

Bernard Magee: Bridge Glossary

ACE

Highest card in the pack: worth 4 points when assessing the value of your hand.

ALERT

When a bid has an unusual or unnatural meaning then it should be alerted by the partner of the bidder. He can either announce 'ALERT' or use an ALERT CARD. More experienced players may play different CONVENTIONS and thus might need to alert regularly. Most beginners will not need to alert at all.

BALANCED HAND

A balanced hand is a hand with no SINGLETON or VOID and at most one doubleton.

BID

To attempt to win the contract: a number and a denomination which designate the trumps (or notrumps) and the number of tricks aimed for.

BIDDING BOX

A box of cards which have the bids written on them. You choose the card which corresponds to the call that you want to make. These are used at most bridge clubs to keep the noise down and make the bidding clearer.

BOOK

The six tricks of a contract before the bid is added. E.g. 1NT contracts for $1 + 6 = 7$ tricks.

BREAK

The divide of a suit. A 3-2 break means that a suit has divided 3 in one opponent's hand and two in the other opponent's hand.

CALL

A BID or a PASS.

CHICAGO

A form of Rubber Bridge, that involves playing sets of four hands at assigned vulnerabilities.

CLAIM

Towards the end of a hand when declarer has all winners he can make a claim for the remaining tricks rather than play all the cards out: as players become more experienced they tend to claim more often; it can save quite a bit of time.

When a claim is made, it does not have to be for all the remaining tricks, just the stated amount. Both defenders have to agree with the claim: if they do not then the director is called to adjudicate.

CLUBS

The lowest ranking of the four suits in bridge. One of the MINOR suits: scoring 20 points per level.

CONVENTIONS

Agreements between a partnership as to the meaning of bids. These are not secret! The opponents are allowed to know all agreements and are allowed to ask the meanings of bids during the auction if they wish.

COUNT

A type of signal where a defender tries to show how many cards he has in a suit.

DEAL

To distribute the cards. Also the name given to the layout of the cards that have been dealt.

DEALER

The player who distributes the cards to start the game. The dealer is often arbitrarily assigned as it is on the computer because the hands are pre-dealt. The dealer is the first player to bid.

DECLARER

The player who plays the cards for the partnership that has won the contract. In Minibridge it is the player with the higher point total of the winning partnership. In bridge it is the player who bid the denomination of the final contract first. Declarer's partner is the Dummy.

DEFENCE

The partnership that opposes the declarer are called the defence (or defenders): their aim is to defeat declarer's contract.

DIAMONDS

One of the four suits. It is ranked above clubs but below the rest. It is one of the MINOR suits: it scores 20 points per level.

DIRECTOR

The referee. Usually a non-playing official who is in charge of the rules of the game and fair play. However at many bridge clubs the director might be a fellow player.

DISTRIBUTION

The shape of a hand: how many cards it has in each suit.

DOUBLE

A type of call in bridge which increases the stakes: often made when you expect your opponents to fail in their contract. You can only double your opponents.

DOUBLETON

A suit with two cards in.

DRAW TRUMPS

To take out the trumps from the opponents hands. This is an important tactic for a declarer: by drawing the opponents trumps he stops them ruffing. Generally drawing trumps is the first part of any plan.

DROPPING RULE

A rule which tells you whether you should PLAY for the DROP or take a finesse.

DROP

To play a high card under which another slightly lower card falls.

DUCK

To deliberately play a small card rather than win a trick with a higher card.

DUMMY

The partner of the declarer. His hand is placed face up on the table for all to see. His cards are played by the declarer.

DUPLICATE BRIDGE

The most common form of bridge played in clubs. The hands are duplicated and put in to BOARDS, so that the same hands can be played at many tables.

EAST

A compass point assigned to a player: his partner is WEST.

ESTABLISH TRICKS

To make more tricks beyond your starting total (top tricks).

FINESSE

A play technique which involves leading towards higher cards through another play and aiming to make a trick with a card which is not the highest remaining; or to make such a play in order to develop extra tricks.

FOLLOW SUIT

Play a card of the suit lead.

GAME

A contract that makes 100 points which if you make it gets a GAME BONUS

GAME ALL

Both sides are vulnerable: the score is 1-1 in games.

GO DOWN

To fail in a contract: not making the number of tricks contracted for.

HAND

The cards of a player constitute his hand. Four hands make up the full deal. The term hand is also sometimes used to describe all four hands. When declarer play is discussed, we talk about declarer's hand and dummy.

HEARTS

One of the four suits. It is ranked above clubs and diamonds. It is one of the MAJOR suits: it scores 30 points per level.

HIGH CARD POINTS

The points assigned to the four high cards to give an evaluation of a hand's worth: 4 for an Ace, 3 for a King, 2 for a Queen and 1 for a Jack.

HOLD UP

See also DUCK

To deliberately play a small card rather than win a trick with a higher card.

HONOUR

One of the five highest cards: ace, king, queen, jack or ten.

In some forms of bridge you score extra points for 'claiming honours': holding four or five of the honours in the trump suit.

INTERIOR SEQUENCE

A sequence of high cards in a suit when there is also a separate higher card, such as KJ109, where the J109 make up the interior sequence.

JACK

Fourth highest card in the pack: worth 1 point when assessing the value of your hand.

JUMP BID

Making a bid which misses out a whole level of the auction.

KING

Second highest card in the pack: worth 3 points when assessing the value of your hand.

LEAD

To play the first card to a trick. The Opening lead is the first card chosen to the first trick.

LEAD UP TO

To play from the hand opposite: an important declarer play technique is leading up to your high cards.

LOVE ALL

Nobody is VULNERABLE: the score is 0-0 in games.

MAJOR

The two highest ranking suits: spades and hearts are call the MAJOR suits; scoring 30 pts each.

MAKE

To play a contract and take the number of tricks contracted for (or more).

MINIBRIDGE

A simplified form of bridge without the complications of the bidding.

MINOR

The two lowest ranking suits: clubs and diamonds are call the MINOR suits; scoring 20 pts each.

NO BID (see also PASS)

Not bidding for the contract.

NORTH

A compass point assigned to a player: his partner is SOUTH. In a bridge club there will usually be a sign designating the direction of NORTH. The direction is arbitrary it rarely has any reference to the geographical north.

NOTRUMPS

The highest ranking denomination in bridge. A notrump contract is one in which all suits are equal: there are no trumps. Only a card in the suit led can win that trick.

OPEN

To make the opening call.

OPENING BID

The first positive bid of the auction (excluding PASSES)

OVERCALL

A bid made after the opponents have made a positive opening bid.

OVERRUFF

After one player has ruffed a trick, a subsequent ruff with a higher trump is called an overruff.

OVERTRICK

An extra trick beyond the level of the contract: they score the same as the other tricks but they cannot be included in the 100 score required for game.

PAIRS

The most common form of Duplicate Bridge, in which the players compete in pairs.

PARTSCORE

A contract which is worth less than 100 trick points: below the level of GAME. You get a 50 point bonus for making a partscore contract, but this is small in comparison to the bonuses for GAME contracts.

PASS (see also NO BID)

Not bidding for the contract.

PASS OUT

A deal on which no player makes a bid: four passes. This is scored as zero points.

PENALTY DOUBLE

A DOUBLE made because you expect the opponents to fail in their contract and therefore would like to increase their penalty.

PLAY FOR THE DROP

To play high cards off in the hope of killing the remaining high cards in the suit.

POINTS

High card POINTS are an assessment of the value of a hand: 4 for an Ace, 3 for a King, 2 for a Queen and 1 for a Jack. Total points include points for distribution.

PREFERENCE

Choosing a favourite suit: specifically when your partner bids two suits, you should choose which of his suits you prefer.

QUEEN

Third highest card in the pack: worth 2 points when assessing the value of your hand.

REDOUBLE

A type of call in bridge which increases the stakes: it can only be made when the opponents have doubled your side.

REVERSE

A forcing rebid, which involves bidding a suit ranking above the first opened, at the two-level.
e.g. 1♣-1♠-2♥. 2♥ is a reverse bid.

REVOKE

To fail to follow suit, when you have a card in the suit led. This is against the rules and the Director should be called. Generally it is by mistake and will not always be noticed until later in the play. However, playing with a computer you will not be allowed to do it: an error message will be displayed.

RUBBER BRIDGE

The most traditional form of the game, where four players play together socially, or for money! The easiest form of the game to play in the home.

RUFF

To play a trump on a trick, when a different suit has been led.

SEMI-BALANCED

Any hand between unbalanced and balanced, particularly hands with two doubletons.

SEQUENCE

A run of cards. When you have three or more touching high cards it is common to lead the top of a sequence as a defender.

SHORT TRUMP HAND

Of Declarer and Dummy: the hand with the shorter trump holding. Generally when declaring a contract, ruffing in the short trump hand is to your advantage - it gains tricks.

SHUFFLE

To mix up the cards in preparation for dealing.

SIGNAL

Using the play of a particular card to signal something to your partner .

SINGLETON

A suit with just one card in.

SOLID SUIT

A suit which contains touching high cards with no break (these can be divided between two hands).

SOUTH

A compass point assigned to a player: his partner is NORTH .

SPADES

The lowest ranking of the four suits in bridge: only NOTRUMPS ranks higher. It is one of the MAJOR suits: it scores 30 points per level.

STAYMAN

A convention used in response to a 1NT opening bid: it uses the bid of 2♣ to ask the opening bidder if he holds a four-card major.

STOP (STOPPER)

A high card in a suit, which stops the opponents running their suit.

STOP BID

When a player makes a JUMP BID he should accompany it by saying ‘STOP’ or by using a STOP CARD. This is to warn the opponents that a level of the auction has been missed and that they can have a little more time to contemplate their next bid.

STRONG NOTRUMP

A system that uses the opening 1NT bid to show a strong hand 15-17 points (or sometimes 16-18). This system is popular in America and much of the rest of the world. It contrasts with the system that I am teaching you: including the weak notrump.

SUITS

A deck of cards is divided in to four suits, with different symbols: CLUBS, DIAMONDS, HEARTS and SPADES.

TAKE-OUT DOUBLE

A DOUBLE which asks your partner to make a bid.

TEAMS

A form of duplicate bridge in which players compete in teams, usually of four. One pair plays North-South and the other pair plays East-West (at their opponents’ table), then the two pairs get together to compare their scores.

TOP TRICKS

Tricks that make without having to lose the lead and without any technique: aces, or kings with aces, etc. Counting Top Tricks is an essential part of Declarer Play Technique.

TRICK

During the play of the hand: one card from each player constitutes a trick. There are thirteen tricks on each deal.

TRUMP

A card of the power suit (determined by denomination of the final contract). Also another term for to RUFF.

TWO-SUITED

A hand is two-suited if it contains two long suits, especially when there are five or more cards in each.

UNBALANCED HAND

Not a balanced hand. Any hand containing a singleton or void.

UNDERLEAD

If you lead a low card from a suit when you hold a much higher card, then you have underled that high card.

UNDERTRICK

When a contract is defeated the tricks beneath the level of the contract are called undertricks.

VOID

A suit with no cards in.

VULNERABILITY

Traditionally bridge was played in Rubbers: the first side to make two game contracts. If a side has made a game contract, then they are VULNERABLE, which increases their score for making a game, but also increases the penalties for going down.

The vulnerability will often be arbitrarily assigned on a deal either LOVE ALL, EW Game, NS Game or GAME ALL.

WEAK NOTRUMP

A 1NT opening that shows 12-14 points is known as a weak notrump.

WEST

A compass point assigned to a player: his partner is EAST.