



# ***CONTRACT BRIDGE***

## Beginner's Notes

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## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

### Introduction & Basics

Bridge is a game played with playing cards, played at a square table. Four players sit at the table and opposite two players are partners. They are designated as North, South, East and West. It is therefore a team game and that is why it is a game of communications. The cards are divided into four suits namely Spades, Hearts, Diamonds and Clubs. There are 13 cards in each suit and Ace is the highest followed by King, Queen in that order with deuce being the lowest.

Dealing is the start of the game and dealer deals the cards one at a time face down in clockwise direction. It is very important for each player to count the cards before looking at them. It is still more important to arrange the cards properly in your hand. I suggest, it is wise to alternate red and black suits so there is no mistake. Once again, a mistake at the beginning is very difficult to rectify later. Bridge is an interesting game and it will give you a lot of fun and satisfaction. However, laziness will not allow you to win.

The dealer starts the bidding .It is an auction and the bidding continues till three people successively, declare they do not wish to take any further part in the auction by passing. The final contract will be the last bid made by any player.

At Contract Bridge the suits are given ranking as follows: -

Clubs being lowest  
Diamonds being higher  
Hearts being still higher  
Spades being highest amongst the four suits  
No-trumps however is higher than even Spades.

Spades and Hearts are the major suits  
Diamonds and Clubs are the minor suits.

Bidding involves making at least half the number of tricks available. 13 tricks are available so at least half is seven tricks so bidding starts there. So, bidding 1 means making seven tricks. In other words remember if you bid any number you need to add 6 to that number to get the number of tricks required.

Before you can understand the principle and the purpose of bidding it is important to have a brief idea about scoring or the points won. It is also important to understand that 100 scoring points make a game.

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Points are assigned as follows: -

1 No trump	40 points
2 No trumps	40 +30= 70points
3 No trumps	40+30+30=100pts
1 Spade or Heart	30 points
2Spades or Hearts	30+30 points=60pts
Each subsequent bid	30 points more each
1 Diamond or Club	20 points
Each subsequent bid	20 points more each

It must be very clear that: -

- 3 No trumps makes game,
- 4 Spades and 4 Hearts make game,
- 5 Diamonds and 5 Clubs make game.

### **Evaluation of Hand**

It is important to be able to judge the strength of the hand dealt to you and to facilitate that the honour cards are counted as follows: -

- Ace – 4 points
- King – 3 points
- Queen – 2 points
- Jack –1 point.

So, it is possible to count 40 points in a pack of cards and the average- one would expect to be dealt is 10 points.

You need to count points in all suits and not only in the suit that you wish to bid. If you have 12 or more points then you should make an opening bid otherwise you should pass. As regards opening you need to strictly understand the principle I wish to put forward to you.

### **System is ACOL with weak No trump**

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**First question you need to ask is can I bid 1 No trump?**

**Points for 1 No trump opening- exactly 12-14**

**Distribution Balanced or No trump**

**4333 or 4432 or 5332 with 5 cards minor**

**5332 with 5 card major open the major**

**1No Trump opening will not consist of 2  
Doubletons and no singletons or voids.**

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### **Rules for opening 1 of a suit**

Open 1 of a suit if you cannot open 1 No trump.

If you have only one 4 card suit, bid the suit.

If you have 2 suits bid the longer suit first. **Do not look at the strength of the suits.**

If the 2 suits are of equal length then consider if they are 4-4 or 5-5 or 6-6.

If they are 4-4 then bid the lower suit first. **Again do not look at the strength of the suits.**

If they are 5-5 or 6-6 then bid the higher suit first. **Again do not look at the strength of the suits.**

If you have 3, 4card suits (meaning 4441 distribution) then bid the middle suit first.

Opening 1 of suit will tell your partner you have 12-19 points and at least 4 cards in the bid suit. You also need to be able to have a safe re-bid.

### **Responding: - to a suit opening.**

#### **Same suit responses: -**

**2 of partner's suit shows 4 cards support & 6-9 points**

**3 of partner's suit shows 4 cards support & 10-12 points**

**4 of partner's suit shows 4 cards support & 13-14 points  
It applies if partner's opening is a major suit.**

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### New suit responses

You must have figured out by now that once your partner has opened for your team you become the responder. Similarly, if you open then partner becomes the responder. We have already discussed that minimum points required to open is 12 at present. The minimum points required to respond is 6 at present.

**New suit at one level is 6 or more points**

**New suit at two level is 10 or more points**

### The No trump responses: -

**1 No-trump 6-9 points denies majors or unable to bid major at 1 level, does not promise balanced distribution.**

**2 No-trumps 11-12 points denies majors promises balanced distribution.**

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### **Rules to remember when responding to partner's opening bid**

Always try to find a major suit fit. A suit bid that by-passes a major suit, denies possession of the major suit.

Even if you have support for partner's minor suit bid your major suit first and if major suit fit is not found then revert back to the minor suit. Supporting partner's minor suit immediately denies having a major suit.

Always decide on your response going upwards in a step wise fashion.

Always check that your response promises the requirements as discussed above.

If you have support for partner's major suit support immediately without trying for a better fit in the other major.

### **Responding to 1Nt opening**

Since partner shows 12-14 points and we have said 25 points make game, if you have:-

0-10 points no chance of game

11-12 points game likely

13 or more point game should be bid.

**First question do I have 0-10 points or 11 or more points**

**0-10 points either pass or bid 2D, 2H or 2S (sign-off bid with 5 cards)**

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**11+ points ask yourself do you have any major suit ?**

**No major suit bid 2Nt (11-12 points) or 3Nt ( 13+ points)**

**If any major ask is it 4 cards or 5 cards or 6 cards?**

**With 4 cards major bid 2C (Stayman Convention)**

**With 5 cards major bid 3H or 3S with 13 or more points.**

**With 6 cards major bid 4H or 4S**

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### **Stayman Convention**

As mentioned above after partner has opened 1 No-trump and you have 11 or more points + a 4 card major suit you need to bid 2 Clubs which is known as Stayman Convention.

It is in fact just a question directed to partner. The question you are asking partner is- Do you have a 4 card major suit?

Before we look at how partner will answer that question, we need to know when to use the convention.

### **Requirements for a bid of 2Clubs (Stayman)**

**Points:** - 11 or more points

**Shape:** - Must possess at least one 4 card major. The shape can really be any either balanced or not.

**There are certain unusual situations when Stayman is used without the above requirements but I will discuss them at a later juncture.**

### **1 No-trump opener's responses to 2 Clubs (Stayman)**

**2 Diamonds – No 4 card majors**

**2 Hearts – promises 4 cards of Hearts**

**2 Spades – promises 4 cards of Spades**

**Bid 2 Hearts with 4 cards of both Hearts & Spades**

### **Further bidding after 2 Diamonds response**

Bid 2 No-trumps with 11-12 points

**Opener will now pass or bid 3 No-trumps**

Bid 3 No-trumps with 13 or more points

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### Further bidding after 2 Hearts response

With Heart suit bid: -

3 Hearts with 11-12 points

**Opener will now pass or bid 4 Hearts**

4 Hearts with 13 or more points

With Spade suit bid: -

2 No-trumps with 11-12 points

**Opener will now pass, or bid 3 No-trumps**

**or 3 Spades or 4 Spades when having both majors initially.**

3 No-trumps with 13 or more points

**Opener will now pass**

**or bid 4 Spades when having both majors initially.**

### Further bidding after 2 Spades response

With Spade suit bid:-

3 Spades with 11-12 points

**Opener will now pass or bid 4 Spades**

4 Spades with 13 or more points

With Hearts suit: -

2 No-trumps with 11-12 points

**Opener will now pass or bid 3 No-trumps**

3 No-trumps with 13 or more points

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### Once again the requirements for using Stayman Convention

- 1) 11 or more points
- 2) At least one 4 cards major

**Now we look at situations when you can bid Stayman without the above 2 requirements.**

#### **11 or more points, but no 4 card major.**

When you have a 5 card major and 11-12 points you start with 2C and then respond either 3H or 3S. (Sometimes you may have 5-4 in majors)

#### **Less than 11 points (0-10 points)**

Here we have different situations.

- 1) When you want to sign off in clubs, you start with 2C and then after partner's reply bid 3C.
- 2) You have 5-4 in majors and actually want to sign off in your major suit but you can bid 2C first and if partner responds 2D now bid your 5 card major.
- 3) You have 4441 distribution with singleton in Clubs, you bid 2C first and pass partner's response whatever it is.
- 4) This is a very rare situation – you have 6 cards of diamonds and a 4 card major you bid 2C initially and if partner bids 2D pass or if partner bids the major you do not have then you bid 3D now and if partner had both majors can now convert to 3 Spades.

### Upgrading the hand by counting Distribution points.

The situation is very tricky and there is often a lot of confusion. To simplify the situation we need to set the requirements clearly by stating that it only applies after **a suit fit has been found.** It is actually a revaluation after realising that a fit is found **especially a major fit.**

Count points as follows:-

Void add 3 points

Singleton add 2 points

Doubleton add 1 point

With Singleton and Doubleton it should not have King, Queen or Jack as part of the holding.

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### **Opener's re-bids after a suit opening**

Since a suit opening promises 12-19 points at the next bid you should be able to inform partner about your strength as accurately as possible.

#### **With No trump distribution bid as follows:-**

- 1 No Trump 15-16 points.**
- 2 No Trumps 17-18 points.**
- 3 No Trumps 19 points.**

#### **Without No-trump distribution, you need to divide the hand into the following three categories:-**

**12-15 points Minimum Hand**

**16-18 points Strong Hand**

**19 points Maximum Hand**

#### **Minimum Hand**

##### **Bid as follows:-**

Pass (if partner makes a limited bid)

Re-bid own suit without a jump

Bid another suit without a jump

Support partner's suit without a jump

#### **Strong Hand**

Re-bid own suit with a jump

Bid another suit with a jump

Support partner's suit with a jump

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### Maximum Hand

Bid game if sure of the contract you want to play in.

If not sure of contact bid hand as if you have a strong hand.

It means:-

Re-bid own suit with a jump

Bid a new suit with a jump

### Reverse Bids

When you open a suit and it is your re-bid always consider 2 of your original suit & consider it as your level call and bid as below.

Suppose you have opened 1D so 2 of that suit is 2D.  
Similarly, 1H 2 of that suit is 2H & 1C-2C & 1S-2S.

All Minimum Hands need to be bid either below or up to the level you have set. Of course it does not apply if you are supporting partner's suit.

All strong hands need to be bid higher than the level you have set.

Let us look at the following two hands:-

AX	AX
KJXX	AKXX
XX	XX
AQXXX	AQXXX

On both hands you open 1C and partner responds 1S. What is your bid now with the two hands?

1<sup>st</sup> hand you bid 2C shows a minimum hand & partner will still be able to bid Hearts.  
2<sup>nd</sup> hand you bid 2H and is known as a reverse bid showing strong hand.

Partner's hand maybe as follows:-

KQXXX	With 1 <sup>st</sup> hand 2H is the correct contract.
QXXX	
XX	With 2 <sup>nd</sup> hand 4H is the correct contract.
JX	

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### Responder's re-bids

Divide your hand into following groups: - especially important if partner has minimum hand.

6-9 points  
10-12 points  
13-16 points

#### Partner has shown minimum hand

##### Suit agreed

6-9 points- Pass as no chance of game  
10-12 points- bid 3 of agreed suit.  
13-16 points- bid 4 of agreed major suit, or bid 3nt or 5C or 5D with minor suit

##### Suit not agreed

6-9 points try to bid a suitable contract at the lowest level.  
10 points usually do not try for game  
11 or more points bid at 3 level with a jump.

#### Partner has shown strong hand

##### Suit agreed

6-7 points do not go to game  
8-9 points go to game

##### Suit not agreed

6-7 points- game may not be there  
8 or more points- try to play at game level

#### Partner has re-bid 1 No trumps showing 15-16 points

10 or more points must play in an appropriate game contract by bidding 3 Nt. or 3H or 3S

6-9 points either pass or signoff at 2 level.

#### Partner has re-bid 2 No trumps showing 17-18 points

6-7 points- no game & should pass

8+ points- bid 3No trumps or bid major suit or re-bid major suit at 3 level.

#### Partner has re-bid 3 No trumps showing 19 points

Pass or bid 4H or 4S

## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

### Vulnerability

Now it is time to understand that if no game is scored we are not vulnerable, and if a game is scored we are vulnerable. Vulnerable literally means prone to injury or sickness. I hope you can understand that if you are Vulnerable you are bound to lose more points so you need to take less number of risks.

It is important to understand scoring at this stage to understand what effect Vulnerability has on the scores and our bidding.

Scoring briefly is as follows:-

<b>Under-tricks – Not Vulnerable</b>			<b>Under-tricks- Vulnerable</b>		
		<b>Doubled</b>			<b>Doubled</b>
1	50	100	1	100	200
2	100	300	2	200	500
3	150	500	3	300	800
4	200	800	4	400	1100
5	250	1100	5	500	1400
	<b><u>Overtricks</u></b>	<b><u>Overtricks</u></b>		<b><u>Overtricks</u></b>	<b><u>Overtricks</u></b>
	Trick value	100		Trick value	200

### Competitive Bidding

If an opponent bids or doubles after partner's opening bid, your bids (responses) generally remain the same except your bid of 1 no-trump will promise a stopper in opponent's bid suit. Also a bid of 2 or 3 no-trumps will promise at least 2 stoppers in opponent's suit. On some occasions you may have to pass even with 6 or more points if you do not have a bid to make.

If the opponent has doubled you should usually with 9 or more points re-double. It usually indicates you do want to penalise, opponents in the other 3 suits.

### Overbids

After an opponent makes a suit bid your bid of a suit is known as a suit overbid and is basically a show of a good suit at least 5 cards in length. It should most certainly be a good suit headed by at least 2 of the top 3 honours. The points will depend on the level of the overbid and the vulnerability.

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To make it simple: -

Non- Vulnerable 1 level overbid is 8 or more points and at 2 level 10 or more points.

Vulnerable 1 level overbid is 10 or more points and at 2 level 13 or more points.

The other important aspect is the number of cards in the suit you have and the rule is that any cards over 5 cards means you need maybe a few less points.

Why is it important to overbid?

- 1) to be able to compete
- 2) partner will know what to lead
- 3) you may push the opponents to a contract that is not make able
- 4) to be able to sacrifice the opponents contract.

Please remember it is not always good to overbid and it is advisable to be very careful when vulnerable and try to be disciplined.

Lastly, but definitely very important NEVER MAKE AN OVERBID WITH 4 CARDS

An overbid of 1 No-trump will be 16-18 points with balanced hand and stopper in opponent's suit. Partner responds as per the scheme of responses after 1 No-trump opening however 2 Clubs will not be Stayman Convention.

### The Take-out Double

Double of opponent's suit bid at the first opportunity is known as a take-out double. It is made with the following requirements: -

- 1) Opening hand, usually 12 or more points
- 2) Shortness in opponent's suit- maximum of two cards
- 3) Readiness to play in the other three suits
- 4) Asks partner to choose the best of the three suits.

Conversely, hands that are having length in opponent's suit should be passed.

Also balanced hands should usually be passed with 12-15 points.

Also hands with two suits may be bid with an overbid in 1 suit followed by the other suit at the next bid or the use of certain special conventions.

Any hand that is diagnosed as a misfit should not be bid. The best way to diagnose it is length in the opponent's suit usually 4 cards.

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Partner is forced to bid and must show his best suit usually a major if possible.  
You should not pass and may only pass if you are able to take at least 7 tricks on your own without much help from partner.

Points for responding: - Again you are forced so must respond even with 0 points.  
However, if your right hand opponent has bid then you are not forced to bid because partner will have a chance to bid again. Of course in such a situation if you bid, you will have at least 6 or more points.

Responder's scheme of bids: -

0-9 points bid 4 card suit usually major if possible.

8-10 points 1 No-trump with 1 stopper in opponent's suit

8-10 points with a five card major bid suit with a jump.

11+ points game is possible so cue bid opponent's suit

If right hand opponent has bid 0-5 points pass otherwise bid your suit- good 4 carder if at 1 level and 5 carder if you have to bid at 2 level.

Take-out Doubler's re-bids: -

12-15 points pass

Support of partner's suit or a new suit bid is 16+ points.

A bid of No-trump will be 19+ points plus stopper in opponent's suit.

### **Defence to 1 No-trump opening (either weak or strong)**

Double is usually 15 or more points.

Suit bid is usually opening hand and 5 cards in bid suit.

2 Clubs can be used like a take out double showing interest in majors.

Of course there are many other defences to 1 No-trump opening.

Presently, the scheme mentioned above should suffice.

After double, partner should normally pass and should only bid his suit if very weak.

After suit bid by partner either pass, invite for game or bid game according to your hand.

After 2 clubs by partner try to bid your best major. Of course with more points bid with a jump or even bid game.

If 1 No-trump opening has been passed by partner and your right hand opponent then Double can be played for take-out and all suit bids can be played as natural meaning 5 card suits and usually opening hand.

## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

### **The 2 level opening bids**

#### **2 No-trump opening bid**

It will be 20-22 points and balanced distribution as already discussed before

Responses:-

0-3 points and no chance of game- pass. As compared to 1 No-trumps there are no sign off bids so you will need to pass even with unbalanced distribution.

4+ points bid as below (sometimes can be 3 points)

Depending on 4 card or 5 card major bid 3C or 3H or 3S as below

3Clubs – Stayman

3 Hearts & 3 Spades shows 5 card suit and forcing

No 4 card major suit bid 3 No-trumps & 6 card major bid 4H or 4S as below

3 No-trumps, 4 Hearts, 4 Spades are game bids and are to play.

#### **2D, 2H, 2S opening bids**

They all promise 20-22 points and 5 card suit or 18+ points & 8 tricks playing in bid suit

Responses: -

0-6 points -2 No-trumps negative bid. It shows no support for partner's suit.

New suit- 7 or more points usually 5 cards.

Same suit support – bid 4H or 4S (3-7 points+ at least 3 cards support)

Same suit support but stronger hand bid 3H or 3S (8+ points + good support)

*Please note 2H-3H is stronger than 2H-4H.*

#### **2Clubs opening**

23 or more points any distribution or 20+ points and 9 tricks

0-6 points – 2D negative response

7+ points bid 2No-trumps, 2H or 2S usually 5 cards

2D is the 1<sup>st</sup> negative and 2 No-trumps is the 2<sup>nd</sup> negative.

## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

### Slam Bidding

To bid a slam is one of the great excitements of the game and the feeling of waiting to see partner's cards is full of great expectation.

A bid of six promises 12 tricks and is known as Little Slam or Mini Slam.

A bid of seven promises 13 tricks and is known as Grand Slam.

**Scoring: -**            Little Slam- 500pts            Vulnerable- 750pts  
                                 Grand Slam- 1000pts            Vulnerable- 1500pts

The above points are bonus points in addition to the game points.

### **An approximate guideline to the number of points between both partners is as below:-**

Little Slam in No Trumps-	33 points
Little Slam in Trumps-	31-33 points- may be enough
Grand Slam in No Trumps-	37 points
Grand Slam in Trumps-	35-37 points- may be enough

### **Blackwood Convention**

It is a convention which asks partner the number of Aces he has. It is very important to note that it is actually a convention that prevents you from going to slam rather than helps you go to slam. It is actually a convention that makes sure that with two Aces missing you do not go to slam. You should only bid 4 No-trumps, if you do have sufficient values to warrant slam investigation.

When is 4 No-trumps Ace asking?

When suit is agreed or

If it is bid with a jump (except 1Nt-4Nt which is invitational)

It is not Ace asking if suit is not agreed and 4 No-trumps is bid because it is the only contract the partnership are able to play since bidding has already reached 4 level.

Responses are as below:-

5 Clubs-	0 or 4 Aces
5 Diamonds-	1 Ace
5 Hearts-	2 Aces
5 Spades-	3 Aces

## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

After Ace asking 5 No-trumps bid is asking for Kings.

It should only be used if all Aces are present and it is actually an investigation for Grand Slam.

The responses are the same as for Aces as below: -

6 Clubs-	0 or 4 Kings
6 Diamonds-	1 King
6 Hearts-	2 Kings
6 Spades-	3 Kings

### **Gerber Convention**

It is the use of 4 Clubs to ask for the number of Aces and the responses are similar using the step system meaning 4 Diamonds will show 0 or 4 Aces and so on.

4 Clubs is usually Ace asking after 1 No- trump opening or 2 No-trump opening or after a 1 or 2 No-trump re-bid by opener.

4 Clubs may also be used if it is bid with a jump.

4 Clubs is also Ace asking if the suit is agreed and it is one of the other three suits.

### **1 No-trump – 4 No-trumps or 2 No-trump – 4 No-trumps**

It is invitational and asks partner to bid 6 No-trumps with a maximum hand or else pass the hand. Remember it is not Ace asking.

### **Some guidelines to bid Slam**

Little Slam can be bid with 1 Ace missing. Also it can be bid with 2 Kings missing.

Grand Slam requires all 4 Aces and all 4 Kings.

Usually, if suit is agreed and you have 30 or more points between the two of you slam is likely to be on and you should try to investigate.

For a No-trump usually you will require the full value of 33 points.

### **Cue Bidding**

Usually when a suit is agreed and you are committed to game a new suit bid is showing 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> round control and it is called a cue bid. 4 No-trumps bid after cue bid or bids is again the normal Ace asking.

## **HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION**

### **Pre-emptive Bidding**

It is the bidding of fairly weak hands at 3 or 4 or 5 level with the sole purpose of taking away bidding space so that opponents are unable to construct their bidding effectively and in the process will either miss their correct contract or will play in an inferior contract.

The pre-emptive bidding is usually before anyone has bid or sometimes after an opponent's opening bid. Rules for making a pre-emptive bid are as follows: -

- 1) At least 7 card suit for a pre-emptive bid at 3 level and usually 8 cards suit for a pre-emptive bid at 4 level.
- 2) Points should be between- 6 to 11 only, with most of the points in the bid suit.
- 3) Rule of 500 as explained below

### **Rule of 500**

Since a vulnerable game by opponents will give them about 600 points and they decide to double you, you should lose a maximum of 500. That works out to 3 light- not vulnerable and 2 light- vulnerable.

If opponents are not vulnerable the situation is more complicated because their game will be worth about 400 points so you can only afford to lose 300 points. That works out to 2 light- not vulnerable and only 1 light- vulnerable.

It effectively means that you need 6 tricks with favourable vulnerability to pre-empt at 3 level. With equal vulnerability you would need 7 tricks and with unfavourable vulnerability you would need to have 8 tricks.

However, over recent times people are known to make pre-emptive bids with almost any hand with seven card suit and do get away with it.

### **Pre-emptive opener's partner's bid**

As explained above if partner is following the rule of 500 in total you can have a rough idea of the number of tricks partner has so you can decide to bid according to the number of tricks you have. For example partner opens 3 Hearts not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents you can easily calculate 6 tricks with him and if you have 4 tricks you should bid 4 Hearts or else you can miss the game.

If partner is more aggressive and will bid 3 Hearts with a much weaker hand you will of course need more tricks to bid 4 Hearts.

## **HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION**

### **Defence to a pre-emptive bidding by opponents**

Double will be take-out oriented. You will be short in opponent's suit and will have a major type of hand with an opening hand. Sometimes partner may pass your double for a penalty. 3 No-trumps is to play. A suit bid by you is usually an opening hand and at least 5 good cards suit. If you wish to double opponents' pre-emptive you will have to pass and convert partner's double into a penalty double. With an extremely strong hand with the other 3 suits you can cue bid opponent's bid it avoids the risk of partner passing your double for penalty.

### **Sacrificing against opponents game**

If you have a good fit for partner's suit and you are not vulnerable and the opponents can make a vulnerable game you may now bid your suit higher than opponents' game bid and if you are doubled you will lose less points as compared to what you would have lost if you had allowed opponents to play their game contract. It is right to sacrifice if you have no defensive tricks. If you are sacrificing and the opponents decide to bid on you must not double them because you have already pushed them 1 level up.

Sacrificing works against opponents slam bid if you are certain they can make it. You may bid your suit and lose less than opponents slam score even after they double you.

### **Learning a few aspects about the play of the cards**

#### **Planning declarers' play in No-trumps**

As a first step you need to count your sure tricks.

Secondly, consider how you are going to get the remaining tricks.

Thirdly consider the total number of losers and other dangers in playing the hand.

Lastly, consider how you are going to avoid the dangers and formulate a plan for playing the hand.

Planning the hand is extremely important to your success.

#### **Planning declarer' play in a trumps contract**

As a first step count the number of losers.

Secondly consider how you are going to reduce the number of losers to the number you can afford to lose.

Thirdly, count the number of tricks you can win and the dangers in playing the hand.

Lastly, consider how you are going to avoid the dangers and formulate a plan for playing the hand.

Again planning the hand is very important to your success.

## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

### Leading against No- trump contracts

The plan should be to play your side's longest suit.

It is usually the fourth best of your longest suit.

It is because you are trying to establish your suit before declarer establishes his longest suit. It is a race you want to win and the advantage you have is you are on lead and you are already ahead and you must not lose the tempo.

If your long suit is headed by a sequence like KQJXX you should lead the highest card of the sequence so that you do not lose a tempo and establish your suit quickly. Also you do not want to lose a trick cheaply.

If you have an internal sequence you must lead the highest card of that sequence. As an explanation if you have AQJ10X your lead should be the queen.

If you are playing partner's long suit and you do not have any honours you should play your highest card as an example say you have 974 you lead the 9.

### Leading against suit contracts

This time it is a question of establishing and winning your tricks as quickly as possible before declarer finds a way of avoiding them.

Your leads should be as safe as possible and should not lose a trick but establish a trick for you.

The best lead is probably A from AKXX or K from KQXX.

It will be quite different as compared to a No-trump contract.

Top of a sequence are fairly safe leads.

Singleton leads are also good leads because you want to lead the second round of that suit.

However, you may play small from QXX or JXX or 10XX but must never play small from KXX or AXX.

Often your lead must be based on a plan of defence after drawing inferences from the bidding as to what will be declarer's line of play.

### The finesse

It is a 50 % chance of winning a trick depending on the placement of opponents' cards.

AQX            you play towards this hand from your hand and if your left hand opponent plays small play the queen and it can win if the left hand opponent held the King.

KXX            you play towards the king and your left hand opponent has the Ace you win the King.

QXX            Again you hope your left hand opponent has the King.  
AXX

## HARROW ELDERS' GROUP – BRIDGE SECTION

### No-trump contract –the hold up play and the safe opponent

Look at the hand below to understand this very basic play when playing No-trumps contract.

S- 654
H-K87
D-AK3
C-KJ72
S-A103
H-AQ3
D-8542
C-A103
A small spade is lead how do you play the hand?
You have 8 tricks and the possibility of the ninth from the Club suit.
However the danger is you losing 4 Spades and a Club.
Solution- win the Ace third time thereby cutting opponents' communications. Lose the Club to the East hand who is a safe opponent.

Playing suit contracts you usually draw the trumps as soon as possible because you do not want the opponents to ruff your tricks. However on many hands you should not do that because if you can take ruffs in dummy you get extra tricks. Please note taking ruffs in your own hand does not get you any extra tricks and at the same time you can lose control of the trumps and the hand.

With the following hand what would you lead against a No-trump contract and against a suit contract: -

S-732  
H-AQ742  
D-J62  
C-75

**That concludes my notes for the beginners and I hope you have enjoyed learning Bridge with me and I wish you GOOD LUCK and success at the Bridge table.**