

Week 5 of 5 – AARP

In the previous 4 weeks, we covered the basics of the game (the deal, partners, tricks, trump, the goal of the auction, opening bids). In the Week 4 notes are “Responding to the Opening Bid” – which we left over for this week. Also were a lot of references to the Appendixes below. Included here is also the Glossary that was with the Week 1 handout.

Don’t get bogged down in these. They are there for you to refer to as you get more into the game. They will start to make sense after you’ve played a few hundred deals.

Remember to visit [Bridge to Brain Health \(aarp.org\)](http://aarp.org) or <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-learning-center/aarp-bridge-to-brain-health> for all of the videos and lesson handouts. Also, there you will find ways to practice. You can also visit www.larrycohen.com and www.acbl.org for more information.

Have fun with this amazing game!

APPENDIX A

Scoring

The scoring shown here is for “duplicate bridge.” There are many tables in play and your score is compared against all the other partnerships who hold your cards at the other tables.

Per Trick

The side that wins the auction gets points if they make their contract. If they fail in their contract, the other side gets points.

If the contract is made:

For every trick taken (starting after the first six required tricks), there is an award of 20 points per trick (if clubs or diamonds were the trump suit). So, if you make seven tricks with clubs or diamonds (a minor suit) as trump, you get 20 points. For eight tricks, another 20 and so on.

If hearts or spades (the majors) are trump, the payoff is 30 a trick. So, seven tricks taken would score 30 points. For eight tricks, another 30 and so on.

In notrump, there is an extra 10 points awarded at first. So, seven tricks taken scores 40 points. Each additional trick awards 30 points. Taking 9 tricks in notrump would be 100 points (40 + 30 + 30).

There are also bonuses awarded for bidding to certain levels (as long as you make the contract).

Partscore, Game and Slam

For bidding and making certain levels (partscore, game or slam) there are bonuses. The bonus is awarded only if the contract is bid and made! Extra tricks are fine, but “undertricks” (falling short) will result in a minus score.

The payoff for bidding and making a partscore (a bid under the level of game, such as 2NT or 3♣) is 50 points. So, bidding and making 2NT would be 120 (40+30 for the tricks and 50 for the partscore bonus). Bidding and making 3♣ is worth 110 (20+20+20 for the tricks and 50 for the partscore bonus). Bidding and making 3♠ is worth 140 (90 for the tricks and 50 for the partscore bonus).

The bonus for games or slams depends on vulnerability. On each deal at duplicate bridge, it is shown in advance (the cards are not actually dealt, but removed from a tray

which holds all four hands) who is vulnerable. When your side (North-South or East-West) is vulnerable, the scores/bonuses/penalties are all higher than if not vulnerable.

The bonus for bidding and making game if not vulnerable is 300 extra points. If vulnerable, 500. If the value of the tricks bid for adds up to 100 or more, it is considered "game." So, for game in notrump, the requirement is to bid three notrump which pays 40 for the first trick and then 30 and 30 to reach 100. For hearts or spades, you need to bid to the four level to get a game bonus (3 x 30 is only 90, not enough). With a lowly minor suit as trump, you have to bid all the way to the five level (5 x 20) to get the game bonus. So, bidding and making 5♣ vulnerable is 600 (5 x 20 for the tricks plus 500 for the vulnerable game bonus). Bidding and making 3NT with two overtricks (so, "making five") not vulnerable is 460 (40+30+30+30+30 for the tricks and 300 for the game bonus).

If you bid and make six (of any suit or notrump), there is an additional bonus of 500 (not vulnerable) and 750 (vulnerable). If you bid and make seven (of any suit or notrump), there is an additional bonus of 1,000 if not vulnerable and 1,500 if vulnerable! Don't expect to be doing this too often early in your career. The score for bidding and making 7NT vulnerable is 2220 (40+30+30+30+30+30+30+30 for the tricks, 500 for the game bonus and 1500 for the grand slam bonus).

If the contract is doubled (or redoubled) and makes, the score is even higher. For practical purposes, it isn't necessary to understand the calculations here (but it can easily be found with an internet search).

Penalties

What if you bid a contract but don't make it? Then you get no points/score. You actually go minus, or, if you prefer to look at it differently, your opponents get points.

For every trick down the penalty is 50 points (100 if vulnerable). So, bidding for 11 tricks and making only eight tricks would mean a penalty of 150 points (3 x 50) if not vulnerable or 300 points (3 x 100) if vulnerable.

Furthermore, if the final contract is doubled (discussed in the bidding) and played there (for example, North bid 4♠, East doubled and everyone thereafter passed), the penalties are very large. If not vulnerable, the first "undertrick" costs 100 points. The next two undertricks are 200 apiece and additional undertricks are 300 each. So, down two doubled (not vulnerable) costs 300 points. Down four doubled (not vulnerable) costs 800 points (100 + 200 + 200 + 300). If vulnerable and doubled, the first undertrick is 200 and each additional one is 300. This can get expensive in a hurry. Down the road,

you will even learn about the rarest breed of all, a “redouble” – but I deem it too abstract for beginners.

Eventually, knowing the scoring affects your strategy. A minus score is not necessarily bad. If your opponents have bid, say a vulnerable 6♥ and can easily make it, they would receive 1430 points! That is 6 x 30 for the tricks + 500 for the game and 750 for the slam. What if your side is not vulnerable and you have a ton of spades. Say you bid 6♠ (knowing it will fail). You get doubled and make only seven tricks. So, you are “down five doubled.” That sounds bad, but the penalty is “only” 1100 (100 + 200 + 200 + 300 + 300). It is better to yield 1100 points than 1430.

Even at lower bidding levels, knowledge of scoring affects the strategy. Minus 50 or minus 100 is better than, say, minus 140.

APPENDIX B

Responding to 1NT and higher opening bids

Responding to 1NT:

When your partner opens 1NT, he has 15-17 points and a balanced hand. Just to review, “balanced” means he has no short suits (like only one or two cards in a suit). He has something like 4-3-3-3 (which means four cards in one suit and three in all the others) or 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2. If you are responding to 1NT, you can choose to pass with a bad hand. But, if you have a decent hand, you might want to look for a game (or maybe even slam) contract. If you think your partnership might have 25 or more points, game is in the picture. If you have something like, say, ♠K102 ♥QJ7 ♦J1097 ♣KJ6, you would simply raise your partner to game by bidding 3NT. With his 15-17 and your 11, he will likely take at least 9 tricks and get the game bonus.

Responding to 1NT in modern bridge uses something called “conventions.” These are special bids which say nothing about the suit you bid! One of these conventions is called “Stayman.” When your partner opens 1NT and you bid 2♣, you are using this convention. The bid of 2♣ doesn’t say anything about the club suit and doesn’t mean you want clubs to be trump. It is an “artificial” bid. That means it says nothing about the suit bid. What does it mean? It is asking the 1NT bidder about his hand. The 1NT bidder then answers to 2♣ as follows:

2♦: Partner, I don't have four (or five cards) in either hearts or spades

2♥: Partner I have four (or five) hearts

2♠: Partner I have four (or five) spades

Once the 2♣ bidder hears that information, he can then decide to play in any suit at any level. He can go to 3NT or 4♥ or 4♠ to play in game. He can pass. He can invite. What does "invite" mean? He can bid 2NT to ask his partner to go to 3NT with a maximum hand. Since 1NT showed 15-17, the 1NT bidder will go on to game with 17 or a very nice-looking 16 (maybe he has some 10's and 9's that look useful). Also, the Stayman bidder can invite like this: 1NT-2♣-2♠-3♠. That would ask the 1NT opener to go on to 4♠ (game) with a maximum.

There is another convention used after the 1NT opening. "Jacoby Transfers" allow the responder to "transfer" to a five-card major suit. So, a 2♦ response to 1NT says nothing about diamonds. It tells the 1NT opener that the responder has five or more hearts. Similarly, a 2♥ response to 1NT says nothing about hearts and shows five or more spades. These transfers say nothing about points. If the person transferring has a good enough number of points, he can bid again. Examples:

1NT-2♦ -- Shows something like:

A) ♠6 ♥QJ1087 ♦J765 ♣432 or

B) ♠65 ♥KQ10876 ♦Q32 ♣32 or

C) ♠QJ6 ♥AQJ76 ♦J107 ♣32

With hand A), the player who bid 2♦ will then pass when the 1NT bidder says 2♥.

With hand B), the player who bid 2♦ can next raise 2♥ to 3♥ to invite game.

With hand C), the player who bid 2♦ can next bid 3NT to insist on game. The 1NT bidder can pass or elect to play in 4♥ if he prefers.

Responding to a 2♣ opening:

Recall that a 2♣ opening shows a very strong hand. It says nothing about clubs. It simply indicates 22 or more points (approximate). What next? The responder can't pass (2♣ would be the final contract). Responder can bid any suit if he meets all of these requirements:

8+ points, 5+ card suit and at least two of the top three cards in the suit. So, respond 2♠ with: ♠KQ1087 ♥654 ♦A32 ♣32.

Without meeting those requirements, the response should be 2♦. This says nothing about diamonds. It is called a "waiting bid." Waiting for opener to describe his hand.

Responding to 2♦/2♥/2♠

These openings are “preemptive” bids. They show weak hands with a six-card suit. The responder will need a very good hand to bid. Unless he has about 15+ points, he will pass. The only exception is that you can raise the preempt. With three-card support for partner, raise the preempt one level. With four-card support, raise the preempt to the four level. You don’t need points to raise the preempt.

Responding to 2NT

Use the same schedule as responding to 1NT as explained above. The only difference is that 2NT=20-21 points and the responses will be on the three level. So, 3♣ is Stayman and 3♦/3♥ are transfers to the next higher suit.

Responding to 3♦/3♥/3♠

These are preemptive bids, but with a seven-card suit. Again, the responder will need a very good hand (about 15+) to respond. Similar to the discussion above, the responder can raise one level with three-card support.

APPENDIX C

Bidding after the opening and the response

The opening bidder's second bid further describes his hand and attempts to reach a reasonable contract. If he has six cards in his first bid suit, he typically repeats that suit. If he has a second suit (of four-plus cards), he usually bids it on his second turn. If he is balanced (as described above), he usually bids notrump at his second turn. With 16-18 points, he usually jumps the bidding (skips a level) at his second turn. With 19-20 he can jump even higher (maybe to game). All of these bids take some time to learn (they are all explained in detail at www.larrycohen.com – go to the learning center).

APPENDIX D

The opponents open the bidding

What if the opponent makes the opening bid and you want to come into the auction? You can double (as mentioned earlier) to show the other (unbid) suits. This requires approximately 12 or more points and at least three cards in each of the other suits. You can also bid a suit (as long as your bid is higher than the bid already made, thus legal). This is termed an "overcall." To overcall, you should have at least a five-card suit and at least 10 points. This is just a primitive guideline to get started.

I recommend playing several hundred deals using these basics, and then reading/studying more advanced-level books or taking bridge classes.

Glossary of terms in this introduction to bridge:

Auction: The bidding (where all 4 players bid for the contract).

Balanced Hand: 13 cards distributed 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2.

Bid: A prediction of how many tricks (with which trump suit if any) will be taken.

Bidding: The first part of the game, where the contract is determined.

Contract: The number of tricks (and trump suit, if any) that were bid for.

Defender: Either of the two players that is not Declarer or Dummy.

Declarer: The player who bid the contracted suit (or notrump) first—he plays both his hand and the dummy.

Discard: To play a card not in the suit led (because you have no more).

Dummy: The (face-up) 13 cards of the partner of declarer (faced after the opening lead is made).

Game: A level bid for that gives a bonus (3NT, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ or 5♦).

Finesse: An attempt to win a trick with a lower card when a higher one is outstanding.

Hand: The cards held by each player.

Lead: To play (face-up) a card that starts a trick.

Make: Succeed in a contract.

Opener: The person who bids first.

Overcall: A bid after the opponent has started the bidding.

Overtrick: Tricks beyond what are needed for making the contract.

Partscore. A contract below the level of Game.

Play: To put out a card into a trick.

Preemptive Bid: A bid that shows a weak hand with a long suit.

Raise: To “support” partner by bidding the same suit a level(s) higher.

Ruff: A verb/synonym for “trump” as in “ruff with the ♦7”.

Set: Take enough tricks so that the opponents don’t make their contract.

Slam: A level bid for that gives an additional bonus (more than game bonus)—these are bids on the 6 level (small slam) or 7 level (grand slam).

Suit: Clubs, diamonds, hearts or spades.

Trick: A collection of 4 cards played, clockwise around the table.

Trump: The “wildcard” suit—determined in the bidding. A trump beats any card in a non-trump suit.

Void: “Holding” of no cards in a suit.