

**Bridge Club for
Yale College Students**
presents...

**Bridge
Beginner
Lessons**

Lesson Plans and Summaries

**Guide for Teachers
Review for Students**

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Beginner Lessons

Overview 1 – Rules and Openings *(1.5-2 hours)*

1. Begin with asking about **previous card game experience**.
2. *Optional: Teach or review basic trick/trump mechanic. (5-10 mins)*
3. **Play a hand whist**, with a random trump and partnerships, no dummy. *(5-10 mins)*
4. **Explain the rules of bridge**, as different from whist, with dummy and ideas of duplicate scoring (partscore vs. game, comparing to other tables). *(~5 minutes)*
5. **Deal out a hand**, and have everyone say what their best suit is and how good they think their hand is, without discussing specific cards. Whichever partnership thinks their hand is best, can choose a trump suit and level. Have one player on that team be dummy. Good time to discuss general play strategies. *(15-20 mins)*
6. Discuss how bidding replaces this conversation. Go over the mechanics of bidding, which bids are higher than others, etc. *(~10 mins)*
7. **Bid and play a hand**, before teaching any agreements, strategies or conventions. *(10-15 mins)*. Another good time to **mention general play strategies on the summary sheet**.
8. **Introduce point counting**. (Sheet 1A) *(10 mins)*
9. *Optional: Bid and play again, and discuss how it helps. (10-15 mins)*
10. **Teach rules for opening bids (Sheet 1B)**. *(10-15 minutes)*
11. **Bid and play again**, with structured opening bids. *(10-15 minutes)*

Beginner Lessons

1a. Counting points, Bonuses (*15 mins*)

What are points?

Points are a way of counting out how good your hand is, so you can tell your partner! They don't count towards the score or anything – it's just so you can bid better by evaluating what you've got.

HOW TO COUNT POINTS

Total Points = High Card Points + Distribution Points

High Card Points (HCP)

Ace = 4 Points

King = 3 Points

Queen = 2 Points

Jack = 1 Point

Distribution Points

Five Card Suit = 1 dist. point

Six Card Suit = 2 dist. points

Seven Cards Suit = 3 dist. points

and so on...

What's GAME?

Game is a contract “threshold” - all contracts above a certain level in each suit are given a big bonus score, if they make. **You only get the bonus if you bid for it** (promise to do it). That's your reward for attempting challenging contracts!

Game Contracts

NO TRUMP – 3NT and up is game. You need about **26 points** total to make it.

MAJORS – 4♥ and 4♠ and up is game. You need about **26 points** to make it.

(MINORS – 5♣ and 5♦ and up is game. You need about **29 points** – *ugh!*)

*-These numbers are the **combined total for both hands.***

-Since minor games are tougher, we'll try and avoid them in the bidding!

What's the big deal with games?

The whole point of learning how to communicate with your partner is to figure out when you should try for game and when you shouldn't! Finding the right contract is a big part of being a good bridge player.

What other bonuses are there?

(SMALL) SLAM – All but one trick in any suit. It's worth about two games!

GRAND SLAM – All the tricks in any suit. It's worth a crapload!

Beginner Lessons

1b. Opening Bids (*15 mins*)

What's opening the bidding even mean?

If you're the first bidder, or the first bidder not to pass, you can pass or make what's called an opening bid, or the first suggestion of a contract.

What do I need to open?

You need a hand worth **13 points to open**. This is because the lowest level game contracts need about 26 points to make, so we need to open any 13 points hand. (If we'd be willing to pass with 13, we might have a total of 26 and never know it!)

OPENING BIDS – (In Order of Priority)

1NT shows 15-17 (HCP) points and a balanced hand.

- Balanced means you have no more than one doubleton.
 - The three balanced distributions are 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2
- Only count high card points in this reckoning. You **can't** have more than 17 !

1♥/1♠ - 5-card major, 13+ points

- You have to have 5-cards in that suit!
- FAQ: 13 points means 13 in the whole hand, not in the suit your opening.
- Really, the range is 13-21, because we have a special bid for 22+ hands (2♣)

1♣/1♦ - if you can't bid one of the first two!

- If you can't open NT or a major, open your longer minor!
- This means you might have as few as 3 of that suit, but open it anyway. This confuses most beginners for a couple weeks.
- If you have 3 clubs and 3 diamonds; all other equal length minors, open 1♦.

Why do we open this way? Why not just open your longest suit?

- No-Trump has a narrow range, which describes our hand well. We always want to tell partner what we have as precisely as possible, so it's our first priority.
- We make minors the last priority opening because we aren't interested in minor games, and remember, the point of bidding is to help us find games (and slams) when we have them!

Yale Beginner Lessons

Summary 1 – Evaluation, Openings, Play

High Card Points

Ace – 4 points
 King – 3 points
 Queen – 2 points
 Jack – 1 point
 Other – 0 points

Distribution Points

5-card suit – 1 point
 6-card suit – 2 points
 7-card suit – 3 points
 and so on...

Order of Suits:

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

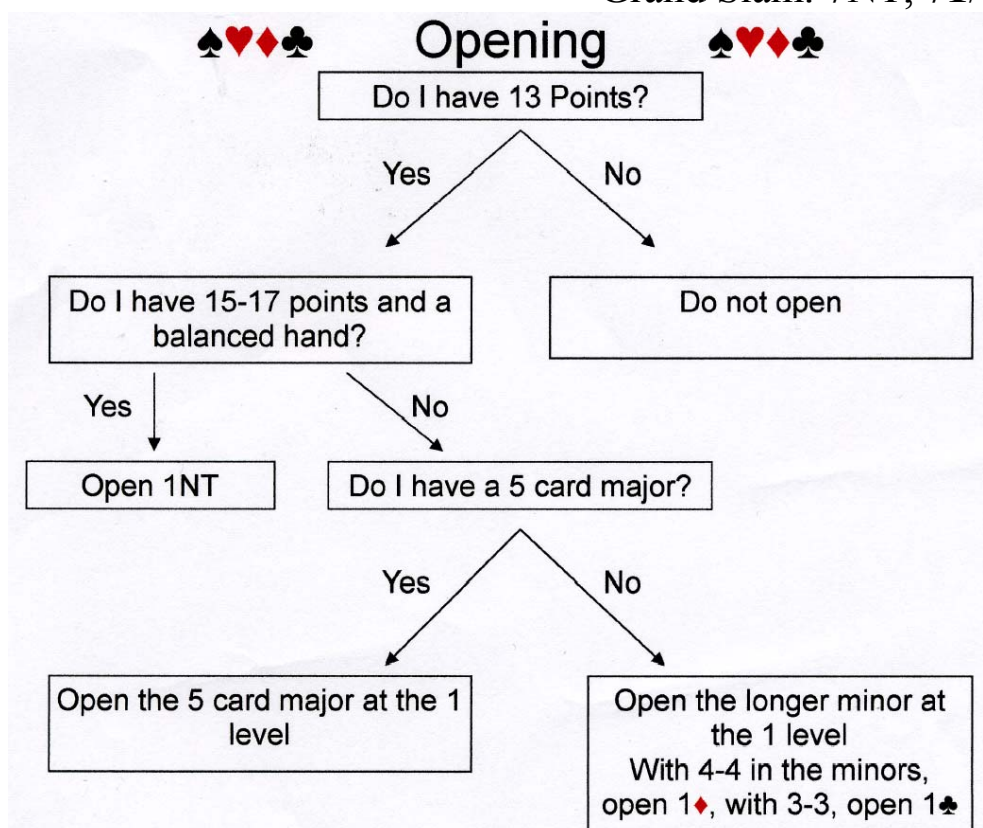
(alphabetical, low to high)

Major suits: ♠ and ♥

Minor suits: ♣ and ♦

Target contracts

Game: 3NT, 4♥/♠, (5♣/♦)
 Small Slam: 6NT, 6♠/♥/♦/♣
 Grand Slam: 7NT, 7♠/♥/♦/♣



Some General Play Strategies

- 2nd hand LOW, third hand HIGH
- Cover an honor with an honor
- Count your winners
- Draw trumps as declarer
- Lead through strength

Basic Leads:

- Top of a sequence
- 4th best (especially in NT)
- Short suit leads
- **DON'T** lead suits with unsupported honors, and don't lead the honors either

Beginner Lessons

Overview 2 – General Responding *(1.25-2 hours)*

1. **Review the suit order, game contracts, point counting and requirements, opening the bidding.** *(5-10 minutes)*
2. **Quiz** using sample opening hands *(~5 minutes)*
3. **Teach** general bidding ideas (**Sheet 2**) *(20-30 minutes)*
4. **Play a supervised hand**, where after each bid, everyone other than the bidder has to identify whether each bid was forcing, invitational, or passout. *(15-20 minutes)*
5. **Play another hand without supervision**, duplicated if possible. Do not interfere with mistakes but discuss them afterwards. *(15-20 mins)*
6. **Teach** the first lesson on **declarer play**. Explain counting winners and **promotion**. *(10-15 minutes)*
7. **Play another hand**, and have everyone count winners at the beginning and create a plan for promoting future winners. If possible, use a predealt hand where an ace needs to be knocked out to establish the winner before a stopper is run through. *(10-15 minutes)*
8. *Optional: Play another hand, unstructured. (10-15 minutes).*

Beginner Lessons

2. After a Suit Opening (general ideas)

Your partner just opened a suit- where do we go from here? There are so many possibilities! To navigate them all, we classify all bids into just a few basic types! The type depends on **who bids it** and **what type of bid it is**.

What's a response?

A response is the first bid by the partner of the opener.

What's a rebid?

When either opener or responder makes their second bid, it's called a rebid. A typical auction consists of an opening, a response, and some number of rebids.

What's are the general types of responses and rebids?

There are three basic types of bids, based on how they ask partner to proceed. Think of it like a traffic-light:

- **bids that partner must pass (drop-dead).** They are final contracts.
- **bids that partner may pass (constructive or invitational).**
 - They tell partner to keep bidding only if there's a chance at something better.
- **bids that partner are not allowed to pass (forcing).**
 - They are used to keep the auction alive, so that game/slam is not missed.

How do I classify my partners bids?

It's easy. These bids are color coded with the same traffic light.

- **Drop Dead Bids:** passes, game bids, slam bids
- **Invitational Bids:** raises of partner's suits, bids of NT that aren't game/slam
- **Forcing Bids:** bidding a new (unbid) suit, without jumping

How many points should I have for each bid?

Always consider what you know about your partner's point range.

- If you are sure you don't have game, pass or make a drop dead bid ASAP.
- If you might have game, bid something invitational if you can, or something forcing if that seems more appropriate.
- If definitely have game, either bid the game or bid something forcing to make sure that partner doesn't pass below game.

You should **use a little arithmetic** to sort this all out and avoid memorization. However, point ranges are included in the summary to guide you.

Beginner Lessons

Summary 2 – After Suit Openings (general)

Traffic Light of Bids:

- **Drop-dead: Do not bid again partner!**
- **Invitational: You can pass, but game might be possible.**
- **Forcing: Don't pass, whatever you do!**

Types of Bids:

- **Game Bids – Don't bid on, we're where we need to be!**
- **Passes – You don't bid at all!**
- **Raise – Bidding Partners suit or rebidding the same suit yourself**
- **No Trump – No new suit to mention**
- **New Suits (non jump) – Here's a suit we might play in***

Basic Point Ranges

Responder

- **0-5 Passout**
- **6-9 Constructive**
- **10-12 Almost There**
- **13+ Don't stop before game**

Openers rebids

- **12-15: pass a non-forcing response**
- **12-15: Minimum rebid**
- **16-19: Almost there**
- **19-21: Don't stop before game**

(*technically, **only new suits by responder are forcing**, since opener is limited to 21 points. In practice one rarely passes openers new suit either, just in case they have a strong hand and two suits.)

What do I bid?

- **Game is impossible** – Pass if you can, or bid something drop-dead.
- **Game is possible** – Bid something invitational (if possible) or forcing.
- **Game is sure** – Bid the game yourself (if you can), or a forcing bid.

Beginner Lessons

Overview 3 – Responses in Depth *(1.25-2 hours)*

1. **Review** principles of forcing and invitational bids. (5-10 mins)
2. **Bid and play a hand** to reinforce review. (10-15 mins)
3. Improve the accuracy of bidding by **explaining exact meanings** of responses to opening suit bids. (**Sheet 3**) (15-20 mins)
4. **Quiz** on responses as a group. (5-10 mins)
5. **Bid and play a couple hands** to reinforce the new ideas. For the first hand, talk about each bid as a table and exactly what it shows. (20-30 mins)
6. Introduce the **idea of running** a suit in a new play lesson. Either use an example from the green book or create one. (10-15 minutes).
7. **Bid and play** one or two more hands. (10-30 mins).

Beginner Lessons

3. Responding to an opening suit

Now that you have an idea about how to bid in the abstract, we can start to hone in on specific situations so that you can bid even better! A very common situation is to have make a response to partners opening suit bid. Here, we'll give you the nitty gritty details – but it's really just expanding on what you learned before!

Here's the system, in full detail. Try and think of the reasons why each response means what it means instead of just memorizing.

Major (♥,♠) Responses

1. Support – 3 Cards or More

0-5: **pass**
 6-9: **single raise** (“constructive”)
 10-12: **double raise** (“invitational”)
 13+: **Bid game...?** (or look for slam)

2. Bid a new suit at lowest level

0-5: **pass**
 6+: **you can bid it at one level**
 10+: **need 10+ to bid it at two level**

3. Bid No-Trump

0-5: **pass**
 6-9: **bid 1NT**
 10-12: **bid 2NT**
 13+: **bid 3NT** (or look for slam)

Minor (♣, ♦) Responses

1. Bid a new suit at lowest level

0-5: **pass**
 6+: **you can bid it at one level**
 10+: **need 10+ to bid it at two level**

2. Support – 5 Cards or More

0-5: **pass**
 6-9: **single raise** (“constructive”)
 10-12: **double raise** (“invitational”)
 13+: **Bid game...?** (or look for slam)

3. Bid No-Trump

0-5: **pass**
 6-9: **bid 1NT**
 10-12: **bid 2NT**
 13+: **bid 3NT** (or look for slam)

Frequently Confused Bids:

- New Suits have **no maximum**, so 1♣-1♥ shows **6 to INFINITY points**.
- You need at least 10 points to bid a new suit at the 2-level, BUT you still bid it at the 1-level if you can!
- If you have enough points to raise directly to game, you probably want to bid some other suit first so that you give partner a chance to show you a really good hand so that you don't miss slam. However, if you think you will make no more than game, regardless of what partner has, you should bid it.

Beginner Lessons

Summary 3 – Responding to Opening Suits

General Knowledge

Goals: 26 pts for games (3NT, 4♥/♠). 33 pts for slam, 37 for grand slam.

Fits: Golden fit is an 8-card trump fit. Do 3NT instead of minor games!

Priorities: In majors, support above all. In minors, bid new suits first.

Ranges:

0-5: Pass immediately

6-9: Constructive

10-12: Invitational

13+: Game Forcing

Support

Need an 8-card fit or better.

6-9: Single raise (e.g. 1♥-2♥)

10-12: Double raise (e.g. 1♣-3♣)

13+: Bid game or a new suit first

NT Bids

Need no support, fallback plan.

6-9: Bid 1NT

10-12: Bid 2NT

13+: Bid 3NT or a new suit first

New Suits

Need a four+ card suit, and always bid at lowest available level.

1 level: Need at least 6 points. (1 of 3 ranges)

2 level: Need at least 10 points. (two ranges)

For example: 1♣-1♥ shows 6 TO INFINITY pts, NOT 6-9.

Basic Declarer Strategies

Promotion:

When you counted your winners, you only counted top ones. If you have touching honors below the ace, you can play them until the lower honors are the highest ones left!

Running a suit:

When you have 7 or more cards in a suit between the two hands, you can keep playing the suit until opponents have no more, in which case the rest are winners now! You should keep count of the suit to see if this is still possible. Also, if the suit is the trump suit, you shouldn't run them right away, since you may want to trump some other suit later.

Beginner Lessons

Overview 4 – Rebids In Depth *(1-2 hours)*

1. **Review** responses to an opening suit. *(5-10 minutes)*
2. **Play a hand or two** to reinforce these responses *(15-30 minutes)*.
3. Discuss the difficulties of rebidding in the previous hands. Use this to springboard a lesson on the usefulness of a **detailed rebid system (Sheet 4)**. *(15-30 minutes)*
4. **Play a supervised hand** where anytime anyone makes a bid, everyone else at the table has to decide what it means. *(10-20 minutes)*
5. **Play a second hand**, without this supervision. *(10-15 minutes)*
6. Give a **short lesson on opening leads** and defensive strategy. Make sure to cover the difference between leading against NT and leading against suit contracts. Emphasize leading through strength and defensive promotion. *(5-10 minutes)*.
7. **Play another hand or two**. *(10-30 minutes)*.

Beginner Lessons

4. Rebids by Opener (in suit auctions)

So what exactly do I rebid anyway?

Obviously, your rebid will depend a little bit on what partner does!

- If partner has **limited his/her hand**, by supporting you or bidding NT, you can simply add up the points and either **PASS, RAISE, or BID GAME** depending on whether game is impossible, possible, or certain.
- If partner has made an **unlimited bid**, by bidding a new suit, you have a lot more to think about. Here are your choices, in either case:

Priority 1 – Support partners major

- If you have **4+ card support** for partners major response, raise!
- Single raise with 13-15 pts; double raise with 16-18 pts, bid game in their suit with 19-21 pts.

Priority 2 – Rebid original suit

- If you have **6+ cards in your original suit**, you can rebid it (and re-rebid it once for each card more than 6 that you have).
- **Minimum rebid** shows 13-15 pts, **Jump rebid** shows 15-18 pts. **Game rebid** shows 19-21 pts.

Priority 3/4 – Rebid NT!

- **1NT with 12-14** points and a balanced hand, **2NT with 18-19** points.
- If partner responded with a new suit at the two level, these shift up one level!

Priority 3/4 – Bid a new suit (majors preferred)

- Bidding an **unbid major** takes priority over bidding NT!
- **To show 12-18 pts**, you simply bid the new suit at the lowest level.
- You can only bid a new suit at the two level that is higher ranking than your original suit if you have 16+ pts and a longer first suit than second suit. This is called a **reverse**. If this is confusing, just ignore it for now. It's pretty rare.
- If you jump and bid a new suit, that shows 19-21+ pts and is forcing until game! (this called a **jump shift**)

Priority 5 – Support partners minor

- With good 4 card or 5 cards support, you can raise partners minor. Last resort.
- **Single raise: 12-15, Double raise: 16-18, 19-21 Bid 3NT**

Beginner Lessons

Summary 4 – Rebids by Suit Opener

Types of Rebids:

- Rebid same suit or reraise partner
- Support partner's suit
- Rebid NT
- Bidding a new suit

Point Ranges:

Minimum:	12-15
Strong	16-19
Game Forcing:	19+-21

Rebidding the same suit:

- Need 6+ cards in suit if partner hasn't supported. (self-supporting)
- **2-level shows minimum** (pass if partner raised you there)
- **3-level shows a strong hand** (bid game if partner raised you there already).
- **4-level shows a game-going hand.**

Supporting Partners Suit:

- Need 4+ cards in suit (4+4 = 8)
- **Single raise shows minimum**
- **Double raise shows a strong hand.**
- Bid game to show a game going hand. (3NT, 4 of major, or rarely 5 of a minor)

Rebidding NT:

- Need a balanced hand, fallback plan.
- Lowest rebid of NT = 12-14 HCP
- Jump rebid of NT = 18-19 HCP (1NT opening showed 15-17!)

New Suit:

- **Non jump/non reverse shows wide range:** 12-17 pts. Not forcing, who knows.
- Jump is forcing, 19-21. (**jump shift**) Partner can't pass until game is reached.

*Note: If you bid so high that partner needs to bid at the 3-level support your first suit, it's called a **reverse**. For instance, 1♣ - (pass) - 1♠ - (pass) - 2♥. You need: 17+, longer first suit than second. It's forcing. This is a complicated topic, so for now, just try and avoid bidding reverses.*

Beginner Lessons

Overview 5 – Rebids, playing a hand *(1-1.5 hours)*

1. **Review all the principles of bidding covered** so far – openings, responses and opener's rebids – by giving sample auctions and asking for interpretations. *(10~15 minutes)*
2. **Play a random hand**, without supervision, to get everyone in the mood. *(10-15 minutes)*
3. **Discuss what might happen after** opener's rebid – what will be responder's choice? Pick a sample auction and have students guess what each bid might mean using principles of forcing, non-forcing, invitational. *(10-15 minutes)*.
4. **Teach and show the responder's rebid decision** summary sheet, which hopefully everyone was able to more or less generate on their own. Emphasize that basically no memorization is required – only an application of the basic ideas of trying to find a game. *(5-10 minutes)*
5. **Play another hand**. Each time responder has to make a rebid decision, everyone at the table should say what they think responder has. *(10-15 minutes)*
6. Review the different ways to establish extra winners as declarer. Introduce the basic finesse an ace / higher card and the finesse against the king / intermediate card. Unify them by the principle of leading towards an honor. Comment on trying to avoid finessing because of the risk. Make sure to discuss the difference between leading out a high card and leading low towards honors. *(15-30 minutes)*.
7. Play another hand or two as time allows. *(10-30 minutes)*

Beginner Lessons

Summary 5a – Play Tactics

Basics of playing a hand

- **Step 1: Count your winners**
 - If you have enough winners at any point, (draw trumps) and take them.
 - Otherwise, don't just take your winners. Use them tactically to create extras.
- **Step 2: Establishing Extra Winners**
 - **Promotion**
 - Knockout enemy high cards to promote the ones under them.
 - Example: You have KQJ10 in a suit. Once you get rid of the ace, you have three more winners!
 - **Running a long suit**
 - Play enough rounds of a suit until only you have card left in that suit.
 - In a trump contract, you usually need to draw trump first.
 - Don't keep running the trump suit, save some to rough other suits.
 - Make sure to end in the long hand.
 - **Finessing**
 - Leading towards an honor, missing the one above it.
 - Play towards an honor, when missing one above it, hoping that person in between has the one you're missing.
 - Sandwich one between two honors, when you have two honors below the one you're missing, and the one above.
 - **Trumping**
 - You can trump losers in **the hand with a shorter trump suit**.
Roughing in the long hand doesn't give you any new winners!

More on defense:

- **During The Hand**
 - Lead through strength, towards weakness.
 - Try to return partner's opening lead.
 - Try not to lead away from unsupported honors.
- **Opening Leads:**
 - What partner bid
 - Top of a sequence, especially honors.
 - High-low from a doubton or a singleton.
 - Top of nothing

Leading/Defending NT:

Leads that still work:

Top of a sequence
What partner bid

Additional lead:

4th-best from longest, strongest

It's a race – try and establish your own suits, don't give stuff away!

Beginner Lessons

5b. Rebids by Responder (in suit auctions)

What do I need to know about partners bid?

By the time your second bid rolls around, a lot could have happened. But hopefully, partner will have narrowed his or her range a lot. This will tell you whether game is possible, impossible, or certain. This will be the guiding principle of your rebid (and any further bids you make).

- **If game is impossible**, or has already been bid, **pass** (if it is a safe spot)
- If game is possible, **make a limiting bid** and let partner make the choice.
- **If game is certain**, either bid it or bid something forcing (a new suit)

What are the non-forcing, passout bids I can make?

- **Pass!** if partner bid a suit you can tolerate and did not force you somehow.
- **Take preference** to partners original suit, showing as few as 2 card support in a major or four card support in a minor. Hey, a 7-card fit isn't terrible.
- **Make a minimum rebid of your original suit**, if you have 6 cards in it.
- Rebid 1NT, if it is available.

What are the invitational bids I can make?

- **Supporting** partners second suit (with 4+ pieces in a minor or major) or jump supporting their original suit.
- **Jump rebidding** your first suit.
- Bidding 2NT (with a balanced-ish hand) and a **stopper** in any unbid suits (a stopper is an Ace, or a king and a small card, or a queen and two small cards etc...

What are the forcing bids I can make?

- A new suit!
- That's it in the beginner system! If you need to be in game, and partner hasn't game forced by his second term, just bid the game you think is most likely to work.

If you've really understood everything in the last two lessons – you are barely a beginner anymore! And don't worry if you didn't catch it all the first time. It comes to you as you play. You only need to know a few more things before you can play duplicate!