

Explore the game

Explore the game of Bridge

Welcome to the world of Bridge! Bridge is a captivating, strategic card game played by millions of people worldwide. Players must use their logic and cooperate as a team to achieve the best score. Before we look at how the game is played, let us understand what it is and who you need to play it with.

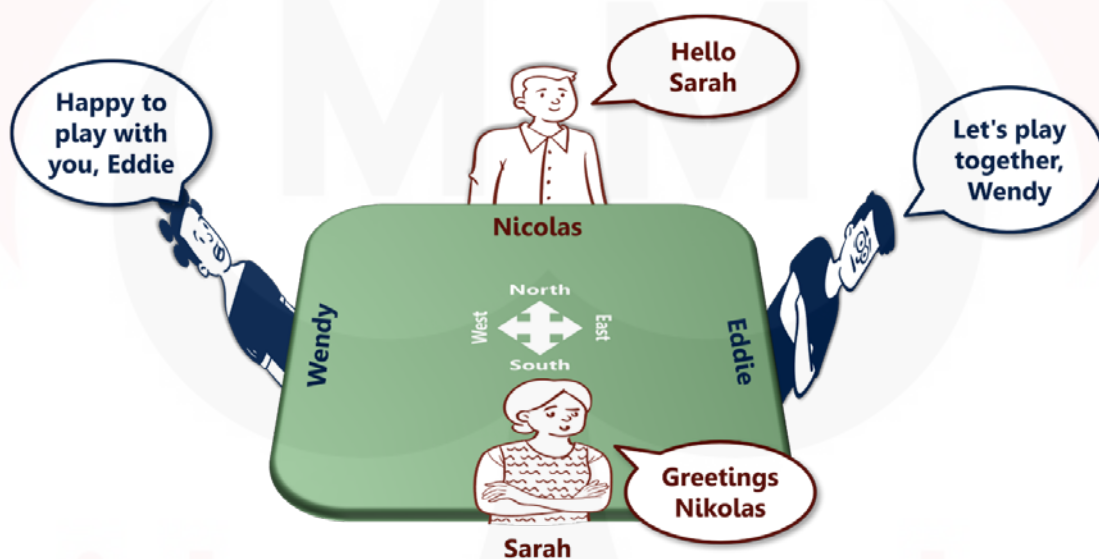
Part 1: What do we need to play bridge?

The Players and Teams

Bridge is strictly a game for **four players**.

- The players form **two partnerships** (teams of two).
- Partners sit **opposite each other**.
- To make communication easy, players are named after the four cardinal directions: **North, South, East, and West**.
- **North and South** form one team (N-S pair).
- **East and West** form the opposing team (E-W pair).

Your partner is your closest ally. In Bridge, you win together, and you lose together.



At this table, **Nicolas** and **Sarah** form a team – **N-S pair**. **Wendy** and **Eddie** play together and form the **E-W pair**.

The cards

Bridge uses a standard pack of **52 cards**. There are no jokers.

The deck is divided into **four suits**. Suits have an official rank or importance in the game, from highest to lowest:

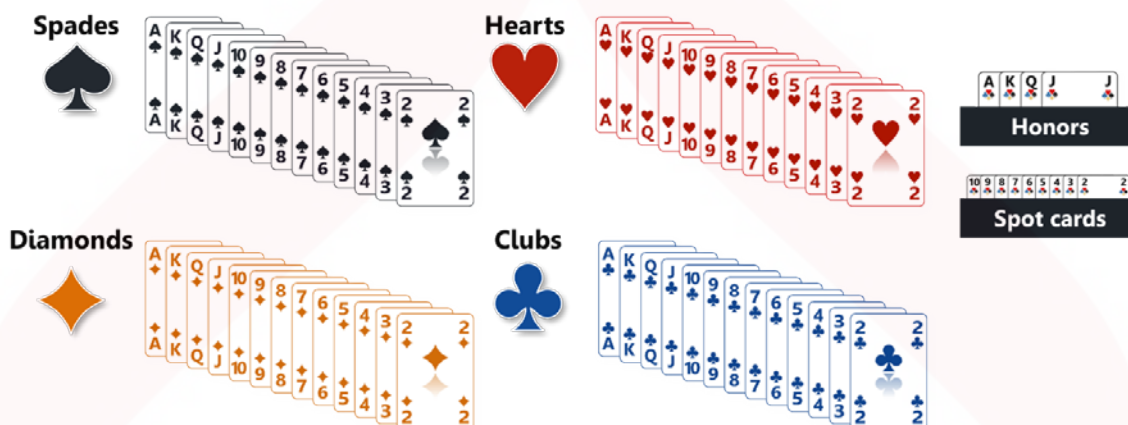
1. ♠ **Spades** (Highest suit)

2. ♥ Hearts
3. ♦ Diamonds
4. ♣ Clubs (Lowest suit)

The rank of cards

There are **13 cards** within each suit. The cards are ranked from the Ace, the highest, to the 2, the lowest. We divide them into two groups based on their ability to win tricks.

- **High Cards (Honors):** Ace (A), King (K), Queen (Q), Jack (J), sometimes 10
- **Spot Cards:** (10), 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2



Shuffling and dealing

Before the game starts, one player shuffles the cards and distributes all of them among 4 players, one by one. We call this player "**the Dealer**". Each player will have 13 cards.

Note: In competitions, the cards are pre-dealt by the machine.

Sorting the cards

Every card game has its strategy for sorting out the cards. In Bridge, we sort the cards by suit and, within each suit, by rank. This way, we have a better overview of our cards. This layout of your hand makes it easier to follow the rules and choose the best strategy. You should always see all your cards.

Hint: Alternate dark and light suit colors. You don't have to follow the order of the suits shown below.



Part 2: The mechanics of card play – key rules

Now that you know the components, let us look at how a hand is actually played. Bridge is a **trick-taking game**.

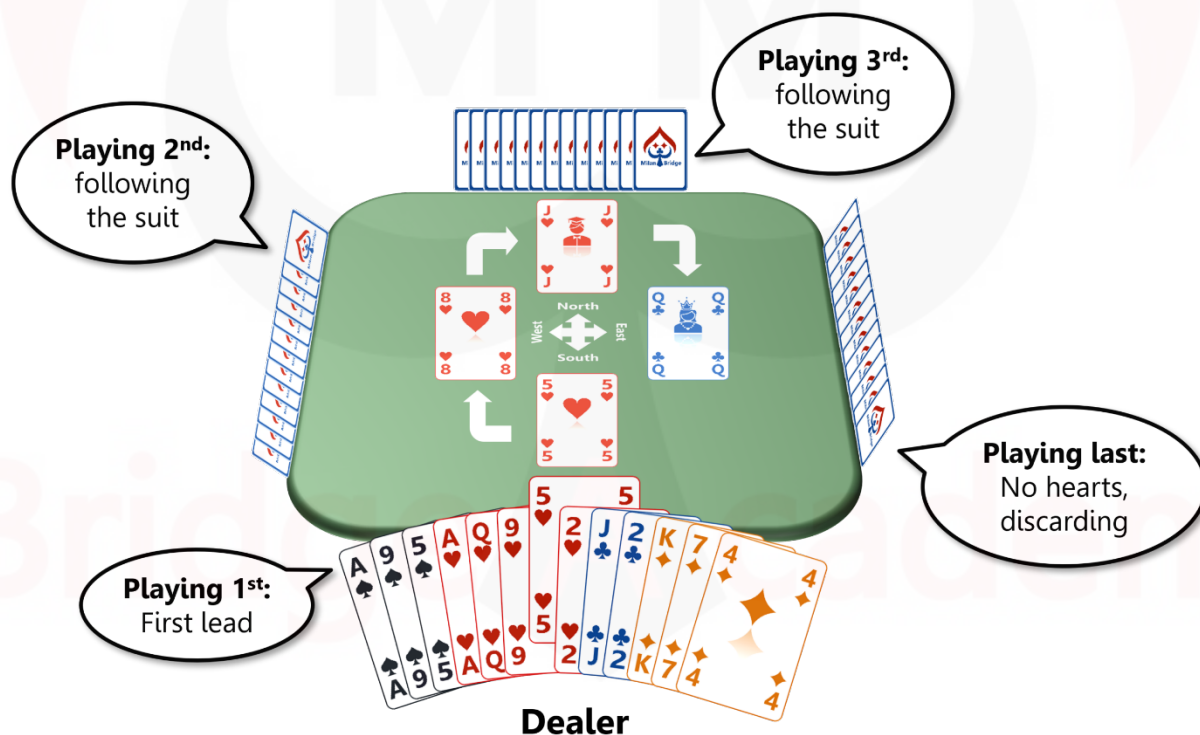
What is a trick?

At the start of the game, all 52 cards are dealt out. Each of the four players receives **13 cards**.

A "trick" consists of **four cards** – one played by each player at the table, moving in a **clockwise direction**. Since everyone has 13 cards, one game of Bridge consists of exactly **13 tricks**.

How a trick is played?

1. **The lead:** One player starts by placing a card face-up on the table. Place the card in front of you so it is clear who played which card. This is called "leading" to the trick.
2. **Following Suit:** The other three players must play a card in clockwise order. There is one golden rule: **You must follow suit if you can**. If a Spade is led, you must play a Spade if you have one in your hand. Yet, you can choose which card of the suit led you play (you don't have to play a higher card).
3. **Discarding:** If you do not have a card of the suit led, you may play any card from another suit. This is called a discard. A discarded card cannot win the trick, even if it is a higher rank.



Moving to the next trick

- The **highest card of the suit that was led** wins the trick.
- In our example, the first lead was ♥5. West plays a higher card ♥8, and North plays even higher ♥J. East cannot follow the suit and must discard. Although Q is higher than J, it does not win the trick. **The ♥J wins the trick** because it is the highest card in the suit led.
- Once a trick is complete, the cards are turned face down.
- Regardless of which player wins the trick, the whole pair wins or loses.
- The pair that **won** the trick places the card **vertically** in front of them.
- The pair that **lost** the trick places the card **horizontally**.
- Future cards are placed on top of each other, so we keep the order in which they were played. That may prevent disputes at the end of who won the tricks.



Moving to the next trick

- The player who **won the last trick leads first** to the next one.
- The first lead may be in any suit.
- The player on lead cannot consult with his partner about what to play. He must decide on his/her own.
- The trick continues the same way as the first one.
- **The game finishes after 13 tricks** have been played.

Counting the winners

When all cards have been played, players count how many tricks they won and compare with others. If everyone agrees on the result, you can score the game based on the type of bridge you play.

Interesting fact: There are many variations of bridge, and they mainly differ in the scoring method. Scoring significantly influences the bidding strategy.

Glossary

Suits = the 4 suits in bridge are called: ♠ Spades, ♥ Hearts, ♦ Diamonds, and ♣ Clubs.

Players' names = North-South pair, East-West pair.

Honors = high cards – Ace, King, Queen, Jack

Spot card = low cards ranked from 10 to 2.

the Dealer = player who shuffles and deals the cards. The dealer starts the bidding.

a trick = one round of cards. Each player plays one card to the trick. There are 13 tricks in the game.

Lead(ing) = playing the first card to the trick. The first lead is the first card played in the whole game and starts the card play phase.

Following suit = playing the card in the same suit as the one led first to the trick.

Discard(ing) = playing a card when a player cannot follow the suit.

Key facts to remember

- Bridge is a game for **4 players**, which we refer to by the cardinal directions: **North, East, South, and West**.
- Players sit opposite each other and form partnerships: **N-S** and **E-W**.
- We play with a deck of **52 cards and 4 suits**.
- The suits are ranked: ♠ Spades, ♥ Hearts, ♦ Diamonds, and ♣ Clubs.
- Each suit has 13 cards, ranked from the Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, down to the 2.
- Bridge is a game of tricks. There are **13 tricks** in each game.
- A trick is a card from each player. We call the first card played a lead. Other players play in a clockwise direction.
- Players **must follow the suit** of the first card led to the trick.
- The **highest card in the suit led** wins the trick.
- If you cannot follow the suit, you must discard a card. You lose the chance to win the trick.