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Charles Goren


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A SIMPLE CONCISE GUIDE ON BIDDING AND PLAY FOR THE NOVICE

CHARLES H. GOREN'S CONTRACT BRIDGE FOR BEGINNERS

Here is the first book on Contract Bridge for beginners which introduces them at once to the generally accepted POINT COUNT method of bidding used by the experts. Written by the leading authority, the foremost teacher, and the most successful bridge player in the world, it will prove a boon to the novice and the average bridge player alike.



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Here is the first book on Contract Bridge for beginners which introduces them at once to the generally accepted Point Count method of bidding used by the experts. Written by the leading authority, the foremost teacher, and the most successful bridge player in the world, it will prove a boon to the novice and the average bridge player alike.

About the Author Charles H. Goren is the Number One ranking player of the United States in the official ratings of the American Contract Bridge League. He holds virtually every record of note on the books of tournament play. He has won more National Championships than anyone in history and holds the record for the most number of National Championships won in a single year (five). Incidentally, he is the only player in the history of Bridge who has ever won every major championship in the United States. Mr. Goren's daily column is syndicated in 150 newspapers which have a combined circulation of over twenty-five million. This makes it, of course, the most widely distributed Bridge column in the history of the game. His books have been translated into French, Spanish, Swedish, and enjoy wide publication throughout the British Empire. His recent book, Point Count Bidding, published by Simon and Schuster, is the most successful Bridge book in the last fifteen years and has changed the bidding habits of millions of players throughout the United States and Europe. The point count method introduced by Mr. Goren several years ago has now been adopted by all recognized authorities of the game. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter 1 PRELIMINARIES For the purpose of this chapter I am proceeding upon the assumption that the reader is totally unfamiliar with the deck of playing cards. If in your case I have made an incorrect assumption, please do not, out of a sense of courtesy, linger over these pages. Simply skip this chapter on Preliminaries. The Deck Before embarking on the study of Contract Bridge one must acquaint oneself thoroughly with the values of the cards which make up the deck. The game can be played with only one deck of cards, but it is more convenient to use two separate packs. Only one pack is in use at a time, and while one is in use the other is being shuffled or mixed to be ready for the next deal. In order to avoid confusion it is better to employ decks with different colored backs. The standard pack contains 52 cards. It is true that as you take them from the container you will find 54 cards; but two of them are Jokers, which are used in some games, but not in Bridge. So for the immediate future I suggest that you put them out to pasture. The Four Suits The deck is divided into four suits: Spades (*), Hearts (*), Diamonds (*), Clubs (*). Each suit contains 13 cards: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2. In designating a card you specify first the number and then the suit. There are some cards which are more frequently referred to by their nicknames. The three is usually called the TREY, and the two is almost universally designated as the DEUCE. Rank of the Cards Each card has its rank. The rank represents the ability to capture other cards of the same suit. The highest-ranking card is the Ace, which can capture any of the other twelve cards in that suit. The King, while it is outranked by the Ace and may be captured by it, has the ability to capture eleven other cards in that suit, from the Queen on down to the Deuce. Next to the Queen comes the Jack, and after that the numbers in descending order from the 10 down through the Deuce. The five highest-ranking cards (Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10) are called HONOR CARDS. Their significance will become more apparent to you as we progress. Assuming that you and your opponents are all playing cards of the same suit, any card which is higher in rank will capture any other card which is lower in rank. But as I indicated a moment ago, the question of rank does not come up unless you are playing cards of the same suit. Your Ace of Diamonds will capture someone else's King of Diamonds because it is higher in rank, but that same Ace of Diamonds will not capture someone else's Deuce of Clubs. To capture a Club you would need a higher-ranking Club. In the preceding paragraphs we have been discussing the rank (capturing power) of cards where all players have played cards of the same suit. Now we come to a more complicated situation where all players are not able to play cards of the same suit. During the bidding period, which we shall take up in a subsequent chapter, one of the suits may be named by the highest bidder to be the TRUMP SUIT. When this is done, that suit becomes invested with certain trick-taking powers which the other suits do not possess. It becomes in a sense the privileged class. The special privilege of this suit is as follows: a player holding a trump card may use it to RUFF or TRUMP any card of some other suit. That means that if that player plays a card of the trump suit, he will capture the played cards of the other suits, even though they are of higher rank. The trump suit in effect has a veto power. It can veto a higher rank of some other suit. A trump card, however low in rank, will capture the highest-ranking card of any other suit. If Clubs are trump, the Deuce of Clubs will prevail over the Ace of Spades. The only cards which can beat the Deuce of Clubs (trumps) are the Clubs (trumps) of higher rank. However, it may be pointed out at this time that players are at all times required to follow suit if they can. That is to say, if the first player plays a Spade, everyone else must play a Spade, if able to, and may not use a trump unless he has no Spades. If any

player has no Spades he may trump, if he chooses, or he may throw a card of some other suit, in which case the four cards played are taken in by the one who played the highest card of the suit which was led. (These four cards constitute what is known as a TRICKS.) The suits also have ranks. Their rank is: Spades Hearts Diamonds Clubs. The Game Contract Bridge is divided into two major parts: (1) the bidding; (2) the play. I shall temporarily refrain from discussing the bidding until I have given you some idea of the play, which in turn will simplify the problem of bidding. The bidding takes place at the beginning, but for the reasons outlined above we shall start with the mechanics of the play of the cards. During the bidding there is an auction to determine the right to name the final trump. The rank of the suits has an important bearing on this bidding, and we shall discuss this presently. The active participants at the Bridge table are always four players, but they do not play individually, for two of them are pitted against the two players sitting in the opposite direction, each partner facing the other partner. The partners share in the responsibility for anything done by either member of the partnership. All gains are credited to both members of the partnership, and all losses are charged in the same manner. Partnerships are chosen by drawing cards. A deck of cards is spread face down on the table and each player draws one card. The two players drawing the high cards become partners. They sit facing each other and play against the other two. If two cards of the same denomination are drawn, the higher is determined by the rank of the suits and for this purpose the suits rank: Spades, Hearts, Diamonds and Clubs. The player who cuts the highest card becomes the dealer and has the choice of seats and cards. Remember, Contract Bridge should be played with two decks with different backs, and while one partner deals, his partner should shuffle the other deck for the next dealer and place the deck to his own right so that it will be readily available for the next dealer. The dealer presents the cards to his right-hand opponent for the CUT. The cut is merely the process of lifting off a portion of the deck and placing it on the table toward the dealer, just beside the bottom portion. However, each portion must contain at least four cards. That is to say, the player making the cut must remove at least four cards or at most forty-eight. The dealer then completes the cut by placing the bottom portion on top of the portion which the cutter has removed. The dealer then deals thirteen cards to each player, one at a time in a clockwise direction, that is, to his left. Each player then picks up his thirteen cards. This distribution of the cards is known as the DEAL. After the cards have been dealt, there is a period during which the BIDDING takes place. This bidding is known as the AUCTION. When a player makes a bid, he offers to win a certain number of tricks. When a player makes the highest bid, he and his partner win the contract, and we may for purposes of identification refer to them as the CONTRACTING SIDE. They have just contracted to win the number of tricks specified in their final bid. Then comes the play period. One of the contracting players is called the DECLARER. He might be considered the active partner. The other member is called the DUMMY. The declarer is always that member of the partnership who first mentioned the trump suit in which the hand is to be played (not necessarily the last bidder). When the bidding ends, the player to the left of the declarer places one of his thirteen cards face up on the table. This is known as the OPENING LEAD, which inaugurates the play of the hand. The opening leader is not restricted in his choice. He may choose any one of his thirteen cards. And it will do no harm to repeat that all players must follow suit if they can. If these players hold more than one card in the suit led, they may choose to play on any particular trick any one of the cards held. They need not beat any card played to the trick, unless they choose to do so. If a player cannot follow suit, he may play any card in his hand without restriction. He need not trump, but he may if he so desires. After the opening lead, the partner of the declarer spreads his thirteen cards upon the table, and this hand becomes the dummy. The declarer chooses each and every card that is to be played from dummy. He plays both his hand and the dummy hand, but the defending players play their own hands. The cards are played to each trick in the player's proper turn. No card may be played out of turn. When each player has played, there will be four cards on the table, and these are called a TRICK. Of the four cards played to the trick, one card will have winning rank and will capture that trick. The player whose card has captured the trick has the right to lead to the next trick; and the same process is continued until all thirteen cards have been played. Let us observe the mechanics of trick-taking with a few illustrations. We shall assume that the bidding has been completed and play is about to begin. For purposes of identification, we shall refer to the players by directions, as though we were looking down upon the table as we would upon a map. North is the upper part of the diagram; East is to the right; South at the lower part of the picture; and West to the left. This map is as natural to a Bridge player as a beard is to Uncle Sam. For the purpose of our discussion, South will be declarer and naturally, therefore, North will be the dummy. The first play, known as the opening lead, has been made by the player to declarer's left -- that is, West. North and South are the contractors and are partners against East and West. Note that a card has been played by each of the four players, who have played in rotation (clockwise), starting with West. The four cards are at the moment face up on the table and are about to be picked up by East on behalf of his partnership. These four cards (a trick) belong to East and West. In other words, they have won the first trick because East played the highest card of the trick and therefore captured the others. Play then proceeds to trick number two. Inasmuch as East won the first trick (though it goes to the partnership credit), he plays first (that is, he leads) to the next trick. Observe that East led the 3 of Diamonds to trick two. The other three hands played in rotation in a clockwise direction. South played the Queen of Diamonds, West the Deuce of Diamonds, and North the 6 of Diamonds. The Queen of Diamonds was the highest card played to this trick and therefore captured the other three cards. The trick is therefore won by the player who played this high card, namely South. He gathers up the

four cards and places the trick face down in front of him. Now at the end of the second trick each side has won a trick, and play proceeds in this manner until all the cards have been played. Consequently, there will always be exactly thirteen tricks in each hand. It has been pointed out that the winner of each trick must lead to the next trick and that play always proceeds in a clockwise direction. A player may not put down his card until it is his turn to play. If West is the leader, East may not play until after North has played, and South must wait for East to play before he puts down his card. It might be profitable to repeat at this time the FOLLOW-SUIT RULE, which provides as follows: Whereas the leader to each trick has his own complete choice as to which card to play, the other three players are restricted in their choice. They must follow suit if possible -- that is to say, they must play cards of the same suit as the card which the leader played. They may play high cards or low cards at their own discretion, but they must follow suit if able to do so. However, if a player has no cards of that suit, he is at liberty to play any card he chooses. We have previously made a brief reference to the dummy (declarer's partner). After the opening lead dummy spreads his hand (13 cards), arranged in suits, face up on the board before him. Thereafter he remains silent -- dumb. Declarer indicates what card he is to play whenever it becomes dummy's turn to play. However, declarer must observe all the rules in regard to dummy's hand, just as he does with his own. The dummy must play in proper turn (though the cards are actually selected by declarer); the dummy must follow suit, if possible; and, when a trick is won in dummy, the lead to the next trick must come from dummy's hand. Tricks can be won not only with high cards (though most tricks are won that way) but also with low cards. In the illustrations we have examined thus far all players followed suit, and the trick went to that player who played the highest card. A 7 might win a trick if all other players put down smaller cards, but it would take the Ace to win a trick if one of the other players put down a King. Winning Tricks by Using Trumps (Ruffing) We have not yet come to the subject of the selection of a trump suit, but it has been pointed out that one of the distinctive features of the game of Bridge is that in many hands a suit in due course becomes chosen as the trump suit and enjoys a certain superiority over the others. Every card of the trump suit is vested with a superior trick-taking power. It is known as the RUFFING power (or trumping power), which a player may exercise whenever he is unable to follow suit. A player who has no cards of the suit which has been led may ruff, or trump, by playing any card of the trump suit. If he is the only one who has played a trump, he wins the trick regardless of the size of his trump. In other words, the Deuce of trumps will capture the Ace of some other suit, provided the player who produces the Deuce of trumps has no more of the suit which has been led. Spades are trumps. West leads the Queen of Hearts; North attempts to capture with the King of Hearts; East beats this with the Ace of Hearts. But South, who has no Hearts, wins the trick with the Deuce of Spades, which is trump. If more than one player uses a trump on any particular trick, the player who contributes the highest trump wins the trick. In other words, a trump can be captured by a higher-ranking trump. Observe the following illustration: Diamonds are trumps. West leads the King of Hearts; North follows suit with the Ace of Hearts; East, who has no Hearts, trumps (ruffs) with the 6 of Diamonds, which are trump. South also has no hearts, so he may play a trump if he chooses. He does choose to play the 8 of Diamonds, a higher trump, and therefore wins the trick. South is said to have won the trick by over-ruffing. When a player is unable to follow suit, he may trump or he may play a card of some other suit. If he plays a trump, he is said to have ruffed. If he plays a card of some other suit, he is said to have made a DISCARD. The discard has no trick-taking power; therefore, the rank of the discard is immaterial. Any trick that does not contain a trump is won by the hand which plays the highest card of the suit led. Hearts are trumps. North leads the 8 of Diamonds. East and South follow suit. West has no Diamonds and also has no trumps. He discards the Ace of Spades. North's 8 of Diamonds wins the trick. It is the highest card of the suit which was first led to that trick. When a trump is led, the other three players must follow suit if they are able to. In other words, the follow-suit rule applies to trumps as well as to the other suits. Remember that a player may not ruff if he is able to follow suit. Remember, too, that when a player is unable to follow suit he is not compelled to ruff. He may, if he chooses, make a discard (play a card of some other suit). But a discard can never win a trick. There is a feature of Bridge to which we have not yet made reference. That is the No Trump feature. The game is not always played with a trump suit. The player who makes the highest bid may announce that the hand is to be played without a trump, or, as we more commonly refer to it, at NO TRUMP. In such case, play proceeds without any trump suit. No suit enjoys ruffing power, and each trick is won by the player who produces the highest card of the suit which has been led to that trick. Copyright 1953 renewed 1981 by Charles H. Goren