

## MiniBridge: For Beginners Without Supervision by Robert Locke

MiniBridge allows a foursome to bypass the more complicated half of every Bridge deal —**the Auction**— in order to quickly get to the perhaps more fun and certainly lots easier half — **Play-of-the-Hand**.

N/S are partners; E/W are partners. North deals 4 hands of 13 each. Players arrange cards by suit, alternating red-black, and by rank within suit.

### Evaluating the Hand by HCP:

HCP stands for High Card Points: A=4    K=3    Q=2    J=1

Beginning with Dealer, each player announces out loud your HCP (should add up to 40 HCP among the foursome). At this point don't worry that you are giving away secrets of your hand; this is for Play-of-the-Hand practice, and knowing a few secrets might even make it easier for you to understand and develop good strategies.

Whichever partnership jointly has most HCP gets to establish the Trump. The two of them announce to each other out loud the length of longest suits to discover if they have a suit in common with 8+ cards between the pair. Don't concern yourselves here with Major Suits (spades & hearts) and minor suits (diamonds & clubs) but treat all suits alike for now.

If the Partnership has two suits of the same length, establish the higher ranking suit as trump. The rank of suits rank from low-to-high alphabetically, C-D-H-S: Clubs-Diamonds-Hearts-Spades. When you learn about Auction, this will become clearer. If the Partnership has no suit of 8+, they might decide to play Notrump (NT).

The hand with most HCP becomes DECLARER, with Partner laying down that hand as DUMMY after the First Lead. The other Partnership becomes DEFENDERS, with LHO (Left-Hand-Opponent) to DECLARER making the First Lead **before** DUMMY is exposed.

### Play-of-the-Hand:

After the First Lead, each player plays in turn in a clockwise rotation. DECLARER instructs DUMMY which card to play. Following the led suit is a must unless impossible, at which time the player may sluff or trump at will. Each player turns own tricks, longwise to self to indicate trick-won, sidewise to indicate trick-lost.

Suggestions: 2nd hand, play low; 3rd hand, play high; except Cover-an-Honor-with-an-Honor. Aces are meant to capture Kings; but if you lead an Ace, you will capture only deuces and treys; so makes good sense **not** to lead an ace.

The first six tricks by one partnership is called "Book". Score one point for each trick above Book: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Highest possible score is 7, meaning you have taken all 13 tricks. Remember, this is MiniBridge designed only to give you hands-on play. The Auction-half is much more complicated, but when you do think you are ready for Auction, take a peek at p. 2.

## Simple Bridge Scoring

Instead of the Simplest Scoring suggested on p. 1 (one point each trick) you might find it easy enough to begin scoring tricks as per Contract Bridge:

minor suit trump=20 per trick    v.    Major Suit Trump & NT=30 per trick (NT add 10 for first trick)

GAME=100+

## More Complex Bridge Scoring

In a system of scoring invented in 1925 on a cruise through the Panama Canal, Harry S. Vanderbilt gave the world the modern game of Contract Bridge. To the Simple Bridge Scoring above, Vanderbilt added bonuses for risking to bid GAME: **4**-of-a-Major or **5**-of-a-minor or **3**NT. That cruise also added risks and rewards of "vulnerability" (marked red or "vul" or simply "V" on the slots of the Duplicate boards).

You achieve Game Bonus **only** if you bid GAME, which means risking penalties if you don't fulfill your contract. Vulnerability increases the penalties. There are also huge bonuses for bidding and making Slam (**6**) and Grand Slam (**7**), but GAME is complicated enough for beginners.

## Duplicate Scoring v. Rubber Scoring

There are two basic types of Bridge Scoring. We will use Duplicate Scoring during lessons and organized game play. Any foursome who wishes to play Rubber Scoring (unexplained here) is welcome to do so.

**GAME Bonus**=300 **NV** (nonvulnerable) — or 500 **V** (vulnerable)

**Partscore Bonus**=50 (for deals where bid GAME is not bid)

**Penalties**=50 per trick **NV** — or 100 per trick **V**

**Doubled penalties**=100 first trick, 200 subsequent **NV** — or 200 first trick, 300 subsequent **V**.

## Simple Auction

Dealer is first bidder, then clockwise rotation, bidding upward C-D-H-S-NT each level, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. to establish the Contract, e.g., 1S - 2C - 2H - 3C, etc.. Simplistic bidding thresholds:

**Opener:** with 12-21 HCP bid longest suit.

**Responder** (partner of Opener): with below 6 HCP—Pass; 6-10 HCP with 3-card trump support—raise Opener's suit to 2; 10+ HCP—bid new suit.

**Overcaller:** 10+ HCP—bid longest suit to compete in Auction, 5&Dime.

**Advancer** (partner of Overcaller): Follow simplistic advice for Responder (above).

Three sequential passes end the Auction. The Contract is the last bid suit or NT at the last level, e.g., 3NT, or 4S, or 5D, etc. DECLARER is first person to have bid that suit (or NT). DUMMY is always Partner of DECLARER. First Lead is always by LHO to DECLARER.

Simplistic suggestions for Opening Leads: Partner's bid suit; **AK** or **KQ** or **QJT**—lead highest of touching honors; 4th from High in your longest suit; singleton so you can trump soon.

Have fun.