy and you have told him you started with two.
4. Play the king – as third hand you should always win with the lowest of touching honours, which helps partner work out what is in your hand. If partner plays the four next time, you know that is the lowest card (s)he can have, so (s)he must have started with two. You can see seven cards in your own hand and dummy so declarer started with four – the queen, jack, ten and nine. If partner has trumps left at this stage, it is worth leading another spade to ruff one of declarer's otherwise winning cards.
5. Play the ten – because it is the best card you have.
6. If the king is played from dummy, play the ace. If declarer chooses not to play the king, win with the queen. Do not carry on with the ace because that would make the king into a winner for declarer. Keep the ace sitting over the king – remember, aces are for killing kings!

Practice Deals

Trump length is better than trump strength

1 North dealer	♠ A K Q ♥ J 10 9 8 7 6 5 ♦ A Q ♣ 4	For the first time the hand is played, North is declarer and should try playing the hand with spades as trumps . If N/S play in spades, the opposition have more trumps than declarer and dummy and declarer will lose control of the hand. Now rotate the deal so East has the North hand and play with hearts as trumps . There are
♠ 9 3 2 ♥ Q ♦ 8 6 5 4 ♣ J 8 7 5 2	♠ 8 7 6 5 4 ♥ A K ♦ J 10 9 7 ♣ A 3	
	♠ J 10 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ K Q 10 9 6	more tricks available with hearts as trumps, despite missing the three top cards, than there are in spades where five top honours are held. In hearts, the lead is probably the ♦ J won by the ace and a heart is played. The queen and king fall together. Just two hearts and one club are lost.
<p>Remember: Length in trumps is more important than strength.</p> Score $(4 \times 30) + 300 = 420$ for 10 tricks in hearts if declarer goes for game Score $30 + 50 = 80$ for making 7 tricks in spades if declarer went for part score Score $- 3 \times 50 = - 150$ for going 3 down in spades if declarer went for game.		

No trump usually score better than minor suit contracts

2 East dealer	♠ Q 10 8 5 ♥ 8 7 4 3 ♦ 7 5 ♣ J 10 7	West is declarer and, with 32 points between the hands, should obviously go for game. West will probably make twelve tricks. If no trumps are chosen the score will be $40 + (5 \times 30) + 300 = 490$. Compare this with the score for choosing to go for game in the 8-card club suit when the score would be $(6 \times 20) + 300 = 420$.
♠ A 6 4 ♥ Q J 2 ♦ A K J 9 ♣ A 9 8	♠ K 3 2 ♥ K 6 ♦ Q 10 2 ♣ K Q 4 3 2	
	♠ J 9 7 ♥ A 10 9 5 ♦ 8 6 4 3 ♣ 6 5	North will probably lead a spade. West must play hearts at trick two, forcing out the ace. Do not cash the other top spade till the ♥ A has gone. Two spades, two

hearts, four diamonds and five clubs would be thirteen tricks but the ♥A must be lost, so declarer takes twelve tricks. Score $40 + (5 \times 30) + 300 = 490$ to E/W for making twelve tricks in no trumps.

... But sometimes it's essential to play in a minor suit

3 South dealer	♠ K 5 3 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ A Q 6 5	South is declarer and North/South have 28 high card points between them, so should go for game. On this hand it's essential to choose game in clubs or diamonds as the defence will take the first five heart tricks if no trumps are chosen. Suppose South says game in clubs, West is likely to lead the ♥A, then the ♥K. But South ruffs the ♥K and
♠ J 10 6 ♥ A K Q 3 ♦ 8 6 4 3 ♣ 9 8	♠ 9 8 7 2 ♥ J 10 9 6 5 ♦ 5 ♣ J 10 4	
	♠ A Q 4 ♥ 2 ♦ A Q J 10 2 ♣ K 7 3 2	draws all the trumps, counting the suit carefully to make sure they are all drawn! Now South can make three spades, five Diamonds and four clubs. Twelve tricks. Score $(6 \times 20) + 300 = 420$ to N/S for making twelve tricks in clubs.

Playing in no trumps, giving up a trick

4 West dealer	♠ A K Q ♥ A 5 3 2 ♦ 9 6 2 ♣ 8 6 2	South is declarer and with 29 points in the two hands should go for game. With no major suit fit and holding guards in all the suits declaring no trumps is right. If it makes it gives the best score. West's best lead is probably the ♠10 as it gives nothing away, but seeing the AKQ in dummy, West may choose a diamond. Declarer
♠ 10 9 8 7 ♥ K J ♦ J 8 7 5 ♣ Q 7 5	♠ J 4 2 ♥ Q 10 9 8 4 ♦ 10 4 ♣ J 10 9	
	♠ 6 5 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ A K Q 3 ♣ A K 4 3	can count nine top tricks. There are three in spades, one in hearts, three in diamonds and two in clubs. Can you see where extra tricks can be won? By letting the opponents have a club, South sets up an extra winner as the suit breaks evenly with three clubs in each hand. Score $40 + (3 \times 30) + 300 = 430$ to N/S for making ten tricks in no trumps.

Playing in no trumps, watching entries

5 <i>North dealer</i>	♠ 10 8 7 3 ♥ Q J 10 4 ♦ J 4 2 ♣ 8 4	This time it is West who is declarer holding a really good hand with 21 points. There are 28 points between the hands and a guard in each suit, so game in no trumps looks the best choice. The ♥Q is led. Declarer has nine top tricks, four in spades two in hearts, one in diamonds, and two in clubs. However, declarer needs to take care in which order the
♠ K 5 ♥ A K 8 6 ♦ A 8 6 5 ♣ A K 7	♠ A Q J 4 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ 7 3 ♣ 6 5 3 2	
	♠ 9 6 2 ♥ 9 7 ♦ K Q 10 9 ♣ Q J 10 9	spades are played. It is essential to play the king first and then the five to the ace; otherwise, declarer will find that there is no winning card to use as an entry to dummy. If you got this wrong when playing the hand, look carefully at how to cash the four tricks. Score $40 + (2 \times 30) + 300 = 400$ to E/W for making nine tricks in no trumps.

Playing in no trumps, avoiding blockages

6 <i>East dealer</i>	♠ A K 6 4 ♥ Q 2 ♦ A K 5 ♣ A 8 6 5	North is declarer. With 20 points North has half the points in the pack. With no particularly good suit and 28 high card points between the two hands, North should choose to play in game in no trumps. East leads the ♦6. There are nine tricks there for the taking but North needs to play the hearts carefully to avoid becoming
♠ Q J 10 ♥ 10 9 6 3 ♦ J 7 2 ♣ K Q 9	♠ 9 8 7 ♥ 8 5 4 ♦ Q 10 9 6 4 ♣ J 10	
	♠ 5 3 2 ♥ A K J 7 ♦ 8 3 ♣ 7 4 3 2	trapped in the wrong hand. The ♥Q should be played first and then a small heart to the ace, followed by the ♥K and ♥J. Work out what will happen if North plays the ♥2 to the ace and then cashes the ♥K, or now plays the ♥7 won by the queen. Score $40 + (2 \times 30) + 300 = 400$ to N/S for making nine tricks in no trumps.

Playing with trumps, setting up winners

7 South dealer	♠ A 10 9 8 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ J 8 5	East is declarer and with only a combined 24 points, game would be over-optimistic. With an 8-card major suit fit, hearts, it is best to play in that suit. Can you work out what could happen if declarer chose to play in no trumps? Against hearts, South leads ♣K. Declarer has six top tricks, four in hearts, one each in clubs and diamonds. If the defenders' hearts break 4:1 or 3:2, declarer will be able to make a fifth heart trick. Declarer can also make two spade tricks. East must play the ♠K to force the defender who holds it to play the ace, so leaving the queen and jack as winners. The defenders are unlikely to obligingly play the ace if East just plays the two from one hand and the three from the other. They would win with the eight, leaving declarer no further forward. East's cunning plan should be to play the trumps until the defenders have run out (CALCULATE AND COUNT!) so the defenders cannot win an unexpected trick by trumping in, and then play the king of spades. So declarer makes nine tricks altogether. Score (3 x 30) + 50 = 140 to E/W for making nine tricks in a part score in hearts.
♠ Q J 4 3 ♥ K 8 4 ♦ 9 6 ♣ A 7 4 2	♠ K 2 ♥ A Q J 7 5 ♦ A 8 4 2 ♣ 9 6 ♠ 7 6 5 ♥ 3 2 ♦ K J 10 3 ♣ K Q 10 3	

Playing to drop the queen when missing four cards

8 West dealer	♠ K Q J ♥ J 9 7 5 2 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ Q 4	West is declarer. Dummy and declarer have 27 points between them so should be in game. With most of the strength in the minor suits West might think about going for game in no trumps to achieve a better score. This idea should be rejected with no guard in spades – go for the safer game in clubs. West can see eight top tricks (two in clubs, four in diamonds and two in hearts). Sadly, despite having the top three cards hearts, declarer can only make two tricks in this suit because he has only two cards in each hand. As is often the case, declarer would be well advised to play off the trumps early to prevent the
♠ 5 2 ♥ A Q ♦ J 6 5 2 ♣ A K J 10 8	♠ 7 6 3 ♥ K 10 ♦ A K Q 8 ♣ 9 6 5 3 ♠ A 10 9 8 4 ♥ 8 6 4 3 ♦ 4 3 ♣ 7 2	

opposition ruffing. With nine cards in trumps but missing the queen, the odds slightly favour playing off the ace and king and hoping the queen will 'drop', as happens here.

Score $(5 \times 20) + 300 = 400$ to E/W for making eleven tricks in a game in clubs

Playing with trumps, establishing winners

9 North dealer	♠ J 10 9 8 4 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ A 6 ♣ A K J	North is the declarer. N/S have 21 points. There is no chance of game, so North should go for part score in spades, even though missing the three top cards in this suit. North can see four tricks (one in diamonds and three in clubs). By playing spades to force out defenders' top spades, declarer should be able to make two spade tricks.
♠ 5 ♥ A 9 7 ♦ Q 10 5 2 ♣ 9 7 6 5 4	♠ A K Q ♥ J 10 8 ♦ K 8 4 3 ♣ 10 8 3	
	♠ 7 6 3 2 ♥ K Q 5 2 ♦ J 9 7 ♣ Q 2	

Add one trick in hearts, again after forcing out the ace, and declarer has the seven tricks needed. Score $30 + 50 = 80$ points to N/S for making seven tricks in a part score in spades.

Setting up winners in defence

10 East dealer	♠ K 9 3 2 ♥ 8 ♦ J 9 7 6 ♣ 9 8 6 2	East is declarer and with 26 points between the two hands, should decide on game in no trumps. There are 5 top tricks with the possibility of two more in spades, and four in clubs. South should lead the ♥K, the top of a sequence to force out the ace. East must play on clubs to set up tricks. When South wins the ace of clubs,
♠ J 10 6 5 ♥ 7 5 4 2 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ Q 4	♠ A Q ♥ A 10 3 ♦ A 10 2 ♣ K J 10 7 5	
	♠ 8 7 4 ♥ K Q J 9 6 ♦ 8 5 4 ♣ A 3	

there are four heart tricks to cash to get East one down. Score 50 to N/S for one down.

Finding the best opening lead

11 <i>South dealer</i>	♠ K 9 3 ♥ Q J 10 9 5 4 2 ♦ K J ♣ 8	South should go for game in hearts. There are 9 top tricks – 7 in hearts and 2 in spades. If West leads a low club or a low spade, this gives South the tenth trick. The lead of a low spade will do the same – East’s play of the ♠Q will enable S to place the ♠J, so it can be finessed on the second round of the suit. Leading a
♠ J 6 5 ♥ 8 7 ♦ 7 6 4 2 ♣ A Q 10 3	♠ Q 8 4 ♥ 6 3 ♦ A Q 10 5 ♣ 9 7 4 2	
	♠ A 10 7 2 ♥ A K ♦ 9 8 3 ♣ K J 6 5	spade not only gives the contract, it actually gives an overtrick too as 4 spade tricks can be made. The lead of the ♦6 defeats the contract as East can beat whatever card is played from dummy. The defence should then be able to take two diamond tricks, a club trick and a spade trick. Score 50 to E/W.

Finding the switch and defensive signalling

12 <i>West dealer</i>	♠ 6 5 ♥ A 9 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ J 10 8 6 5 2	West is declarer, and with 26 points should be in game. Game in diamonds looks too much so no trumps seems best, even though the heart suit is weak. North should lead the ♣J, won by the ♣Q. West can see 6 tricks: 3 in spades and 3 in clubs The diamond suit provides the necessary extra tricks but first the ace must be forced
♠ A K 10 ♥ J 10 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ A K Q 3	♠ Q J 9 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ J 10 9 5 4 ♣ 9 7	
	♠ 8 7 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 8 7 2 ♦ 8 2 ♣ 4	out. West therefore leads the ♦K and keeps on leading diamonds until North plays the ace. When N wins the ♦A he should see no future for the defence in carrying on with clubs so should try a major – after all, if declarer was looking at a good major suit it might have been made trumps. North should switch to a heart, playing the ace to see South’s signal. South should let North know this is a good idea by playing the highest card he can afford – the eight. North can then continue with the nine, which South will win with the king and take five heart tricks. Together with the ♦A, this defeats West by two tricks for a score of 100 to North/South.

USING THE MINIBRIDGE SOFTWARE

Installing and using the software

Blue Chip Minibridge is free to download from the Blue Chip Bridge website.:

- <http://www.bluechipbridge.co.uk/minibridge.htm>

The free program is funded jointly by the English Bridge Union and the American Contract Bridge League.

The link to download is at the bottom of the page carrying the licence. During download you can specify the directory where you want the program files saved.

The software provides opportunities to practise the play of the cards at a number of levels according to the stage of learning reached. It also includes a series of Minibridge lessons which will reinforce the classroom learning. You can choose to study a lesson or practise your play at any time by clicking the appropriate button on the opening screen or by using the Help facility to select a lesson.

The Blue Chip Helpline

If you have any problems in installing or running your Blue Chip Minibridge software, you can contact the helpline either via e-mail at support@bluechipbridge.co.uk or by telephone on 01992 636074.

MINIBRIDGE GLOSSARY

Attitude signal	As defender, playing a high card to say 'I like this suit' or a low one to discourage or deny values in the suit.
Balanced hand	One with a relatively equal number of cards in each suit. No void or singleton, not more than one doubleton.
Board	The container which holds a deal and shows who is dealer. Sometimes called a wallet.
Bonus	Extra points for making a contract, The part score bonus is 50 points and game bonus is 300 points.
Boss	An alternative name for Declarer
Cash	To play a winning card or cards. To 'cash out' is to take all your winning cards.
Claim	When the play is clear-cut, declarer may show his/her hand, claiming a stated number of tricks.
Clear a suit	To force out the high card held by the opponents and set up winners.
Contract	The announcement by declarer of the denomination (trump suit or no trumps) for this deal and the target number of tricks to be won by the declaring side.
Count signal	Play by defender of a higher then lower ranking card to show an even number of cards (called a peter), or low then high to show an odd number of cards.
Covering honours	When an honour is led and the next player plays a higher honour, this is said to be 'covering an honour with an honour'.
Cross-ruff	Sequence of tricks in which a player and his or her partner score trumps separately by alternately ruffing side suits.
Deal	Fifty-two cards distributed so each player has thirteen cards.
Dealer	The player who announces points first on a deal.

Declarer	The player on the side winning the contract who has the most points, or who announced points first. Declarer has responsibility for playing both his/her hand and dummy.
Defeat the contract	To win, in defence, enough tricks so that declarer fails to make the contract. The score is 50 points for each undertrick.
Defence	The line of play adopted by the defenders.
Defenders	The two players in opposition to declarer. Often referred to as RHO (right-hand opponent) and LHO (left-hand opponent).
Denomination	Clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades or no trump.
Discarding	Playing another suit (not trumps) when unable to play a card in the suit led, preferably throwing a card that gives helpful information to partner.
Double dummy	A play which could not be bettered even if declarer could see all four hands.
Doubleton	A holding of two cards in a suit, shown by either leading the higher or playing the higher one before the lower.
Drawing trumps	Continuing to lead trumps until opponents have none left – this involves counting the cards played to make sure all opposition trumps have been drawn.
Ducking (hold-up)	Deliberately withholding a high card which could have won a trick.
Dummy	Declarer's partner whose hand is tabled after the opening lead.
Duplicate competition	Where the result on each deal is determined by comparison with other scores on the same deal.
Duplication	Duplication of distribution is when both players in a partnership have the same length in each suit. Duplication of values is when strong holdings in one hand are facing strong values in the same suit in partner's hand, such as AQ opposite KJ.
Eight-card fit	A combined holding of eight cards in a suit between the two hands of a partnership.

English Bridge Union	The governing body for the game of duplicate bridge in England.
Entry	A card that enables access to a particular hand.
Establishing	Setting up a specific card or cards as winner(s) by forcing out high cards.
Etiquette and Ethics	Good manners and good behaviour at the bridge table.
Exit	Get 'off lead' by playing a card you expect to be won by the other side – trying to do so without giving away an unnecessary trick.
Finesse	A technique of card play to try and win a trick with a particular card, when opponents hold a higher card in the same suit.
Fit	A fit is the combined holding in any one suit between the two hands in a partnership. A good fit is 8 or more cards. A double fit is a fit in two suits on the same deal, often very useful.
Flat hand	A balanced hand, particularly a 4 3 3 3 pattern.
Following suit	Playing a card in the same suit.
Fourth highest	The lead in a suit of the fourth card from the top. e.g. the lead of the 6 from K J 9 6 4.
Game	Contract whose trick score is 100 points or more i.e. 3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣, 5♦.
Get a count	Discover the distribution of the unseen hands.
Give count	Make a distributional signal.
Go down	or Go Off. Make fewer tricks than your target.
High card points	Values given to high cards as follows: ace=4, king=3, queen=2, jack=1. There are 40 high card points (HCP) in the pack.
Honours	The five highest cards in a suit (ace, king, queen, jack, ten).
Intermediates	Middle-size cards like tens, nines and eights that might win tricks.
Laydown	A contract that is so certain that declarer can claim at trick one.

Lead	The first card played to a trick.
LHO	Left-hand opponent.
Long suit	A suit of four or more cards in the same hand.
Major suits	Spades and Hearts whose tricks score 30 points each.
Minor suits	Diamonds and Clubs whose tricks score 20 points each.
No trumps	A contract played without trumps (the highest card in the suit led always wins the trick).
Opening lead	The card led to the first trick.
Overtrick	A trick made by declarer above the number required for the contract.
Pair	The partnership of two players.
Part score	A contract to take at least 7 tricks.
Penalty	Points scored by defenders when declarer fails to make a contract.
Puppet	An alternative name for Dummy.
Quit a trick	To complete the trick by turning over the cards after all players have played to it.
Revoke	Failure to play a card of the suit led when it is possible to do so. Can be corrected if the trick has not been quit. Otherwise ask for help.
RHO	Right-hand opponent.
Ruff (or to Trump)	To play a trump on the lead of a side suit, when holding no card (void) in the suit led.
Second hand	The player on the left of the leader to the current trick who plays the second card to the trick. 'Second hand plays low' is often right, meaning that the second hand often does not try to win the trick.
Sequence	Three or more touching cards in the same suit. e.g. J 10 9.
Side suit	Any suit other than trumps.
Singleton	Holding of only one card in a particular suit.

Slam	A contract to make twelve or thirteen tricks. Optionally, slam contracts can be introduced into Minibridge, attracting an extra bonus of 500 points as well as the game bonus.
Stop or Stopper	A card, or cards, held in a suit which prevents the opponents from running the suit (cashing all the suit as winners). Also called a guard.
Tenace	A combination of cards held in a suit which is not a sequence, because there are gaps e.g. AQ or KJ10.
Third hand	The partner of the player who led to the trick, normally 'Third hand plays high'.
Trick	Four cards, one from each player, played in clockwise rotation.
Trump	A card in the suit named as trumps by declarer.
Unbalanced hand	Contains a void or singleton or two doubletons.
Void	Holding no cards in a particular suit.
Wide open	A suit in which declarer has no stopper when playing in no trumps.
Winners	Cards that may reasonably be expected to win tricks.
x	Used to describe unimportant small cards e.g. AKxx.
Yarborough	A hand with no card higher than a nine.



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