

The tricks of the trade

In this section you will learn how tricks are won. It is essential reading for anyone who has not played a trick-taking game such as Euchre, Whist or Five Hundred, and it is worthwhile reading for all new players.

BRIDGE is a card game for four players. They sit down at a square table and form two partnerships. The partners sit opposite each other. They use an ordinary deck of 52 cards without jokers. The deck has four suits – ♠ (spades), ♥ (hearts), ♦ (diamonds) and ♣ (clubs).

The 13 cards of each suit are ranked from the ace (highest), king, queen, jack, ten, nine, eight and so on down to the two.

The cards are shuffled then dealt one at a time in a clockwise direction starting with the player to the left of the dealer. The full deck is dealt so each player starts with 13 cards.

You pick your cards up without showing anyone else and sort them into suits, perhaps placing them black-red-black-red for easier recognition. Now you are ready to go.

The bidding comes first – more about that shortly. Then the cards are played out one at a time until all 13 cards are gone. In the card play the two sides are trying to win as many *tricks* as they can.

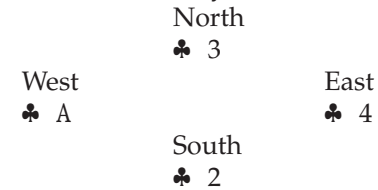
Tricks

A trick is made up of four cards, one from each player. A designated player leads a card – any card – placing it face up on the table. Then the other three players in a clockwise rotation play a card, taking care to follow suit. That is, to play a card from the same suit as the one that is led.

When you can't follow suit you make a *discard*. You can always discard any card you like. Normally it would be something low.

Each trick is won by the highest card in the suit that is led, unless a *trump* is played. Trumps are explained on page 4.

Here East-West are partners against North-South. The compass points are used for easy reference.

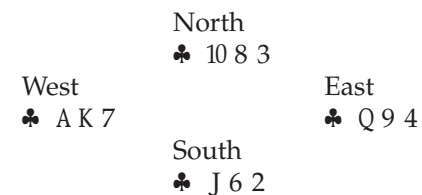


Let's say West has the lead and leads the ♣A. The play proceeds in a clockwise direction. North plays the ♣3, East plays the ♣4 and South plays the ♣2. West, who played the highest club, wins the trick. The winner of each trick, West in this case, leads to the next trick.

Play the cards along the edge of the table in front of you. Turn each card over when the trick is complete, pointing it towards the side that won. The alternative is for the winner of the trick to gather the four cards together but this method is inferior.

Since each player is dealt 13 cards, there are 13 tricks up for grabs. It doesn't matter which partner wins each trick – all that counts is the partnership total. You and your partner are a team, trying to win as many tricks as you can.

In the following examples West is always on lead. This is to make it easier to read – in real life, it could be any one of the four players.



Again West leads the ♣A, North plays the ♣3, East the ♣4 and South the ♣2. There is no point in playing a higher card because you can't beat the ace. Next West leads the ♣K and everyone plays a low club again. Then West leads the ♣7 and this time East wins the trick with the ♣Q.

Establishing tricks

You can sometimes take tricks in a suit even though you don't have the ace.

	North	
	♦ 7 5 4	
West		East
♦ K Q J		♦ 9 8 6
	South	
	♦ A 10 2	

West leads a diamond, say the ♦K, and South takes the ace. This is a good move for East-West even though they lose the trick. When they next get the lead the ♦Q-J will be established as winners.

Third hand high

When partner leads a low card you should, in general, play a high card to prevent the fourth player winning the trick cheaply.

If your partner leads a low card you should generally play a high card

	North	
	♦ 7 4 3	
West		East
♦ K J 5		♦ Q 8 6
	South	
	♦ A 10 2	

West leads the ♦5 and North plays low. The third player, East in this case, should play the ♦Q. South can top the ♦Q with the ♦A but now West's ♦K-J are high. If East withholds the ♦Q, South wins a cheap trick with the ♦10.

Playing the queen like this is known as *third hand high*. It is good advice but do use your common sense:

	North	
	♦ 10 4 3	
West		East
♦ Q J 5		♦ K 8 6
	South	
	♦ A 9 2	

West leads the queen. Again East is the third hand but this time there is no point in playing high. You would only be beating partner's queen. Remember, it doesn't matter which partner wins the trick.

	North	
	♥ 10 9 5	
West		East
♥ K Q 2		♥ A 8 4
	South	
	♥ J 7 3	

This time West leads the ♥K and East plays low. Again, there is no point in beating partner's winner. Next West might lead the ♥2 and now East should play the ♥A, otherwise South will take the trick with the ♥J. The third lead of hearts is won by West with the ♥Q.

Second hand low

When you are the second player to the trick you generally play a low card. This gives partner the chance to win the trick cheaply.

If the player on your right leads a card, you should usually play a low card

	North	
	♦ A 4 3	
West		East
♦ Q 10 5		♦ 9 8 6
	South	
	♦ K J 7	

West leads the ♦5. As North, there is no rush to play the ♦A. You should play low – second hand low – to give South the chance to win the trick with a lower card. Here South wins the trick with the ♦J and the ♦A-K are still there for later.