

EGCC Bridge Lessons

Notes from Week 5

Play of the Cards

I thought it worth noting how well you have all picked up how to play the cards. Whilst there is always more to learn, the standard you have reached is close to (and will soon equal) that of “gentle duplicate”.

Here are some more thoughts on the play.

Why is it Better to Play in Trumps?

1) Making more Tricks

Assuming you have an 8 card fit (at least 8 cards of one suit between the two hands) you are likely to make more tricks (frequently one more trick) in a suit contract

The reason for that is the possibility of cross ruffing, which looks like this: Assume this is the position after 11 tricks have been played. South (declarer) is on lead:

N (Dummy)	
♠3 ♥2	
W ♥AK	E ♦AK
♠2 ♦2	
S (Declarer)	

In No Trumps, South can win one trick by leading a spade but must lose the other.

In a contract with spades as trumps, South can win both tricks. By leading the ♦2 from hand and ruffing with the ♠3, S wins the first trick. Then S plays the ♥2 and ruffs it with the ♠2, winning the second trick also.

This is called a cross ruff, because the lead crosses from one hand to the other while ruffing.

Advanced: The reason you often make exactly 1 extra trick is because frequently the trump suit is 4-4 (4 in declarer's hand and 4 in dummy) and the remaining 5 trumps are split 3-2 in the defenders' hands. So after drawing trumps declarer has only one trump remaining in each hand, giving (as we saw above) one extra trick.

2) Trumps are Safer

A Trump contract is safer than No Trumps because opponents are unlikely to be able to run a long suit against you. Your trumps give you a measure of control.

The other side of that coin is that opponents can also ruff tricks. So, as a general rule, **always draw the opponents' trumps as soon as you can.**

Determine the Contract (Denomination and Level) and Scoring the Result

You all have a good idea when you should be in a suit contract and when in no-trumps. You will have also noticed me setting you a contract level (target) based on how many points you have between you.

The table for converting combined points to a target number of tricks was included in the Week One notes, but here it is again:

21 - 22 HCPs will produce 7 tricks. $23 - 24 = 8$ tricks. $25 - 26 = 9$, $27 - 28 = 10$, $29 - 32 = 11$, $33 - 36 = 12$, $37-40 = 13$.

Next week you will practice setting the complete contract as well as scoring the result (based on last week notes on scoring).

More on Defending

So far we have mostly concentrated on declarer play. The reason for this is that both defenders and declarer are trying to do the same thing (make as many tricks as possible) using the same techniques (top cards, long suits, ruffing). It is easier to see how to do this as declarer (because you can see both your hand and dummy's), so that's a better way to learn. As your declarer play gets better, you will start to see where you might take tricks as a defender. In particular, declarer's play will tell you what is likely to be in their hand, so you can have a good guess at what your partner has.

In defence, when leading the object is twofold: to make tricks and to avoid giving away tricks. Giving away a trick is when you allow declarer to make a trick they would not have done without your lead. An example: If you hold ♥Kx and declarer (on your right) holds ♥AQ. If you lead either card declarer will make two heart tricks. If you let someone else (declarer or partner) lead them you will make your ♥K. Lead a different suit!

For defenders there are no safe leads in bridge. However one of the least likely to give a trick away is leading top of a sequence – say ♥JT98 or ♥KQJ.

As a general rule, if you partner leads an honour card (AKQJ or T) then they have the next card, and possibly the one after that. Compare this to when you are not leading and you play the lowest of a sequence (week 4 notes: "Winning a trick as defender")

Bidding

After Christmas we will be looking at the bidding. Bidding is more complicated than playing the cards, not least because it is completely unfamiliar (with the play at least you know what a pack of cards look like!)

With bidding, the contract is essentially decided in the same way as we currently do, by answering the questions: Do we have 8 cards in a suit? How many points do we have between us?

Because we can't see each other's hands during the bidding, we use the bids we make as a sort of code to tell our partner what we've got. More on this later.

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