

## A-Z of Useful Bridge Terms

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**Auction or Bidding:** The start of the bridge game where each pair **bids** according to their **hand**

**Balanced hand:** A hand which contains no **voids**, **singletons** and no more than one **doubleton**. There are 3 distributions of the cards for a balanced hand: 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 and 5-3-3-2.

**Bid:** Each bid is part of the **auction** or bidding. Players choose a suit plus the number of **tricks** in excess of six that a player believes he and partner can make with that suit as **trumps**. Thus a bid of 2 spades shows that the bidder aims to win 8 tricks with spades as trumps. There are 4 suits to bid plus 'no trumps'.

**Cash:** To take all the obvious winners in a suit one after the other when playing the cards.

**Contract:** The final bid of the **auction**. A **bid** becomes the contract when the next three players all pass.

**Control:** A high card (ace or king) or shortage (void or singleton) in a suit which will stop the opponents taking quick tricks in that suit.

**Convention:** An artificial **bid** which does not show the suit of the actual bid. **Stayman** is the best known convention or artificial bid.

**Cover:** To play a card which is higher than the previous one played by the opponents, ie above it thus covering it.

**Crash:** A convention used after a strong club opening to show various 2 suited hands of similar colour, rank and shape.

**Cross-ruff:** A way of the cards in trump **contracts**, where declarer makes **tricks** by **ruffing** cards in both hands one after the other.

**Cue-bid:** An artificial bid of the suit your opponents have bid which does not show any values in that suit. The term "cue-bid" also describes a high-level bid that shows a **control** in the suit.

**Deal:** To distribute the cards at the start of the game so that each player has 13 cards.

**Dealer:** The player who deals the cards.

**Declarer:** The player who is the first person to bid the suit (or no trump) of the final contract. Declarer then plays the hand and the opponents are the **defenders**.

**Defenders:** The opponents of the **declarer**.

## A-Z of Useful Bridge Terms

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**Discard:** The play of a card (other than a trump) of a different suit from the one led. Players aim to discard cards that are no longer useful.

**Distribution:** The way in which the cards are divided among the four suits. Hands can be described as **balanced** or **unbalanced** according to the distribution. The distribution of a hand is also known as the **shape**.

**Double:** A bid which can only be made after the opponents have bid a suit or no trumps. A double usually has one of two meanings, depending on the auction: [a] **Penalty**

**double** - this is made when you do not think the opponents will make their **contract**. [b] **Takeout**

**double** - this shows a reasonable hand and shortage in the suit bid. It asks partner to "take it out" of the opponent's suit by bidding his/her longest suit.

**Doubleton:** An original holding of two cards in that suit.

**Duck:** A card-playing technique when a player does not win the trick, but could, and plays a lower card instead.

**Dummy:** Declarer's partner. Dummy does not participate in the play and Dummy's cards are played by declarer.

**Duplicate bridge:** A type of bridge tournament where the same cards are played at more than one table. Scores are then compared with the **partnerships** playing in the same direction. This is done to try and eliminate the **luck of the cards**.

**East:** The 4 players are referred to as North, East South and West.

**Entry:** A winner in one of the partnership's hands, which is useful to be able to lead from that hand.

**Finesse:** A play that attempts to win a trick with a card which is not the highest card held between the two hands, and where the opponents hold a higher card in the suit.

**Forcing bid:** A **bid** that obliges partner to bid. Partner should not pass a forcing bid unless the opponents have made a positive bid (not a pass) after partner.

**Game:** A bid at a certain level which if made would be worth at least a hundred points. The key thing about a game bid is that, if the contract is made, it attracts a bonus of either 300 or 500 points, depending on the **vulnerability**. The game contracts are 3NT (40 for the first trick + 30 each subsequent trick); 4 of a **major** (4 tricks × 30 points per trick); 5 of a **minor** (5 tricks × 20 points per trick).

**Grand slam:** A contract of seven, in a suit or no trumps

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**Hand:** The cards that a player holds.

**HCP:** High Card Points. The most commonly used hand evaluation system is one where an Ace is worth 4 points, a King 3, a Queen 2, and a Jack 1.

**Honour:** Ace, King, Queen or Jack (and sometimes ten).

**Lead:** The first card played in a **trick**, which dictates the suit that others must play if able to do so. A player is on lead if it is their turn to lead. The opening lead is the first card of the play.

**Line of play:** Declarer's strategy for playing the cards and often criticised by **partner** in the **post mortem**.

**Luck of the cards:** A bridge players way to explain why they did badly.

**Major suit:** Hearts and spades

**Minor suit:** Clubs and diamonds

**No trump:** This is the highest-ranking denomination in the bidding, and it means that the play would proceed without a trump suit.

**Opener:** The first person to make a positive **bid** (not a pass).

**Overcall:** The first **bid** by the **partnership** after an opponent has opened the bidding.

**Overruff:** To **ruff** a **trick** with a higher **trump** than has already been played.

**Part score:** A **contract** which is below the level of **game**. A partnership bidding and making a part-score contract is awarded a bonus of 50 points.

**Partner:** The person so often thought to be responsible for a bad score in the **partnership**.

**Partnerships:** North and South are a partnership and **East** and **West**.

**Penalty double:** See **double**.

**Post mortem:** An examination of the bidding or the play to discover why a bad score was obtained. Generally initiated by the player who believes their partner is to blame.

**Psyche:** A **bid** made where the bidder knowingly does not have the hand they describe. The bidder's **partner** should not suspect that the bidder has psyched and must bid as if this is a genuine bid.

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**Rebid:** Any subsequent **bid** made by a player who has already bid.

**Redouble:** a bid made (immediately) after the opponent's bid of **double**. This can have a **conventional** meaning, otherwise it is a confident bid confirming that you believe your partnership's contract will be made.

**Responder:** **Opener's** partner

**Revoke:** To fail to follow suit when holding a card of the suit led.

**Ruff or ruffing:** To play a **trump** when you no longer hold any of the initial suit led. Same as trumping.

**Shape:** The **distribution** of the cards in a hand. A shapely hand is one with unbalanced distribution

**Singleton:** An original holding of just one of a suit.

**Slam:** Six bids are small slams; seven bids are **grand slams**.

**Takeout or Takeout double:** See **double**.

**Trick:** This is part of the play. Every player plays a card in a clockwise order around the table. The highest card of the suit led (or the highest trump) wins the trick. The player who wins the trick then chooses the card to lead at the next trick. Each player holds 13 cards so there are 13 tricks in each **deal**.

**Squeeze:** A sophisticated play that forces an opponent to discard a card that they really need.

**Stopper:** A protected honour in a suit. Examples are A, Kx, Qxx, Jxxx, where x refers to a small card. A stopper therefore prevents the opponents from running a suit, particularly useful in a no trump contract.

**Tenace:** A broken sequence of **honour** cards, such as AQ or KJ.

**Trump:** A card that belongs to the suit that is chosen as the final contract.

**Void:** Suit with no cards in it.

**Vulnerability:** A scoring condition assigned to each pair in advance of a deal where there is a larger bonus for making a game contract or slam contract but an increased penalty for failing to make any contract.