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Menus

Only those menu items that are active in the shareware version are shown here, all other items invoke the [Register](#) help.

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Register

Thank you for trying the Shareware version of WinBridge. It allows you to evaluate the game program before you commit to purchasing the product. You are allowed to use this program for one month after acquiring it; after this time, if you intend to continue using it you are obliged to purchase the registered version. This shareware version limits you to playing 10 rounds before giving this help. **To continue playing WinBridge you must exit and restart the game.** This help is also displayed if you invoke a feature that is only available in the registered version of the game.

There are several advantages to registering.

The registered version allows you to save any options that you change.

The registered version saves the size and position of the WinBridge window when you leave the game and automatically restores them when you next use it.

You will be notified of future releases of the registered game, and will be able to purchase them at a substantial discount.

You can contact the author to report problems with the play, and, possibly, have your own preferences included in the next release.

The registered version also has some useful additional features:

You can restore saved hands and replay them.

You can enter hands of your own.

You can take back a card and replay a trick.

You can control the Auto Play feature so that the next trick does not start until you are ready.

You can ask for a hint when it is your turn to bid or play.

To register

Contact Pik A Program using the file PIKORDER.TXT.

The latest shareware version of WinBridge is available from Pik A Program's home BBS, Software Creations. You can reach this BBS at the following numbers:

(508) 365-2359 - 2400 Baud V42 MNP5

(508) 368-7036 - 14.4K V32(BIS) DS

(508) 368-4137 - 16.8k HST USR

Or contact the Author using the file EURORDER.TXT.

Dialogs

Bidding

Conventions

Pacing

Scoring

Acol Bidding

The bidding system that is described is that which is generally applied by the program. You might find some occasional variation for the strict rules. There are the odd hands that do not fit the system and so the program occasionally might have to diverge from the truth when bidding.

Opening

Responding

Second Bid

Finding the Contract

Using the Keyboard

The keyboard can be used to control all aspects of the game.

With either menus, dialogs or cards, use the arrow keys to move the cursor and press space to select an item.

Normal Windows shortcuts can be used to select menu items.

In Dialogs use Arrow keys to move to the required button then press the space bar to select/deselect the item.

Where buttons are in Group Boxes the arrow key will move the selection within a box; to shift between boxes and the OK/CANCEL buttons, use the TAB key.

If the cursor is in the table area it will be placed over a valid card when it is your turn to play (the card indicated is not a recommendation). Use the left and right arrow keys to move the cursor to the card you want to play then press the space bar or the return/enter key. The tip of the arrow in the cursor must be touching a card for the card to be selected. If a card is not touched by the cursor then a "BEEP" will sound.

Playing WinBridge

(See [Bridge Basics](#) if you are completely new to the game)

[Screen](#) Layout

[Bidding](#)

[Playing](#) Cards

Screen Layout

The WinBridge screen has three sections in addition to the standard elements:

- the short cut buttons: the buttons below the menu bar
- the table: the green area
- the information line: the grey area at the bottom of the screen

The Short Cut Buttons



The Short Cut buttons correspond to menu items as follows:

- Deal
- Restore (not available in this version)
- Save As
- Exit
- Acol Bidding Help
- Review Bidding
- Review Trick
- Show Hands
- Claim
- Concede
- Take Back (not available in this version)
- Hint (not available in this version)
- Acol Help
- Resume Play (not available in this version)

The Table

The table area contains the hands, a central area where cards are played and the dialogs.

Players 'sit' at the cardinal points of the screen:

- North Top of the screen
- East Right of the screen
- South Bottom of the screen
- West Right of the screen

You Bid and Play South's hand. If North or South win the Bidding then you also play North's hand.

During bidding, only South's card are shown. After the first lead the dummy is also displayed (if North is the declarer then North's hand is shown to you but not to the opposition).

If you want to see all of the hands use the Show Hands menu item after the bidding has finished.

Cards are played in the centre of the table. When a trick is complete the winning card is displayed Inverted.

When it is your turn to play the cursor will change to either an up arrow with an N (North to play) or a down arrow with an S (South to play), and will be placed over the hand to play.

Information Line

The Information line shows the following:

Current: who is to bid or play
Declarer: who is playing the contract
Contract: the contract being played for
NS Tricks: the number of tricks made by North/South
EW Tricks: the number of tricks made by East/West
Vulner: the current vulnerability.

Bidding

The bidding system is based on Acol with some options and extensions available as Conventions.

During the auction, bids that have been made are shown in boxes at the top of the table. Each bid that is made by a player is shown in that player's box. The boxes for each player are always in the same position (South, West, North, East). If South is not the first bidder then a '-' is inserted in each box up to the first bidder.

Each player can make up to 10 bids. If more than 10 bids per player are needed then an error will be reported and the hand should then be abandoned.

Bidding by South

South bids using the Bid Board. You make your bid by pressing the button that corresponds to the bid. * means doubled, ** means redoubled, 'NT' means No Trump and 'PASS' is equivalent to no bid.

Buttons can be selected using the mouse or by using the TAB keys on the keyboard. The arrow keys can also be used but they will act like the TAB keys

A button can be pressed with the mouse, the RETURN/ENTER key or the SPACE bar.

If you press RETURN or SPACE without selecting a button the PASS button will be pressed.

Playing

You must play a card when it is South's turn, or when North or South is the declarer and it is North's turn to play.

When you need to play a card, if the cursor is on the table it will be moved to the hand that is to play, over the suit that has been led or over the left-most card in the hand. The positioning of the cursor is not recommending a card to play.

You can only play a valid card, i.e. you must follow suit if you can.

You can move the cursor using the mouse or the left and right arrow keys. If you use the arrow keys the cursor will move from card to card.

To play a card double-click with the mouse anywhere on the card, press the SPACE bar or the RETURN key on the keyboard. If the cursor is not over a card a 'BEEP' will sound.

The see also [opening leads](#).

Dealing

Four new hands of cards are dealt each time the Deal Menu item is selected. You see South's card and all other player's cards are hidden.

If the play of a hand is incomplete when Deal is selected, a simple dialog is displayed which allows you to cancel (select "No") the new deal. If you select "Yes" the previous hands are lost.

Opening Leads

The game chooses its opening lead from the following rules:

In a suit contract when holding trumps: lead a singleton or the high card (except a king, queen or jack) from a doubleton (but not from Ace Queen).

The top card from a continuous sequence of three cards, the highest of which is an honour.

The highest card in Partner's bid suit.

The trump suit if it has been supported and it does not expose a trump honour.

The fourth highest card in the longest and strongest suit.

Claiming the Tricks

Claiming awards all the remaining tricks to North-South. The validity of the claim is not verified!

Play is ended and the result is declared.

Conceding the Tricks

Conceding awards all the remaining tricks to East-West.

Play is ended and the result is declared.

Show Score

Show Score displays the current score in the Scoring Dialog.

This menu item is disabled if Duplicate Scoring is being used.

Scoring

The Scoring menu item allows you to select either Rubber or Duplicate. The currently selected option is indicated by a tick mark.

Rubber Scoring

If Rubber Scoring is selected then bidding will take into account part-scores when bidding Game.

Vulnerability is determined by which sides have won a game.

When one side has won two games the difference in scores is calculated and the winner of the rubber is declared in a simple message dialog.

Duplicate Scoring

If Duplicate Scoring is selected then part-scores are not retained and each hand is played on its own merits.

Vulnerability moves with the deal, i.e.:

Dealer	Vulnerability
North	None
East	East/West
South	North/South
West	All

Save

Save saves a a set of hands.

All bidding options, vulnerability and (if Rubber scoring is in use) part scores are also saved.

If the game has been saved previously, it will be saved under the same file name.

If the game has not been saved before, you will be invited to give a file name. By default, the file will be saved with a "BRD" file extension.

Save As

Save As saves a game into a nominated file. See also [Save](#).
The default file extension is "BRD".

Exit

Exit ends the session.

If the play of a hand is currently incomplete a simple dialog is displayed which allows you to cancel (select "No") the exit.

If you have changed any options a simple dialog will appear to allow you to save the changes.

Hands and scores are not saved when you exit.

Restart Bidding

Restart Bidding causes the play of a hand to be restarted. It can be used any time after a Deal even after a hand has been played.

Any cards that have been played are returned to the hands and all previous bidding and play is forgotten.

Bidding restarts with the original dealer.

The original Vulnerability and part scores (if Rubber scoring is in use) are restored.

Review Bidding

Review Bidding causes the bidding table part of the Bidding dialog and the previous sequence of bids to be displayed.

You can only review bidding after bidding has been completed.

If you want to change a bid you must restart bidding.

Review Trick

Review Trick causes the last trick that was completed to be displayed in the top left corner of the Table.

You can review the last trick any time until the next trick is completed.

(Note: The Rules of Bridge allow you to see the last trick until the next lead is covered. Since you cannot stop a card from being played, the strict rule has been relaxed.)

To remove the display, either click with the left mouse button on the last trick, press a character on the keyboard or play a card.

Show Hands

Show Hands allows you to see all four hands.

Show Hands can only be used after bidding has been completed.

After a Deal only your hand will be shown.

Conventions

Conventions lets you specify a range of conventions the game understands for North/South and East/West. Each pair has its own set of conventions.

The default conventions are:

Weak No Trump

Stayman

Gerber

Takeout Double .

Conventions are entered through the Conventions dialog.

Conventions are saved with the hands when they are saved.

You cannot change conventions during bidding and play. If you call up the dialog and press OK you will be given a simple message saying that you cannot make changes while cards are out.

If you have restored a game, you will not be able to change the conventions used in the bidding until the hand has been played once.

To replay a hand after you have changed the conventions use Restart Bidding

Cursor

The Cursor menu item allows you to set whether the cursor will jump to the hand that is to play next, or whether the user must move the cursor to the hand.

When selected two options are displayed:

Auto: If Auto is selected the cursor will jump to the hand to be played.

Manual: If Manual is selected the cursor must be moved by the user.

The current option is indicated by a check mark.

The Auto option is only effective if the cursor is in the playing area.

If you are using the keyboard then the Auto option will make play much easier and quicker. Use the Manual option if you find that the Auto cursor often causes you to play the wrong card.

Pacing

Pacing lets you change the rate at which the game bids and plays.

You change the pacing using the [Pacing](#) dialog.

Bias

Bias allows you to select which pair of players will have the most High Card points.

The choices are :

Random
North/South
East/West.

Note: Setting the bias towards one pair does not necessarily mean that they will get the best hands nor that they will win the auction, since distribution is also considered when bidding.

Sound

The Sound option allows you to toggle on or off the sound that can be made when a conventional bid is made.

The system will still 'beep' at you if the cursor is not over a card when you try to play one.

Bidding Dialog

The Bidding dialog has two parts:

- the bidding table
- the bid board

Bidding Table

The Bidding Table shows each bid as it is made. The table comprises four columns, one for each player.

The columns are always in the same order: South; West; North; East. A '-' is entered in the table for each player before the dealer (eg if North is dealer, South and West will have a '-' in their first line, but if South dealt, no columns will contain a '-').

When the computer makes a bid that is defined as a Convention, and if the sound option is selected, the computer will make the default sound.

Bid Board

The Bid Board is displayed when it is South's turn to bid. There is a button on the board for each possible bid that can be made. You can only make bids that are within the rules of Bridge.

Doubled is shown on the board as a *.

Redoubled is shown as a **.

No Trump is indicated by NT.

To make a bid, press the button!

The default bid is **PASS** (some people prefer "no bid"), so if, when the bid board is displayed, you hit the return key without having pressed any arrow or TAB keys, your bid will be 'pass'.

Result

When the auction is completed a simple message box displays the final contract.

Help Index

The Help Index Lists the various topics covered in the Help System.

Help Bridge Basics

The Help Bridge Basics describes the basic things that you need to know to start to play bridge.

Help Acol Bidding

The Help Acol Bidding describes the Acol bidding system and the options as used by this program.

Help About

The Help About gives some information about the program.

Conventions Dialog

The Conventions Dialog lets you change some of the bidding conventions that a pair use. It is invoked by the Conventions Option menu.

The following options can be selected:

Opening No Trump

weak	12 to 14 points
strong	15 to 17 points
variable	weak when non vulnerable: strong when vulnerable.

Response to a No Trump Open

Stayman
Baron only used over a 2 No Trump open

If both Stayman and Baron are selected, Stayman will be used over 1 No Trump and Baron will be used over 2 No Trump.

Opening Two Bids

Standard	Normal Acol bidding
<u>Benjamin</u>	2 Clubs: a hand that could make an Acol two bid 2 Diamonds: equivalent to an Acol 2 Clubs bid

Slam Conventions

<u>Blackwood</u>	bid 4 No Trump to ask for aces
<u>Gerber</u>	bid 4 Clubs to ask for aces

Takeout Doubles

Requires the partner to bid his best suit.

Pacing Dialog

Change the rate at which bids are made and cards are played.

Input in seconds between actions.

Maximum 60 seconds (yawn!).

Minimum 1 second.

Scoring Dialog

The scoring dialog is based on the normal bridge score sheet. The scoring information is in two columns: the first for North/South; the second for East/West. Each column is divided into two for above-the-line and below-the-line scores.

The Scoring Dialog is displayed automatically when a contract has been completed.

Scores are calculated using the bridge scoring system

The information shown in the dialog depends on the selected scoring option.

Rubber

Points above-the-line show, for each pair:

- the previous total above-the-line score
- any above-the-line score from the last contract (only shown when the dialog is displayed at the end of a contract)

Points below-the-line show, for each pair:

- the total scored in any previous game
- the total of previous part scores
- any score for the last contract (only shown when the dialog is displayed at the end of a contract).

Duplicate

Points shown above-the-line and below-the-line are for the last contract only.

When Duplicate scoring has been selected through the Scoring menu, the Scoring Dialog cannot be selected through the Show Scores menu.

Scoring System

Scoring is divided into two parts:

Above-the-line
Below-the-line

The winner of a rubber is the side with the most points. Points above-the-line and below-the-line are added together to calculate the winner.

The score system is slightly different depending on which scoring option is selected.

In duplicate scoring:

part scores from previous hands are forgotten
a non vulnerable game scores a 300 point bonus
any vulnerable game scores 500
a making a part score receives a bonus of 50 points
honours are not scored

Below-The-Line

Trick Values for making a contract

Suit	First Trick	Subsequent Tricks
Clubs	20	20
Diamonds	20	20
Hearts	30	30
Spades	30	30
No Trumps	40	30

Contract Value

The value of a contract is the total of the trick values for the bid level, eg:

3 No Trumps	= 40 + 30 + 30 = 100
3 Spades	= 30 + 30 + 30 = 90
1 No Trump	= 40
5 Clubs	= 20 + 20 + 20 + 20 + 20 = 100.

If the declarer makes the contract, the contract value is added to the score below the line for the current game.

A contract value of less than 100 is a part score.

A game is made when the score below the line is 100 or more. When a game is made a new game is started. The rubber is complete when one side has won two games.

When a rubber is completed the total scores for both sides are calculated, and the side with the most points is declared the winner. A new rubber will be started on the next deal.

Above-The-Line

Penalties for failing to make a contract

	One Down	Each Extra Down	
Non Vulnerable			
Not Doubled	50	50	
Doubled	100	200 (300 after the third down)	
Redoubled	200	400	
Vulnerable			
Not Doubled	100	100	
Doubled	200	300	
Redoubled	400	600	

Bonuses

Making a Doubled Contract

50 points (100 if re-doubled).

Part Score

Bidding and making a contract with a value less than 100: 100 (duplicate scoring only)

Game

Two to Nil: 700

Two to One: 500 (or a vulnerable game using duplicate scoring)

One Game 300 (non vulnerable game using duplicate scoring only)

Overtricks

	Not Doubled	Doubled	Redoubled
Non Vulnerable Trick Value		100	200
Vulnerable Trick Value		200	400

Slams

	Non Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Small Slam (6 bid & made)	500	750
Grand Slam (7 bid & made)	1000	1500

Honours points scored to the side holding the cards (not applied in duplicate scoring)

Any four honours in one hand in the contract suit 100

All five honours in one hand in the contract suit 150

All four aces in one hand in a no trump contract 150

Bridge Basics

For an explanation of some of the terms used in Bridge refer to [Bridge Basics Terminology](#)

Bridge is a card game for two pairs of players using a pack of 52 playing of cards (without jokers).

In WinBri the players are placed at the cardinal points of the compass: North, East, South and West. You are South and your partner is North, East and West play together.

There are four suits which are ranked as follows:

Clubs
Diamonds
Hearts
Spades.

There is a fifth "suit" that is used in bidding called No Trumps, which is ranked higher than spades.

Each suit has 13 cards with the 2 the lowest ranked card and the Ace the highest ranked. The 10, Jack, Queen, King and Ace are called "Honours".

At the start of a hand, a card is dealt to each player in turn until all the cards in the pack have been dealt: each player then has 13 cards.

The cards are then considered in two phases:

[Bidding](#)
[Play](#)

Bridge Basics - Terminology

Acol: a bidding system that is the basis for the bidding used and understood by this program.

Auction: the process where players bid to decide on the contract.

Contract: a level, and a suit or no trumps. The level indicates the number of tricks to be made (6+level = number of tricks); the suit indicates the trump suit or no trumps. A contract may also be doubled or redoubled.

Declarer: the player in a partnership that won the auction that first bid the contract suit. The declarer plays both hands for the partnership. (In this program, if North/South won the auction, south always plays both hands.)

Discard: playing a card that is not a trump when you are void in the led suit.

Doubled: a bid that increases the points, bonuses and penalties that are scored after a contract has been played, depending on the result. You can only double an opponents bid.

Doubleton: holding of two cards in a suit.

Dummy: Declarer's partner. Dummy's hand is laid out on to the table after the first card has been led and is played by the declarer.

Duplicate: an alternative way of scoring and supplying cards. In duplicate hands are dealt once or prepared independently and placed in boards. The hands can then be played by different people. Each board is played independently and part scores are not carried over to the next board.

Finesse: an attempt to make a trick with a card that is not a certain winner by exploiting the possible relative positions of the cards.

Game: bidding and making sufficient contracts to score at least 100 points "below the line".

Honour: Ace, King, Queen, Jack or 10.

Minor Suit: clubs and diamonds.

Major Suit: hearts and spades.

No Trumps: a type of contract that is played without a trump suit.

Partner: your partner is the player who sits opposite to you at the table; the player that you play with.

Redoubled: a bid that doubles the doubled points. You can only redouble your opponents double.

Rubber: one side winning 2 games. The winner of the rubber is the pair with the most points scored.

Ruff: the play of a trump on a trick when the player is void in the led suit.

Singleton: holding one card in a suit.

Suit: clubs, diamonds, hearts or spades.

Trick: four card that have been played in sequence by each player.

Trump: any card in the contract suit or the act of ruffing.

Void: holding no cards in a suit.

Bridge Basics - Bidding

BIDDING

After the cards have been dealt the auction begins. The purpose of the auction is to establish the Trump suit and the number of tricks that are to be made. You and your partner are competing against the other pair. Bidding starts with the dealer then proceeds clockwise around the table. You cannot consult with you partner, the only way of telling your partner about your hand, or of asking your partner about their hand is by making a valid bid.

There are three types of bid:

- a contract bid: a level from 1 to 7 and a suit (including No Trumps)
- a double or redouble
- a no bid or pass.

With WinBri you can only make valid bids.

Contract Bid

The level of a contract bid says the minimum number of tricks that are to be made by the bidding partnership. A bid at the 1 level requires that 7 tricks are made (6+1); a bid at the seven level requires that all 13 tricks are made (6+7).

The suit in a contract bid says what suit is to be trumps (or that the contract will be played without trumps).

Each contract bid that is made must be higher than the previous contract bid in either level or suit rank (or both).

Double/Redouble

A double bid will increase the penalties points that a side scores if the opposition fail to make the contract and increases the opponents score if they make or exceed the contract. Penalties and bonuses are not strictly doubled (i.e. multiplied by 2) as shown in the scores section. You can only double the opponents.

Redouble doubles a double! You can only redouble after a double with no intervening contract bids.

No Bid or Pass

A No Bid (when you Pass) means that you do not wish to make a contract bid or a double/redouble.

The Auction

The auction starts with the dealer and ends when three successive passes are made after a contract bid or four passes if nobody makes a contract bid on the first round. If the hand is passed out then the cards are collected, shuffled and cut, and passed to the next player to deal. (The program does all this for you.)

The contract that is played is the last contract bid, possibly doubled or redoubled. The contract is played by the member or the winning partnership that first bid the contract suit.

Bidding System

It is usual for partners to bid using a system. This program uses the Acot system with some variations.

To understand the bidding, and to communicate with your partner, you must understand the system that is used.

Bridge Basics - Play

If you are familiar with Whist or Solo the basic rules for card play should be familiar to you:

Cards are played in groups of 4 (a 'trick'), one from each player.

The lead after the bidding has been completed is made by the first player clockwise from the declarer.

Subsequent leads are made by the winner of the previous trick.

The winner of a trick is the position who played the highest card in the led suit or the highest trump.

A player must follow suit if they can.

If a player cannot follow suit they either play a trump or discard a card from another suit.

The trump suit is the suit named in the contract except when the contract 'suit' is no trumps. As the name implies, a no trump contract is played without a trump suit.

After the first lead, the partner of the declarer lays their cards on the table to form the dummy. The declarer must play the dummy's cards as well as his own cards.

The other pair should cooperate (without consulting each other) to attempt to stop the declarer from making the contract. They are not allowed to see each other's cards until each card is played, but they can see the dummy.

Playing Tips

The following tips are mostly aimed at the declarer, but many of the ideas apply equally to the defence except they do not have as much information about their partner's hand.

Try to remember how many cards have been played in each suit (especially the trump suit). Even better, try to remember exactly which cards have already been played. This will let you know which the cards you hold are winners. If you know that all of the trumps have been played, your winners are certain to make once you get the lead. If you hold the remaining cards in a suit and there are no trumps to be played, even if the card is a deuce when you lead it will win. The snag is if you cannot win the lead even if the last card in the suit is an ace it will not win.

You do not have to hold the highest card in a suit to win a trick. You can play a low card to a king with the ace held by the opposition: if the ace is held to the left of the leader the king should make (if not on this trick then the next time it is played; if it is on the right then it will always lose if you lead (but not if you can persuade the right hand opponent to lead the suit). This type of play is called a finesse. Another type of finesse is to play a lower card (say the queen) towards a higher card (the ace in this example) hoping the king is on the left. If it is then the player must decide whether to beat the queen and lose to the ace or not play the king and allow you to let the queen win the trick. This type of play is best used when you also hold the cards immediately below the card that was led (eg Jack, 10), it is not such a good idea if the opposition hold these cards.

See what cards are discarded. This might help you to decide where a missing honour is held since it is unlikely that a player will throw a card that is protecting an honour. The fact that a player is discarding tells you how many cards in the led suit the other player has (you know how many you hold, how many dummy holds and how many have already been played, so the number left must be held by the other player).

Consider the percentages. Knowing the likely distribution of the cards held by the opposition can help you to decide how to play a suit. For example if you hold Ace King Jack, plus others, in a suit with 4 cards missing it is best to play Ace then King and expect the Queen to be played, if 5 cards are missing the odds are close but are just in favour of the Queen dropping but if six cards are missing the odds swing in

favour of trying to finesse the Jack.

Manage your entries. When declarer, plan how you will move between dummy and your own hand to make the best of both hands. If there is a long suit in one hand and the other hand is short, you might need to cross between hands in another suit to play off the long winners. Avoid "blocking" a long suit by playing higher cards from the short hand on the long hands winners (so long as you do not make winners for the opposition).

Do not be afraid of losing tricks. If the contract is to make 9 tricks you can lose 4 tricks, lose the tricks when you want to. If losing a trick makes a trick for you it might be worth doing. In a no trump contract it is usually best to lose tricks at the beginning to try and establish your long tricks, but avoid establishing the opposition's long tricks.

Make the contract. If you have a choice between making an over trick, risking going down, and just making the contract, always choose making the contract. The bonuses for overtricks do not justify the risk of receiving penalties for going down.

When things go wrong. Even with the best players, the bidding and play sometimes result in confusion. Try to make the best of the situation. Try to keep your sense of humour. Do not argue with your partner (after all I'm only a dumb computer!).

Acol Bidding - Opening

A balanced hand is any hand that has a Short Point count of 2 or less (i.e. no more extreme than two doubletons).

Points 0 - 11

Long Suit

Pass

Weak Two Option

Points 12 - 17

Opening -Balanced Hand

Opening -UnBalanced Hand

Takeout Double Option

Points 18 - 22 (or 8 playing tricks)

Opening -UnBalanced Hand

Points 20 - 22

Opening -Balanced Hand

Points 23 + (or 10 playing tricks)

2C

Benjamin Option

Points 18-23

Benjamin Option

If the opposition have bid you should consider whether to Overcall.

Opening - Balanced Hand

A balanced hand is any hand that has a Short Point count of 2 or less (i.e. no more extreme than two doubletons).

Less than 20 points

Weak no trump: 12 - 14 points bid 1 No Trump

15 or more points bid your longest suit (bid no trumps on your next bid).

Strong no trump: 15 - 17 points bid 1 No Trump

12 - 14 points bid your longest suit (bid no trumps on your next bid).

18 - 19 points bid your longest suit (jump bid no trumps on your next bid).

20 - 22 points

Bid 2 Notrump.

More than 22

Bid 2C (or 2D Benjamin).

Opening - Unbalanced Hand

Bid you longest suit.

With suits of equal length:

5 card or longer suits bid the highest first

4 card suits bid the lowest first.

If you are using the Gerber convention for asking for aces and you have a biddable club suit, bid clubs first (this is a bit of a fudge in the program but does solve a lot of real problems when using Gerber in the real world).

Opening - Strong Unbalanced Hand

Bid your longest suit at the 2 level.

With suits of equal length:

5 card or longer suits bid the highest first

Do not open at the two level in a suit with a 4 card suit.

If the suit that you should bid is clubs open 1C.

If you are using the Gerber convention for asking for aces and you have a biddable club suit, bid clubs first (this is a bit of a fudge in the program but does solve a lot of real problems when using Gerber in the real world).

As an alternative you could use the Benjamin option.

Opening - Strong Balanced Hand

20 - 22 points

With no 5 card suit bid 2 No Trump.

More than 22

Bid 2C (or 2D Benjamin).

Opening Two Club

Shows 23+ points with any distribution. If partner holds 6 or more points a game is likely, if 10 or more then a slam is possible.

Your partner will respond with a bid of 2D holding 0 - 7 points. With a minimum hand you should bid 2 No Trump.

Any other bidding sequence after a 2C open is forcing to game.

Preemptive Bids

If you hold a weak hand with a long (greater than 7 card) suit you can consider a preemptive bid to disrupt the opposition bidding.

Counting Tricks

Count one trick for each card after the third in your long suit.

Count one trick for each of the A, K, Q in the trump suit.

Count one trick for each winner in outside suits.

Bid level

The level you should bid depends on how many playing tricks that you hold in your own hand. If you side is not vulnerable bid at a level to make three more tricks than you hold, if vulnerable bid a level to make two more tricks.

If you can count 8 tricks your hand is probably too strong to preempt and you should use an Acol two opening unless the opposition have bid.

BUT: the level should be at least 3.
the level should not be higher than that needed for game.

Acol Bidding - Responding

Responding to:

1 in a suit

1 No Trump

2 in a suit

2 No Trump

2C

3 or more in a suit (preempt)

Acol Bidding - Responding to 1 in a Suit

Points 0 - 5

Pass

Points 6 - 10

With 4 cards in partner's suit bid 2 in the suit

With a balanced hand and no major suit that can be bid at the one level bid 1 NT

With an unbalanced hand bid the best suit (of 4 or more cards) that you can at the 1 level

With an unbalanced hand and no support but 10 points bid your best suit at the lowest possible

level

Otherwise pass

Points 11 - 16+

With 4 cards in partner's bid suit

11-12 points raise to 3 level

greater than 12 and no other possible bid: bid at the 4 level or bid game or consider a

slam.

With a balanced hand

11 -12 points bid 2NT

13 - 15 points bid 3NT

16+ points bid as an unbalanced hand, expect to make game or a slam.

With an unbalanced hand

11 - 15 points bid your best suit at the two level without jumping

16+ points jump bid your best suit

Divergences

It might sometimes be acceptable to raise your partner with only 3 card support.

If you are stuck for a bid try something higher or lower than you should depending on the value of your hand.

Prefer to bid a good 4 card major suit than no trump if it does not raise the level too much.

Remember that if you bid a different suit to your partner then they will bid again (except they can pass no trumps).

Acol Bidding - Responding to 1NT

Points 0 - 5

Pass (unless you have a very unbalanced hand and a long suit (6+ cards) then try the suit at the 2 level, but be prepared for trouble).

Balanced Hand

Points: 6 - 10 (weak no trump); 6 - 7 (strong no trump)

Pass.

Points: 11 - 12 (weak no trump); 8 - 9 (strong no trump)

Bid 2NT inviting your partner to bid 3 if they hold a maximum.

Points: 13 - 18 (weak no trump); 10 - 15 (strong no trump)

Bid 3NT expecting your partner to pass.

Points: 19 - 20 (weak no trump); 16 - 17 (strong no trump)

Bid 4NT inviting your partner to bid a slam with a maximum

Points: 21+ (weak no trump); 18+ (strong no trump)

Bid 6NT.

Points: 25+ (weak no trump); 22+ (strong no trump)

Bid 7NT if you hold all of the aces.

All of the above bids contain an element of risk and rely on average distribution of cards and points. You might prefer to be more cautious with the higher levels of bidding by trying a suit bid then using a slam convention (but you risk your partner passing your bid!).

Unbalanced Hand

Points: 6 - 12 (weak no trump); 6 - 9 (strong no trump)

Bid your best (preferably 5 card or more) suit at the 2 level, expecting your partner to pass.

Points: 13 + (weak no trump); 10 + (strong no trump) and a 5+ card suit

Bid 3 of the suit inviting game in the suit or no trump.

Points: 13 - 14 (weak no trump); 10 - 11 (strong no trump) and a 6+ card major suit

Bid 4 of the suit (game).

Points: 16 - 17 (weak no trump); 13 - 14 (strong no trump) and a 6+ card minor suit

Bid 5 of the suit (game).

Stayman

An alternative to the suit bids above is to use the Stayman convention.

Acol Bidding - Responding to 2 in a Suit

Points 0 - 7

Bid 2NT.

Points 8 - 11 Balanced hand (or unbalanced with no 5 card suit and your partner has bid your short suit)

Bid 3NT.

Points 8 - 11

With at least 3 cards of partners suit: bid game in the suit.

Otherwise bid your best 5 or more card suit at the lowest possible level.

Points 12 +

With at least 3 cards of partners suit: bid 3 of suit or jump bid your own 6+ card major suit.

Otherwise jump bid your best 5 or more card suit.

Acol Bidding - Responding to 2 NT

Points: 0 - 4

Pass (unless you have a very unbalanced hand and a long suit then try the suit at the 3 level).

Balanced Hand

Points: 5 - 10

Bid 3NT.

Points: 11 - 12

Bid 4NT inviting your partner to bid a slam with a maximum

Points: 13+

Bid 6NT.

Points: 17+

Bid 7NT if you hold all of the aces.

All of the above bids contain an element of risk and rely on average distribution of cards and points. You might prefer to be more cautious with the higher levels of bidding by trying a suit bid then using a slam convention (but you risk your partner passing your bid if it does not sound positive!).

Unbalanced Hand

Points: 5 +

Bid your best (preferably 5 card or more) suit at the 3 level.

Baron

An alternative to the suit bids above is to use the Stayman or Baron conventions.

Acol Bidding - Responding to 2C

Remember that partner has not promised a club suit.

Points 0 - 7

Bid 2D regardless of any suit you might have or the shape of your hand.

Points 8+

Bid your best 5+ card suit or 2 NT with a balanced hand.

After a positive response a game contract is virtually certain and a slam is possible (with 10+ points in your hand then a slam is probable).

Acol Bidding - Responding to a Preempt

When considering your response to a preemptive open by your partner you should count tricks rather than points.

Count tricks as follows:

Any of A, K or Q in partner's suit: 1 trick each.

Any other ace: count 1 trick

Any other King: holding the ace or queen in the suit count 1 trick otherwise count as half a trick

Any queen in a suit where you also hold the ace but not the king count half a trick, if you hold the king as well count as a trick.

With support for your partners suit (minimum 3 card excluding winners in the suit): with a singleton count 1 trick; with a void count two tricks.

Only raise your partner's suit if you can offer 4 tricks when non-vulnerable or 3 tricks when vulnerable. Do not raise unless it is to game or to a slam.

Do not bid your own suit unless it is overwhelmingly good.

If your partner has bid a minor suit, consider a bid of 3NT if you have controls in the other suits and at least 2 cards in partner's suit.

Acol Bidding - Second Bid

Partner Supported the Opening Suit (including no trump)

Partner Bid a New Suit

Partner Bid No Trumps over the Opening Suit

Partner Bid a Suit Over No Trump

Opening Bid of 2 of a suit

Opening Bid of 2C

Acol Bidding - Partner Supported Opening Suit

If partner supported the opening bid in a suit, they will have a fairly weak hand. Unless you hold a very strong hand you should look to make a bid that is likely to be the final contract. Apply losing trick count to determine the contract level of a suit contract.

In no trumps, if your partner's bid is an invitation to go higher (2NT, 4NT), only raise the level if you have a maximum hand, otherwise PASS.

With a balanced hand but points that are higher than the range for a no trump option, bid no trumps.

Acol Bidding - Partner Bid a New Suit

When the partner of the opener responds with a new suit it shows a good hand. If the player also jumps it shows an excellent hand. A change of suit requires the opener to bid again.

With 4 or more cards in responder's suit the opener should bid that suit. With a minimum hand (up to 16 points) raise one level, with 16 -18 points raise two levels with more than 18 points bid game. It will be the responder's decision whether to proceed further.

If the opener cannot support responder's suit they should:

weak hand (12 - 15 points):

bid a second suit at the lowest level but not higher than the 2 level

rebid their first suit.

if all suits are controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons)

try no trumps at the lowest level

medium hand (16 - 18 points):

bid a new suit

jump rebid a 6 or more card opening suit

if all suits are controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons)

bid 3 no trump

strong hand (19 - 22 points):

jump bid a new suit

if responder bid at the 1 level and all suits are controlled

bid 3 no trump

With a balanced hand but points that are higher than the range for a no trump option, you could bid no trumps at a level that indicates how many extra points (2 - 4 bid at current level, 5-7 at current level + 1, etc.) you have (but not higher than the three level) .

Acol Bidding - Partner Bid No Trumps Over a Suit

Responder bid at the 1 level:

Minimum hand (12 -15 points):

with no voids or singletons: PASS or rebid a good 5+ card opening suit

with voids or singletons: rebid a 5 or more card opening suit or bid a lower ranking second suit.

Medium hand (16 - 18 points):

with no voids or singletons: bid 3 no trump or 4 in a good 5+ card major opening suit

with voids or singletons: bid a second suit or jump rebid a 5+ card opening suit.

Strong hand (19 - 22 points):

3 no trump (hope that partner has any weakness covered)

jump bid a second suit

bid game in the opening suit.

Responder bid at the 2 level:

Minimum hand (12 -14 points):

with no voids or singletons: PASS or rebid a good 5+ card opening suit

with voids or singletons: rebid a 5 or more card opening suit or bid a second suit.

Medium hand (15 - 18 points):

with no voids or singletons: bid 3 no trump or 4 in a good 5+ card opening suit

with voids or singletons: bid a second suit or jump rebid a 5+ card opening suit.

Strong hand (19 - 22 points):

4 no trump inviting a slam

use slam conventions

jump bid a second suit

bid game in the opening suit

Responder bid at the 3 level:

Minimum/medium hand (12 -18 points):

with no voids or singletons: PASS or rebid a good 5+ card opening suit

with voids or singletons: rebid a 5 or more card opening suit or bid a good second suit.

Strong hand (19 - 22 points):

use slam conventions to play in either no trump or the opening suit

jump bid a second suit

Responder bids higher than 3:

if using Blackwood

opener shows the number of aces held

minimum/medium hand(12 - 18 points)

PASS

strong hand(19 - 22 points):

bid 6 no trump

Acol Bidding - Partner Bid a Suit Over No Trumps

1 No Trump Open:

Responder bid at the 2 level:
PASS

Responder bid at the 3 level:
With 3+ card support raise partner's suit
Bid 3 no trump

Responder bid game:
PASS.

Responder bid 4 of a minor suit (but beware if you are using the Gerber slam convention):
With support and maximum points raise to game.

2 No Trump Open:

Responder bid at the 3 level:
With 3+ card support raise partner's suit
Bid 3 no trump

Responder bid game:
PASS.

Responder bid 4 of a minor suit (but beware if you are using the Gerber slam convention):
With support and maximum points raise to game.

Acol Bidding - Opening 2 of a Suit

Partner responded 2 no trump:

Re bid a good 6+ card suit

Bid a second suit

With all suits controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons): PASS.

Partner supports opening suit:

Bid game in an opening major suit

Maximum points: bid a good second suit

With all suits controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons): bid 3 no trump.

Partner bid a new suit:

with 3+ card support: raise partner's suit.

with 6+ card suit: re bid opening suit

Maximum points: bid a good second suit

With all suits controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons): bid 3 no trump.

Partner bid 3 no trump.

With no singletons or voids and a minor suit: PASS

Bid game in the opening suit.

Acol Bidding - Opening Bid of 2C

Partner bid 2 diamond:

23-24 points and a balanced hand: bid 2 no trump

bid a 5+ card suit

With all suits controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons): bid 3 no trump.

Any other response:

show support with 3+ cards

bid a 5+ card suit

With all suits controlled (ace, king or 4 or more cards with no voids or singletons): bid 3 no trump

Keep bidding when it is your turn until at least game has been reached or you are in a slam.

Acol Bidding - Finding the Contract

Agreeing a Suit

Losing Trick Count

Cue Bids

Finding a Slam

When in Doubt

Bidding can go wrong for several reasons, for example:

- no suit can be agreed
- a bid has been misunderstood
- a wrong bid has been made
- the opposition have interfered.

If you think things are going wrong it can be better to stop the bidding at a low level rather than trying to find a suit fit.

Acol Bidding - Agreeing a Suit

To play in a suit the partnership should hold at least 8 cards in the suit between them. If a player has shown 4 cards in a suit, you should hold 4 cards to support them, similarly the holdings should be 5 - 3, 6 - 2, 7 - 1. If you cannot support your partner's suit and they have not supported your suit, try bidding a second suit to look for a fit.

Do not assume that your suit is better than your partner's. If you opened and rebid your suit, when your partner rebids their own suit it almost certainly denies that they hold 3 cards in your suit. If you hold 3 of his suit it might be best to show your support even if you hold a good 6 card suit.

If your suit is a minor suit and your partner's suit is a major and you hold support, it might be best to play in your partner's suit since it requires one less trick to make game. If your minor is strong your partner may well be able to make its tricks once trumps have been drawn.

It might be worth risking a no trump contract if there is no obvious trump fit, even if you have an unbalanced hand.

Acol Bidding - Cue Bids

Cue bids can be used after a suit has been agreed to show controls.

A first round control is an ace or a void (but not if the agreed suit is no trumps!).

A second round control is a king or a singleton (but again, not in no trumps).

To make a cue bids first bid the lowest suit in which you hold a first round control (missing a suit implies that you do not hold a first round control in that suit). Partner will then show their lowest first round control. Once first round controls have been shown, second round controls can be found when suits are rebid. If a control is not held, bid the agreed suit.

Acol Bidding - Finding a Slam

If the bidding or Losing Trick Count indicates that a slam is possible, it is important to identify whether the partnership is missing any aces and kings. This is usually achieved by using a slam asking convention such as Blackwood or Gerber.

With an ace missing a grand slam is unlikely and with a king missing it will be difficult

With 2 aces missing a small slam is unlikely.

It is possible to make a slam with aces and kings missing if the hands contain a lot of distribution (long and strong suits, voids, singletons). With distributional hands and a contract in a trump suit, it can be better to show controls by cue bidding.

Losing Trick Count

Losing Trick Count (LTC) is a method of estimating how many tricks a partnership will make *on average* in a suit contract (LTC should not be applied to a no trump contract). For LTC to be valid the partnership should hold at least 8 trumps between them.

Counting Losers

In a 3 card or longer suit only consider the top 3 cards. For each card lower than the queen, count one loser. If the queen is the only honour in the suit it should be counted as 0.5 of a loser. You will note from this that no suit can have more than 3 losers.

In a 2 card suit, any card lower than the king is counted as a loser except A-Q which is counted as 0.5 of a loser.

In a 1 card suit count anything other than the ace as a loser.

The total number of losers in a hand is the total of the number of losers in each suit.

Estimating Partner's Losers

Partner's losers are estimated according to the number of points that they have shown:

Points shown	Losers
7 - 9	9
10 - 12	8
13 - 15	6 - 7
16 - 18	5 - 6
19 - 21	4 - 5
22+	0 - 3.

There is some scope for interpretation in these estimates, and to a certain extent will depend on whether you are an optimist or a pessimist. The program assumes the lowest limit in each case.

Estimating the Contract Level

To estimate the contract level that should be bid add together the total number of losers in both hands and subtract the total from 24. This gives the number of tricks that can be expected to be made; the level of the bid should be 6 less than the number of tricks.

If the level is greater than that needed for game but less than that for a slam, reduce the bid level to that of game.

If a slam is indicated and the bidding level is not too high, use a slam asking convention to determine whether any controls are missing. What ever LTC tells you about the level, if you have aces and kings missing they can cause a slam to go down.

Counting Points

High Card Points

Ace = 4
King = 3
Queen = 2
Jack = 1

Long Points

Count 1 point for each card over the fourth card in any suit, eg add 1 point for a 5 card suit, add 2 points for two five card suits, add 2 points for a six card suit.

Short Points

Void = 5
SINGLETON = 3
Doubleton = 1

To Open

Add High Card Points to Long Points.
Balanced hand if Short Points are less than 2, otherwise unbalanced.

Agreed Suit (Not No Trumps)

Add High Card Points to Short Points

No Agreed Suit or No Trumps

Add High Card Points to Long Points.

Benjamin Option

2 Clubs: shows an Acol 2 level opening hand in a suit.

2 Diamonds: shows an Acol 2 Clubs opening hand.

2 Hearts or 2 Spades: 6 card suit with at least Q-10 high, less than 10 points.

The weak (0 - 7 points) response to 2 Clubs is 2 Diamonds. A response of a suit should indicate a minimum 5 card suit, and a response of 2 No Trumps shows no 5+ card suit. Opener would normally respond by showing their 5+ card suit. Bidding would then proceed to agree a suit and possibly to find a game contract.

The weak response to 2 Diamonds is 2 hearts. If opener then bids 2 no trump it shows 23 - 24 points and a balanced hand. Bidding should then continue as following a 2 No Trump opening. Any other bidding sequence is forcing to game with a good chance of a slam. First suit that is bid by either player should be at least 5 cards long.

Overcalls

When the opposition have opened and you might want to bid if you have a good hand or a weak hand that is worth a sacrifice bid.

With 16 - 18 points, a balanced hand and control over any suits bid by the opposition you could bid 1 no trump.

If you are using the take-out double option you could use that.

If you can make your normal opening bid at its normal level and only one opponent has bid, make that bid (except do not try a weak no trump opening).

If you have a hand that is suitable for a preemptive bid and the opposition bidding is below the level of your potential bid, then you could bid the preempt.

Take-out Double

When neither player in a partnership has opened and it is the first opportunity to make a bid, the doubling of a suit bid is for take-out.

To make a take-out double a player should hold one of the following:

- 12 - 15 points, a weakness in the suits that have been bid, support for any unbid suits
- 16 - 18 points, no control in the bid suits, support for any unbid suits
- 19+ points.

The partner must give the doubler another chance to bid, i.e. they must bid unless the opposition have made a bid.

- 0 - 8 points, bid the best suit held at the lowest possible level
- 9 - 12 points, jump bid the best suit held
- 13+ points, bid game in the best suit held.

The doubler's next bid should be:

- 12 - 15 points, PASS
- 16 - 18 points, support the bid suit if not in game
- 19+ points
 - Bid game in partner's suit
 - Investigate a slam if partner made a jump bid
 - Bid the slam if void in opponents suits or investigate the possibility by using cue bids

Stayman Convention

To use the Stayman convention selected the Stayman option in the Conventions Dialog.

Opposite an opening bid of 1 No Trump or 2 No Trumps the Stayman convention can be used. To bid the Stayman convention a player should hold:

- 11+ (weak no trump), 8+ (strong no trump or 2 no trump) points
- at least one (and usually two) 4+ card major
- a short suit.

To use Stayman bid 2 Club (over 1 No Trump) or 3 Club (over 2 No Trump) asking the opener to bid their lowest ranking 4+ card major suit. If they do not hold a 4+ card major they respond 2 Diamond.

If you are playing the Stayman convention and you hold a club suit with no other viable bid, bid clubs over a no trump opening then bid clubs again when partner has responded.

An alternative to Stayman over a 2 No Trump opening bid is to use the Baron Convention.

Baron Convention

To use the Baron convention selected the Baron option in the Conventions Dialog.

If both Stayman and Baron are selected, Stayman will be used over 1 No Trump and Baron will be used over 2 No Trump.

With Baron, a response of 3 clubs over 2 No Trump asks the partner to bid their lowest 4+ card suit. The objective is to find a suit fit. Any subsequent suit bid should be of the next 4+ card suit that can be bid at the lowest level. Missing a suit in the sequence denies having 4+ cards in that suit.

To bid the Baron convention a player should hold:

- 6+ points
- a short suit.

Blackwood Convention

To use the Blackwood convention selected the Blackwood option in the Conventions Dialog.

The Blackwood convention allows a player to ask how many aces their partner holds.

To start Blackwood a player bids 4 no trump, their partner then bids:

0 or 4 aces	5 clubs
1 ace:	5 diamonds
2 aces:	5 hearts
3 aces:	5 spade.

It is then possible to ask for kings by bidding 5 no trump with similar responses at the six level.

Gerber Convention

To use the Gerber convention selected the Gerber option in the Conventions Dialog.

The Gerber convention allows a player to ask how many aces their partner holds.

To start Gerber a player bids 4 clubs, their partner then bids:

0 or 4 aces	4 diamonds
1 aces:	5 hearts
2 aces:	5 spade.
3 aces:	4 no trump

It is then possible to ask for kings by bidding 5 clubs with similar responses at the five level.

