

A close-up of the Queen of Clubs playing card, showing the queen's face and the club symbols.

# Welcome

**to the World of Duplicate Bridge**

*What to Expect at Your First Club Game*



## Let's Play Duplicate

If you like to have fun, love a challenge, enjoy meeting new people and want to keep your brain sharp, then duplicate bridge is for you. Duplicate is the ultimate partnership game and is widely regarded as one of the world's finest mind sports. Whether you've played bridge for a week or 50 years, dealt one hand or a thousand, you're already a player!



Join the 167,000 members of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) who play duplicate bridge in 3200 bridge clubs throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico.



**First-year membership is just \$29 and includes:**

- ♠ The Bridge Bulletin — monthly magazine for players of all levels
- ♥ Online masterpoint games
- ♦ Online Partnership Desk
- ♣ Recognition for masterpoint achievement

## Getting Started

You may want to start in a newcomer game (meaning new to duplicate, not necessarily new to bridge). Most clubs and tournaments have games especially for new and intermediate players. Many other games are “stratified” so that your scores are compared only to others at your level.

Duplicate games are held daily in cities and towns across North America — indeed, around the world. This is one of the greatest things about duplicate and the ACBL — just about anywhere you travel, you’ll find a club.

To locate a game near you, go to **[www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org)** and click on the “**Clubs**” header, then “**Find a Club**” on the left side. Or, call ACBL’s Club and Member Services Department at 662-253-3100 for information about the nearest games.

A number of websites offer both free and ACBL-sanctioned games. Click on “**Play Online**” in the “**Clubs**” section of the ACBL website to learn more.

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*Like a teacher presides over a class, a director oversees all aspects of a bridge game. Don't be afraid to call the director if there is an irregularity. It's their job to make the game fair for everyone.*



## Before Your First Game

Here are a few things you might do before your first trip to a club or tournament.

### Take a Class

Bridge lessons are great way to meet your first bridge friends and partners. How do you find them?

- ♠ Go to **www.acbl.org** and click on “**Learn**” then “**Find a Teacher**” on the left side.
- ♠ Call your local club and ask when it is offering lessons.
- ♠ Check adult education or community services catalogs.

*Many clubs offer free lectures a half hour or so before game time. **Ask!***

### Call Ahead

Let your club manager know that you're about to play in your first duplicate game. They will be thrilled and encouraging! If you don't already have a partner, ask the manager or director to find one for you. If you're an ACBL member, you have access to an online partnership desk that will help you find a suitable partner to play with at clubs and local tournaments as well as at the

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*Count your cards before you look at them and call the director if you don't have 13.*

national level. If you are looking for a tournament partner, you'll find that many sectionals and regionals and all national tournaments have a partnership desk onsite, staffed by volunteers whose mission it is to make compatible bridge matches.

## Do Your Homework

There are thousands of books, software products and computer apps designed to help you improve all facets of your bridge game — bidding, play of the hand and defense.

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*Count your cards again at the end of each deal before you put them back in the duplicate board.*

The ACBL offers free Learn to Play Bridge web application software that can be accessed by any device that can connect to the web. Visit the Learn to Play Bridge site at **<http://learn.acbl.org>**.

A number of websites offer both free and ACBL-sanctioned games. Click on “**Play Online**” in the “**Clubs**” section of the ACBL website.

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## Arriving at the Game

Your first club game is like your first day at a new school. You walk through the door and find that everyone knows one another. Don't hesitate to tell the others you're a newcomer. You'll find many players eager to show you the ropes.

Find the person selling entries. The cost for a club game varies, but is usually about the same as a movie ticket. You'll probably want an East-West entry so that you don't have to keep the official score (that's the job for the player sitting North). The entry will show your direction and table number.

ALERT

*When you are the dummy, don't exchange hands with partner or go around the table to look at declarer's hand, like you might do in a home rubber bridge game. Except for preventing an irregularity by declarer, dummy remains silent during the play of the hand.*



## The Convention Card

Before you play, you and your partner should fill out a convention card. A convention card shows your general approach to bidding (aggressive, conservative, traditional, scientific, etc.) and goes into some detail about your offensive and defensive bidding methods. The form also includes sections about your defensive carding agreements — your opening leads and signals.

The card serves two purposes. One, it tells your opponents what you play. Your opponents are the only people allowed to look at your card during the game (though most bridge clubs are somewhat lenient about this rule for the new player). Two, making out a card allows you and your partner to get your understandings straight.

See the sample convention card on the following pages for suggestions about basic bidding and defensive carding.

## Alerts and Announcements

At first sight, the convention card can be intimidating. Don't worry yet about filling it out in detail. You'll see it already has common conventions, such as Stayman and Blackwood. Dozens of other conventions have been invented to describe various hands, and you'll discover some you will enjoy using.

Unusual conventions are shown in red on the card. Your opponents will "Alert" them by saying the word or using the "Alert" card in the bidding box. You may ask for an explanation when it is your turn to call.

Bids shown in blue require an "Announcement." For example, when your partner opens 1NT, you "Announce" to your opponents you're agreed notrump range. A standard 1NT opening is 15–17 or 16–18 high-card points; some pairs use more unusual methods.

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*Your opponents have the right to know what your bids mean, and you have the right to ask what their bids mean to each other. Ask when it is your turn to make a call.*

SPECIAL DOUBLES

Negative ☐: thru \_\_\_\_\_

NOTRUMP OVERCALLS

Direct 15 to 17 Systems on \*  
\* Use same as over opening 1NT

Jump to 2NT: Minors ☐ 2 Lowest ☐

SIMPLE OVERCALL

1 level 6 to up HCP (usually)  
often 4 cards ☐ very light style ☐

Responses

New Suit: Forcing ☐ Non-Forcing ☒

DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP

vs:             
2 ☒             
2 ☒             
2 ☒             
2 ☒             
2 ☒           

JUMP OVERCALL

Strong ☐ Intermediate ☐ Weak ☒

OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE

New Suit Forcing: 1 level ☒ 2 level ☐  
Jump Shift: Forcing ☐ Inv. ☐ Weak ☒

OPENING PREEMPTS

Sound Light Very Light  
3/4-bids ☐ ☒ ☐

VS Opening Preempts Double Is

Takeout ☒ thru \_\_\_\_\_ Penalty ☐

SLAM CONVENTIONS

Gerber ☒: 4NT: Blackwood ☒

LEADS (circle card led, if not in bold)

versus Suits

**X** **X**      **X** **X** **X** **X**  
**X** **X** **X**      **X** **X** **X** **X** **X**  
**A** **K** **x**      **T** **9** **x**  
**K** **Q** **x**      **K** **J** **T** **x**  
**Q** **J** **x**      **K** **T** **9** **x**  
**J** **T** **9**      **Q** **T** **9** **x**  
**K** **Q** **T** **9**

versus Notrump

**X** **X**      **X** **X** **X** **X**  
**X** **X** **X**      **X** **X** **X** **X** **X**  
**A** **K** **J** **x**      **A** **Q** **J** **x**  
**A** **J** **T** **9**      **A** **T** **9** **x**  
**K** **Q** **J** **x**      **K** **Q** **T** **9**  
**Q** **J** **T** **x**      **Q** **T** **9** **x**  
**J** **T** **9** **x**      **T** **9** **x** **x**

LENGTH LEADS:

4th Best      vs SUITS ☒ vs NT ☒

DEFENSIVE CARDING

vs SUITS vs NT

Standard: ☐ ☐

Standard is defined as:

ATTITUDE is generally used when following to partner's lead or discarding. Playing a high card says you like the suit; playing a low card says you don't.

COUNT is usually applied when following to declarer's lead. Playing a high card first and then a low card (high/low) shows an even number of cards in the suit and playing a low card first then a high card (low/high) shows an odd number of cards in the suit.

Primary signal to partner's leads

Attitude ☒ Count ☐

SPECIAL CARDING



PLEASE ASK

\* The agreements a partnership might select to play have been

The agreements you mark in a

The agreements you mark in a BLUE

NAMES \_\_\_\_\_



## GENERAL APPROACH

## STANDARD AMERICAN

FORCING OPENING: 2♣ ☒ Other ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS

15 <sup>1NT</sup> to 17  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

3♣ \_\_\_\_\_  
3♦ \_\_\_\_\_  
3♥ \_\_\_\_\_  
3♠ \_\_\_\_\_  
FORCING

2NT 20 to 21 \*

\* Use same as over opening 1NT

3NT 25 to 27

2♣ Stayman ☒

2♦ Transfer to ♥ ☒

2♥ Transfer to ♠ ☒

2NT Inv. Other \_\_\_\_\_

### MAJOR OPENING

Expected Min. Length 4 5  
1st/2nd ☐ ☒  
3rd/4th ☐ ☒

#### RESPONSES

Double Raise: Force ☐ Inv. ☒ Weak ☐

After Overcall: Force ☐ Inv. ☒ Weak ☐

1NT 6 to 10  
2NT 11 to 12  
3NT 13 to 15

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### MINOR OPENING

Expected Min. Length 4 3 0-2 Conv  
1♣ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐  
1♦ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐

#### RESPONSES

Double Raise: Force ☐ Inv. ☒ Weak ☐

After Overcall: Force ☐ Inv. ☒ Weak ☐

1NT/1♣ 6 to 10  
2NT 11 to 12  
3NT 13 to 15

Other \_\_\_\_\_

2♣ 22 to + HCP  
Strong ☒

### DESCRIBE

### RESPONSES/REBIDS

2D WAITING

2♦ 5 to 10 HCP  
Weak ☒ Strong ☐

2NT Force ☒

2♥ 5 to 10 HCP  
Weak ☒ Strong ☐

2NT Force ☒

2♠ 5 to 10 HCP  
Weak ☒ Strong ☐

2NT Force ☒

### OTHER CONVENTIONAL CALLS:

o of beginning duplicate players  
indicated (in gray) on this card.  
RED section require an ALERT.  
section require an ANNOUNCEMENT.

## Skip Bid Warning

Another duplicate practice is the “skip bid warning,” which is used whenever a player jumps a level in the bidding. For example, you open a weak 2♥. Say “Skip bid, please wait,” before you make your call, or use the red Stop card in the bidding box. This allows your left-hand opponent to recover from the surprise of your jump and an opportunity to rethink a level higher. The warning obligates him to hesitate 10 seconds, minimizing any information that might be transmitted by an immediate call.



## Keeping a Private Score

Duplicate is scored like Chicago or party bridge. If your side makes a contract, you receive your trick score, plus a bonus of 50 points if you bid and make a partscore, 300 points if you bid and make a non-vulnerable game, or 500 points if you bid and make a vulnerable game. Each deal stands alone and has no effect on any following or previous deal. If you don't know the score of a particular contract, just look on the back of the cards in the bidding boxes.

On the back of a convention card you'll find a private score card, which indicate board numbers and vulnerability and includes space for you to note the contract and result of the deal. There is also space to jot down your matchpoints for each board when you've finished playing. If your club uses computer scoring, the director may be able to print out individual recaps following the game.

# How to Keep a Private Score

You can use your private score to improve your game. Writing your opponents' names or a description of them may help you reconstruct the board later.

Boards 1-3 were played against Pair 4, a lady with glasses and red hair and her hubby.

Board 1: 4♠ by South, making 5.

Board 2: 2NT by East, down 1.  
(Dissatisfied with my bid.)

Board 3: 6♥ by North, making.

Boards 4-6 were played against two college kids.

Board 4: 1NT by West, making 2.

Board 5: 4♣ by West, down 1. (Should have been down 2, but made a terrible lead.)

Board 6: 3♠ by South, making 4. (Wrote down my hand, don't think we bid enough.)

BD # PAIRS	DLR AND VUL	BD # TEAMS	VS	CONTRACT & DECLARER	PLUS	MINUS	PTS EST.	PTS.
1	N NONE	NONE	4	4S <sup>+5</sup> <sub>S</sub>	450			
2	E N-S	GLASSES-KED HAIR	4	2NT <sup>-1</sup> <sub>E</sub>	50	ME!		
3	S E-W	GLASSES-KED HAIR	4	6H <sup>+6</sup> <sub>N</sub>	980			
4	W BOTH		3	1NT <sup>+2</sup> <sub>W</sub>		120		
5	N N-S	COLLEGE KIDS	3	4C <sup>-1</sup> <sub>W</sub>	50	Bad Lead		
6	E E-W		3	3S <sup>+4</sup> <sub>S</sub>	170	Qxx Ax KJxx Qxxx		
7	S BOTH							



## Bidding Boxes

Most games use bidding boxes filled with cards designating every possible call. The director or one of your opponents will show you how to use the box. The cards provide an instant review of the bidding and eliminate the possibility of mishearing an auction

ALERT

*Emphatic bids, slow passes and fast doubles are not part of duplicate bridge. Try to bid and play in tempo.*



## Shuffle, Deal and Play

You've found your table and greeted your opponents. The director will place duplicate boards on your table and ask you to shuffle and deal the cards. Instead of dealing them to a player, deal them in front of you and insert each hand into one of the slots in the boards. Cards are dealt for the first round only. No more shuffling!

To keep each deal intact for the next round, place each card face down in front of you on the table, pointing toward your partner if you win the trick, toward the opponents if you lose the trick.

As declarer, you will tell your partner which card to play from dummy instead of pulling the card yourself.

As more clubs and tournaments gain access to dealing machines, the boards are mechanically shuffled and dealt in advance. The director will distribute these boards saying, “Ready to play.” Do not reshuffle these boards. Just pick up your hand, noting from the board instructions who is dealer, and play bridge. If your club is using pre-dealt boards, hand records will generally be available after the game.

Get into the habit of making your opening lead face down. This helps prevent irregularities such as leading when it is not your turn to do so and allows questions about the auction and any Alerts to be answered.

ALERT

*As a courtesy, wait to write down the contract in your private score until after you have made your opening lead or put down your dummy.*



## Recording the Score

Many clubs have invested in electronic scoring devices. The devices look like oversized calculators. There is one on each table.



After the auction, North enters the contract and, when play of the hand is complete, enters the result and offers the device to one of the opponents to verify. After the opponent agrees to the score, it is transmitted directly to the director's computer. When the final score of the session is entered, the complete results are available for printout.



If your club scores manually, using pick-up slips or travelers, North enters the contract and the result, and East-West approves it.

ALERT

*After the boards have been played, do not take your opponents' cards out of the board without their permission.*



## Move for the Next Round

You will play two to four boards at each table, a total of 20 to 28 deals for the entire session. To keep the game going smoothly, each round is timed. You are allowed an average of about seven and a half minutes for each board, so you will want to learn to use your time wisely.

When you have finished all of your boards at a given table, the director will call the round and direct the movement of the boards and players. Generally, North-South remain stationary while

East-West “get older” (move to the next higher table), and the boards “get younger” (they are passed to the next lower table).



## **“Director, Please”**

Duplicate bridge is a sport, and sports have rules. The rules ensure that the game is fair for everyone. You’re not expected to memorize the entire “Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge,” but don’t hesitate to politely call the director to your table if you think there has been an irregularity. Never be intimidated when the director is called because of something you might have done. A good director will assess the situation and present a solution in a manner that doesn’t embarrass or offend anyone. Do players always agree with the director? Does LeBron James always agree with the referee? Accept rulings with grace.



## **How Did You Do?**

You don’t have to hold a lot of aces to win in duplicate bridge. Your score is the result of a comparison between how well you did with the cards when you held them and how each of the other pairs did with those same cards.

Matchpoints are awarded for the results on each board. You receive one matchpoint for each pair whose result you beat and one-half a point for each pair whose result you tie.

When you add up all of your matchpoints, you will be able to see whether you did better or worse than average. You will also be able to see which boards you found troublesome. Don't be afraid to ask one of the better players about one or two of your problem deals. Every club has experienced players eager to help newcomers sharpen their bidding and their play of the cards. Look for these friendly faces and seek their advice. You'll meet a lot of interesting people this way.

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*Develop the expert's attitude:  
Each deal is unique and separate.  
Discuss what went wrong with  
your partner privately after  
the game.*



## Are You a Winner?

Play well and you will be awarded a prize: masterpoints, the coin of the duplicate bridge realm.

Masterpoints appeal to members because it allows them to track their growth in the game by achieving new ranks on their way to becoming a Life Master.

To learn more about rank advancement, visit **[www.acbl.org/masterpointsranks](http://www.acbl.org/masterpointsranks)**.





## Thank You, Partner

Bridge is as friendly as the players, and it's important to be a good partner and opponent.

Introduce your partner and yourself to the opponents at the start of each round. Thank your partner when she puts down the dummy. Wish the opponents good luck before you start the game. Don't get upset about a bad result — you get to start fresh with the next 13 cards. Successful partnerships will discuss difficult hands and situations where something went wrong after the session in private.



**Bridge is a game.  
Have fun!**

## For the Love of the Game

To make the game of bridge more enjoyable for everyone, the ACBL has a Zero Tolerance policy. Many clubs have adopted this or a similar policy that emphasizes positive, ethical comportment such as:

- ♠ Being a good "host" or "guest" at the table.
- ♥ Greeting others in a friendly manner.
- ♦ Praising the bidding and/or play of the opponents.
- ♣ Having two clearly completed convention cards readily available to the opponents. (This one is a regulation, not just a nicety.)

Behaviors that are not tolerated because they interfere with the enjoyment of the game include:

- ♠ Badgering, rudeness, insinuations, intimidation, profanity, threats and violence.
- ♥ Negative comments concerning opponents' or partner's play or bidding.
- ♦ Constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table.
- ♣ Loud and disruptive arguing with a director's ruling.



For the love  
of the game

Play nice

## Notes



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Horn Lake MS  
38637-1523

662-253-3100  
[www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org)

Rev. 1/15 © 2015  
Printed in the  
USA by ACBL