

BridgePal User Manual

B r i d g e P a l (2.0)

Plays the Card Game of Contract Bridge

Complete Bidding, Play, and Scoring
For 1 or 2 players
Random Hands -- Every one different
Bidding Help for Beginners
Options to Replay, Quit, and Auto Finish
Best Hand option to increase Offensive Play
Works with Monochrome, CGA, and EGA

Program and Documentation

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P.O. Box 4819
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

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Welcome to BridgePal, the computer version of the card game of bridge. Here's your chance to learn, practice, or just enjoy the game of bridge without needing three other players. BridgePal is played just like bridge, except the computer shuffles and deals the cards, bids and plays three hands, and does the scoring. You will bid and play the South hand. If your team gets the bid, then you play both the North and South hands.

BridgePal is a "shareware" program, so you are encouraged to try it out and make copies for friends. If you like the program and continue to use it, we ask that you acknowledge your use by sending in a \$9.95 registration fee. When you register, please include any comments or suggestions you have regarding BridgePal. Ideas for additional features, new or revised bidding conventions, and improved play strategies are especially welcome. If your idea is included in BridgePal, we'll send you a free disk with the latest version which includes your suggestion.

SETTING UP

To begin with, it is a good idea to copy the BridgePal diskette to another floppy or a hard disk, and save the BridgePal disk as a backup. Floppy users can format a new diskette (FORMAT B:/S), put the BridgePal disk in the A: drive, and then make the new disk copy (COPY A:*. * B:).

Hard disk users can log on to their fixed disk (usually drive C:) and see the DOS prompt: C>. You will probably want to set up a sub-directory for BridgePal, for example one called "BP". To do that, type "MKDIR \BP" and press <Enter> to create the sub-directory, then type "CHDIR \BP" and press <Enter> to change to the new directory. Finally, insert the BridgePal diskette into floppy drive A, and type "COPY A:*. *" and press <Enter> to copy the files to your hard disk.

LOADING

At the DOS prompt, type "BRIDGE" and push <Enter> (Note: if you have trouble with this version, try BRIDGE1 instead). The program will load into memory, and ask "Color (Y/N)"? If you have a color monitor then reply Y (for Yes). All other users should reply N (for No). The next thing you see is the BridgePal Menu.

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GAME OPTIONS

There are three ways to play BridgePal. SOLO bridge is for one player. TWO PLAYER bridge provides scoring for two people, who take turns playing random hands. Similarly, DUPLICATE scores for two, but deals the same sets of hands to both players.

All three game options will ask if you want the "Best Hand (Y/N)"? If you reply Y(es), the hand with the most points is given to you (South) on every round. All options also ask if you want "Automatic Trick Pickup (Y/N)"? If you reply Y(es), the cards will be "picked up" after the fourth card is played on each trick. Reply N(o) and the cards will be displayed until you "Push any key to continue."

When the hand is finished, you are asked if you want to "Play this hand again (y/N)?" The uppercase "N" indicates that this is the default response. If you press just <Enter> then N(o) is assumed. Reply "Y" (upper or lower case) if you wish to repeat that hand. If you choose to replay the hand, you may then choose to "rotate" the cards. This will move each player's cards one player to the left (clockwise). You must complete the hand the last time it is played, or the score for that hand is not kept.

After completing each hand the last time (if the hand is replayed), the score for that hand is shown. This display also shows: 1) "Hand Number," 2) who bid first, and 3) whether or not the Best Hand option was used. If you wish to replay this same hand some other time, you will need to jot down these three items. Then you can choose SELECTED HAND from the menu to replay the same hand at any time, even months later. When you choose SELECTED HAND the first hand is the one you indicated, then the game continues in the SOLO mode using randomly generated hands.

BIDDING

BridgePal bidding is the same as conventional bridge. Bids which are not legitimate, like one club after three hearts, will cause the message "ILLEGAL BID" to appear. This will repeat until a legal bid is made. BridgePal understands (and makes) the following bids: Preempt, Short Club, Take Out Double, Penalty Double, Overcall, and Blackwood.

Bids are entered into the computer by pressing a number and then a suit, using the first letter of the suit. So, to bid two hearts, push the "2" key and then the "H" key. No-trump bids are made by using the letter "N" instead of a suit letter. The following bids are entered by pushing just the first letter: P(ass), D(ouble), and R(edouble). It is not necessary to push ENTER to make a bid.

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Deciding what to bid can be difficult, but HELP is available. Just push "H" and the computer will suggest a bid for you. To see the point COUNT for your hand, push "C" before you make a bid. To exit the hand press the ESC(ape) key.

PLAYING THE HAND

After the bidding is finished, the play of the hand begins. The "?" symbol will appear next to the appropriate hand when it is your turn to play a card. Cards are played by choosing the letters A(ce), K(ing), Q(ueen), J(ack), or the numbers 2 to 10 (you can also use the letter T to play a Ten). The suit is selected by the first letter of the suit, just like in the bidding. So, to play the ace of spades, just press "A" and then "S". To follow suit and play the lowest card you have in that suit, just press the ENTER key.

After the first card is played on a trick, a snowflake (*) will appear in South's hand next to the suit that was led. After a card has been played by each of the four hands, BridgePal will determine the winning card. A arrow symbol will point at the winning card.

You may decide during the play of the hand to let the computer finish playing the hand for you. BridgePal will "AUTOMATICALLY FINISH" the hand if you key in "AF" and push ENTER. You can also press the ESC(ape) key to quit the hand. If you are not playing the DUPLICATE option, you will have the choice of repeating the hand, or dealing again and playing a new hand.

SAVING THE SCORE

You can save the score at the end of any hand, before the rubber is finished. The score will be written to your diskette or hard disk, along with the type of game (for example, SOLO), who was dealing next, etc. At a later time, you can select PRIOR GAME on the Main Menu and resume the game at the point where you left off.

RULES OF BRIDGE

These instructions are primarily for those who have never played the card game of bridge. Former players may find some helpful reminders here. The game of bridge is played by 2 teams of 2 players each. BridgePal replaces 3 of the players, letting you play bridge by yourself. A hand of Bridge consists of 4 different activities:

- Shuffling and dealing
- Bidding
- Playing the hand
- Scoring

SHUFFLING AND DEALING

Bridge is played with a 52-card deck composed of 4 suits of 13 cards each. Cards are ranked from Ace (highest), King, Queen, Jack, and 10 to 2 (lowest). All cards are dealt to the 4 players, so each player has 13 cards in his "hand". BridgePal will shuffle and deal the cards automatically.

BIDDING

Bidding is the way you describe your hand to your partner, and make a guess about the strength of your combined hands. The highest bid becomes the "contract," or goal of the offensive team. If you can fulfill your contract, your team scores points. If you fail to make the contract, your opponents will score.

You may bid a suit or "No-trump." If the highest bid is a suit, that suit becomes the "trump" suit. Cards in the trump suit are something like "wild cards," as you will see in the next part of the game. If "No-trump" is the final bid, then there are no "wild cards."

Suits are ranked from lowest to highest: clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades, and No-trump. So a bid of "1 diamond" is higher than a bid of "1 club." The bidding begins with the dealer and continues clockwise until 3 players in a row say "pass" (pass means "no bid"). The lowest possible bid is "1 club," and the highest is "7 No-trump." Each bid must be higher than the previous one: for example, 1 club, 1 heart, 1 No-trump, 2 diamonds, etc. Each bid is supposed to give your partner more information about the strength of your hand.

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A set of bidding rules is included at the end of these instructions, but they are too complicated for newcomers. Rather than struggling with them in the beginning, try using the bidding Help feature. When it's your turn to bid, just push "H" (for Help). Then BridgePal will make your bid for you.

The team that makes the highest bid wins the contract. The suit from the highest bid becomes the trump suit (unless it was No-trump). The player on the high bidding team who first mentioned the trump suit (or No-trump) is called Declarer. The high bidding team is on offense, and the Declarer has to "play" the hand by himself.

PLAYING THE HAND

After the bidding is finished, the person to the left of Declarer plays the first card (opening lead). The Declarer is on offense, and he plays both his own and his partner's cards. Declarer's partner is called the Dummy. The Dummy puts all his cards face-up on the table, immediately after the opening lead.

Declarer then decides which card to play from Dummy. The second defensive team member plays next, and finally Declarer plays from his own hand. The highest card played in the same suit as the opening lead wins the "trick." A trick is a round of 4 cards, one from each player in a clockwise direction. If someone plays a card from the trump suit (a "wildcard"), then the highest trump card wins. But you must follow suit if possible (you may play the trump suit only if you don't have any cards in the suit that was led--the suit of the first card played on each trick).

The hand that wins the trick has the lead and plays the first card on the next trick. At this point you can play any card in your hand. Play proceeds in this manner until all cards have been played and the 13 tricks are divided between the two teams.

This may sound confusing, but BridgePal will make it easier for you to play the hand. BridgePal will prevent illegal plays, keep track of who plays next, and tell you who won the trick.

SCORING

The basic objective of bridge is to win two "games" before your opponents do, and therefore capture the "rubber." What is a game? A game is 100 or more points. Game points are scored by the team making the highest bid, if the contract is made. To make a bid, you must take six tricks plus the number you bid. For example, a bid of four spades means the team must take ten tricks to fulfill the contract (six plus the four bid). Points are awarded as follows, but only for tricks after the first six:

Spades or Hearts (Majors) = 30 points per trick
Clubs or Diamonds (Minors) = 20 points per trick
No-trump = 40 points for the first trick and 30 points
for each additional trick

In order to make a game in a single deal, you must bid three No-trump, four hearts or spades, and five clubs or diamonds. These points are written "below the line" on bridge scoring sheets. There are also defensive and bonus points which are scored "above the line." Since BridgePal will keep the score for you, there is no need to understand scoring details before beginning to play.

SUMMARY

Well, that should be enough to get started (far too much, you say). You can skip the following section on Bidding until you've had some fun with the game. The BridgePal bidding "Help" feature will allow you to get going without reading further.

BIDDING RULES

The purpose of bidding is to reach the highest contract your team can make. To evaluate your hand, use the following table to get a total point count:

High Card Points	Distribution Points
Ace = 4	Void (no cards in suit) = 3
King = 3	Singleton (1 in a suit) = 2
Queen = 2	Doubleton (2 in a suit) = 1
Jack = 1	

A "game" bid will usually require 26 or more points between the partners' hands. A bid of six or seven (called "slam") requires 33 or more points. Slam bids earn a scoring bonus.

Unfortunately, you are not allowed to call out your hand's point count. Instead, you must hint at it using the various conventions of bridge bidding. The more common conventions are discussed below.

BASIC OPENING BIDS

You may open the bidding with one of a suit if you have at least 13 points in your hand. An opening bid of one No-trump shows 16 to 18 high-card points, with no voids, no singletons, and not more than one doubleton. Do not open one No-trump with a five card major. It is all right to open a No-trump with a five card minor.

Which suit to bid? A four card suit is biddable, but always open your longest suit. With two suits of equal length, bid the highest ranking suit first, i.e., with 4 hearts, 4 spades and 13 points in your hand, open the bidding with one spade.

RESPONSES TO SUIT BIDS

The partner who opens the bidding (bids first) is called the Opener; the partner is called the Responder. The Responder evaluates his hand with the same point count method as the Opener. With 6 points, the Responder must bid; with less than 6 points, Responder must pass. With 6 to 9 points and 4 cards in Opener's suit, bid 2 in the Opener's suit. With 6 to 9 points and without 4 cards in Opener's suit, Responder makes a bid at the one level, either with one of his biddable suits or 1 No-trump. With 10 points or more, Responder may bid at the 1 level or 2 level in a new suit. With less than 10 points, Responder cannot bid at the 2 level in a new suit.

With at least 4 cards in partner's suit and 13 or more points, bid 3 in partner's suit (called a "jump," since you have skipped over the next possible bid of 2 in your partner's suit). Bid 2 No-trump with 13 to 15 high-card points, all unbid suits stopped, and with less than 4 in partner's suit. Jump in a new suit (jump shift) with 18 or more points. With 13 or more points, no support in partner's suit, and lacking the cards for a 2 No-trump bid, then bid another suit and jump on the next round.

RESPONSES TO NO-TRUMP BIDS

If you have no major suit, try to play the hand in No-trump. With less than 8 points, pass; with 8 or 9 points, bid 2 No-trump; with 10 to 14 points, bid 3 No-trump.

If you have 5 cards in a major suit and 10 or more points, you may jump to three in this suit over the No-trump bid. If your partner has three or more in this suit, he will bid four in the major. If he has only 2, he will bid 3 No-trump. With less than 8 points and 5 or more cards in a suit, bid 2 of this suit.

OTHER OPENING BIDS

PRE-EMPT: This is a defensive bid designed to prevent your opponents from arriving at their best contract. The rules for making this bid are complex, but in general you must have a long suit (at least 7), and a weak hand (less than 11 high card points). Bid 3 of the long suit with minimum requirements, 4 or 5 with more length or strength.

TWO OF A SUIT: An opening 2 bid in a suit shows a very strong hand, and both partners should keep bidding at least until game is reached. To open with a 2 bid, you must have 25 points with a 5-card suit; 23 with a 6-card suit; and 21 with a 7-card suit. Your partner must respond to this bid. With 7 or less points, the response should be 2 No-trump. With 8 or more points, make a positive response, i.e., bid your best suit, raise your partner's suit, or bid 3 No-trump.

TWO NO-TRUMP: This bid is made with 22 to 24 high-card points and a balanced hand. It is not forcing to game, but you will often end up at a game bid. Your partner should respond with 4 or more high-card points in his hand.

OVERCALLS

An overcall is a bid made after an opponent has opened the bidding. This bid can be made with as few as 11 points, but the suit you bid must have at least 5 cards, at least 2 of which are honors (A, K, Q, J, or 10). Responder can raise your suit with any 3-card support. With 6 to 11 points, partner raises one level. With 13 or more points, partner raises with a jump bid.

TAKE-OUT DOUBLE

This is another bid made after an opponent has opened the bidding. This shows an opening point count in your hand and asks partner to bid his best suit. For example, opponent is dealer and opens 1 diamond. You have 13 points and at least 3 cards in all other suits and less than 3 diamonds. You double, asking your partner for his best suit. If your partner has 10 points or more and a good suit, his answering bid should be a jump. Partner must respond, even with zero points, if previous opponent has passed.

BLACKWOOD

When the bidding indicates that a slam is possible (33 or more points between the partners), the Blackwood convention can be used. The Blackwood convention is used to tell your partner how many Aces or Kings you have. To start the Blackwood bidding, one partner makes the bid of 4 No-trump. Then the other partner responds as follows:

Number of Aces	Response
0 or 4	5 Clubs
1	5 Diamonds
2	5 Hearts
3	5 Spades

You can figure out how many Aces your team has by counting them in your hand, and adding the number indicated by your partner's bid.

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If the team has all 4 Aces, the 4 No-trump bidder may find out about Kings by bidding 5 No-trump. The partner should respond as follows:

Number of Kings	Response
0 or 4	6 Clubs
1	6 Diamonds
2	6 Hearts
3	6 Spades

You may bid a Small Slam (6) if your team has at least 3 Aces. You may bid a Grand Slam (7) if your team has 4 Aces and at least 3 Kings.

SUMMARY

It may not seem like it, but this is a VERY BRIEF introduction to bridge. If you get hooked on the game, you should get one of the many fine books that have been written about bridge. You will then begin to see the diversity of bidding and play strategies that exist. Join the ranks of those who find bridge a fascinating challenge that lasts a lifetime.