

# **EZ-Bridge**

and

## **3-Person EZ-Bridge**

...are gentler forms of Bridge for those who might like to play, if it didn't make them feel like a "dummy". These new versions of Bridge were created in 2002 by John N. Zorich, Jr.

The most striking differences between the classic game of Bridge and EZ-Bridge are:

- Any bid is acceptable (e.g., you can bid from 1 to 13 tricks).
- Bidding does not have to proceed alphabetically.
- No one is forced to sit out as the silent "Dummy" hand, unless they want to.
- Scoring is simple (one point per Trick won, no matter what suit is trump).
- Any player can keep a paper record of who bid what suit, and who played what cards (as long as everyone gets to see it).

3-Person EZ-Bridge is played like regular EZ-Bridge, except that there is a permanent "dummy" hand, which the winning bidder gets to have as his/her partner.

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"EZ-Bridge" is not to be confused with "Easybridge!". EZ-Bridge refers to the EZ-Bridge manual and is a new version of Bridge. In contrast, Easybridge! refers to "educational services, namely, providing classes, seminars, workshops and demonstrations for bridge teachers on specific teaching techniques to enhance the teaching experience and the ability of students to learn duplicate bridge and on how to develop marketing programs for new client business development for duplicate bridge clubs, districts and units" [quote from US Trademark Office, TESS database]. EZ-Bridge is trademarked by John N. Zorich, Jr., whereas Easybridge is trademarked by Edith McMullin and is promoted by the American Contract Bridge League.

# **EZ-Bridge<sup>TM</sup>**

**and**

# **3-Person EZ-Bridge<sup>TM</sup>**

## **Gentler Forms Of Bridge**

**For Those Who Might Like To Play Bridge,  
If It Didn't Make Them Feel Like a "Dummy"**

**by**

**John N. Zorich, Jr.**

**( author of : *Very Easy DOS*, and *Hazmat65* )**

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## Preface

The Classic game of Bridge is a bit too challenging for most people. To play well at Classic Bridge, you need to have a great memory, and to pay attention with unwavering concentration. The arguments spawned during games of Classic Bridge, because one partner was not watching the play closely, are the stuff of movies and TV sitcoms.

I became interested in Classic Bridge when out of curiosity I began reading the "Bridge Column" in the morning newspaper. My very observant wife then bought me for Christmas a thick instruction book on Classic Bridge. To my surprise, the book described itself as a beginner's instruction manual, even tho it was over 500 pages !!

That book described the Bidding practices, playing procedures, and scoring methods that are fundamental to Classic Bridge. I found them intellectually challenging because they were quite complicated compared to most any other card game. However, because of its complexity, I was not able to find anyone among my family and friends who were interested in playing with me -- they just didn't find it "fun".

That's why I developed EZ-Bridge. My family loves to play this new version of Bridge. For example, my niece and nephew, and their traveling companions, while on Spring Break from college recently, had a 3-hour wait between airplane flights. They spent the entire 3 hours playing EZ-Bridge. My niece and nephew had played EZ-Bridge only twice before, and had never played Classic Bridge; but they were able to explain EZ-Bridge to their friends in just a few minutes, and to begin play immediately. They enjoy playing EZ-Bridge -- they find it to indeed be "fun".

In contrast to Classic Bridge, to win at EZ-Bridge you don't have to memorize who Bid what suit or who played what card. EZ-Bridge doesn't require anyone to sit out a Hand as the non-playing "Dummy" or to refrain from Bidding just because they have a weak Hand. EZ-Bridge doesn't require you to know brilliant Bidding strategies, or even to have four players. Nor does it require you to know higher mathematics just to keep score.

If you want to spend a relaxing time with family and friends in very friendly competition, then EZ-Bridge is for you.

## Introduction

This book introduces two new versions of the "Classic" card game called "Bridge".

The first new version, which is called "EZ-Bridge", is designed for four players in two teams of two persons each. It allows either all players to be active participants in every Hand, or for one player, at his or her own discretion, to sit out a Hand every once in awhile, as the "Dummy".

The second new version, which is called "3-Person EZ-Bridge", is designed for three players. It is played almost identically to the 4-person version of EZ-Bridge, except that there are no teams (the 3 persons play against each other, and the fourth "person" is a permanent "Dummy").

Compared to Classic Bridge, both versions of EZ-Bridge incorporate simple rules for Bidding, as well as simplified rules for scoring.

Finally, and possibly most important to your having fun with EZ-Bridge, both versions allow one or more players to keep a paper record of who Bid which suit, and who played which card, as long as all players are allowed to see what has been recorded.

Therefore, you do not need to have a good memory in order to formulate clever Bridge strategies or to make brilliant Bridge plays like professional Bridge players.

# EZ-Bridge

## How To Play (the basics)

EZ-Bridge is a card game played with a deck of either Poker or Bridge cards. Such decks contain 52 cards in 4 "suits" (in addition, Poker decks also contain 2 "joker" cards, which are not used in EZ-Bridge). The suits each have a symbol and a name, as shown below:

♣	CLUBS
◇	DIAMONDS
♥	HEARTS
♠	SPADES

Each suit has 13 cards, one each of the following named or numbered values:

**Ace** (or "A")  
**King** (or "K")  
**Queen** (or "Q")  
**Jack** (or "J")  
**10**  
**9**  
**8**  
**7**  
**6**  
**5**  
**4**  
**3**  
**2**

I referred to them as "values" because the higher they are on that list, the more valuable they are, just like in most games of poker. For example, the 10 of Hearts ( 10♥ ) is more valuable than the 9 of Hearts ( 9♥ ), and the Queen of Hearts ( Q♥ ) is more valuable than the 10♥, but the Ace of Hearts ( A♥ ) is the most valuable card in that suit.

In EZ-Bridge, one suit is not more valuable than another, except for the "Trump" suit, the identify of which changes with every Hand. We'll discuss "Trump" suits in detail in a later section of this book.

A "Hand" of Bridge is played with all 52 cards from a well-shuffled deck. Each player is randomly given (that is, "dealt") 13 of the cards. Each Hand is played one "Trick" at a

time. A "Trick" is a set of four cards, one from each of the four players. The most valuable card played in each Trick "wins" that Trick.

Each Trick is worth 1 point (we'll discuss more about this later). Points are earned only by the team that won the Bidding. Bidding for a Hand takes place before the players start playing the Hand. During Bidding, each player in turn makes a promise that she and her partner will, together, win a certain number of Tricks in the Hand that is about to be played. The first team to win 30 points wins the "game" (a Game lasts at least 3 Hands, because the most points that can be won in a single Hand is 13).

Bidding is like an auction, or a game of reverse "Name That Tune". When a player makes a Bid, he is promising to win, together with his partner, at least the "Bid" number of Tricks, in the Hand that is about to be played. After the first Bidder has made such a promise, the next player has a chance to Bid either that same number of Tricks, or a higher number of Tricks. The last player to Bid wins the Bid (that is, if the remaining players say "Pass" when it's their turn to Bid, then the player who Bid last wins the Bid for his team). In a later section of this book, Bidding will be described in more detail.

## **Players and Partners**

EZ-Bridge requires 4 players (we'll talk about "3-Person EZ-Bridge" later on in this book). Each player must partner with one of the other players, to form a team. Thus, there are 2 teams comprising 2 players each.

Typically, during an evening's play of EZ-Bridge, the teams do not change membership. However, you can do anything you want, in order to have fun. For example, in a situation where a couple of married folks are playing together, the husbands could at first team up against the wives, and later each husband could team up with his wife, to play against the other couple.

For convenience, in this book, the names of the 4 players will always be:

North, South, East, and West

and the teams will always be constructed like this:

North + South versus East + West

but such descriptions are not meant to imply that team membership must remain constant.

## Table and Seating

Almost any household table can be made suitable for EZ-Bridge; you can even play on the floor. The only rule is that the players should all be able to face each other and to comfortably reach the middle of the "table" where they have to place cards during the game. Even the end of a long, formal, dining room table can work well.

Who sits where at the table is completely up to your discretion. The only rule is that team members must sit opposite each other, and have a member of the other team on their right and on their left, like so:

	North	
West		East
	South	

In that example, North and South are on one team, and East and West are on the other. For convenience, in this book, the positions of the players will always be shown like they are above, but this is not meant to imply that seating order must not change when you play your own games.

## Shuffling and Dealing

Among friends, it doesn't matter who shuffles or who deals. Some people hate to shuffle. Some folks hate to deal. As long as everyone agrees on how it is to be done, it does not matter who shuffles or deals. However, a common method for rotating these tasks is described next:

Someone shuffles the deck. All players choose one card from the deck. Whoever has the most valuable card is the first dealer; in the case of a tie, draw additional cards to break the tie.

The first dealer shuffles the deck thoroughly and then deals one card to each player (including herself), and then a second card to each player, and so on until each player has 13 cards.

After the Bidding and playing of this first Hand of EZ-Bridge, the player to the left of the first dealer now becomes the shuffler and dealer for the next Hand. For the Hand after that one, the player to the left of the second dealer becomes the next dealer, and so on around and around the table for each new Hand to be played.

## Bidding

As described above in the section entitled "How to Play (the basics)", before play actually begins, the two teams Bid to determine which team can possibly gain points (only the team that wins the Bidding, the "Winning Bid Team" can possibly gain points). The other team will try to prevent Winning Bid Team from gaining any points (this team is called the "Defending Team").

The Bidding process also determines which (if any) suit is "Trump" (what is meant by "Trump" will be explained very shortly).

## TRICKS

EZ-Bridge is played as a series of 13 Tricks, where a Trick is a set of 4 cards, placed one at a time into the center of the table, one card by each of the players. After the first Trick has been played, it is taken off the table and set to the side in a separate pile, one pile for each team. Then the next Trick is played, and so on until no player has any cards remaining in his Hand.

## TRUMPS VS. NO-TRUMPS

As described above in the section entitled "How to Play (the basics)", Bidding is done by one player at a time sequentially naming the number of Tricks that she thinks her team can win in the Hand that is about to be played. A Bid states not only the number of Tricks, but also states which suit will be "Trump".

A Trump suit is something like a wild card in poker. For example, if the Winning Bidder won the Bidding with a Bid of "9 Clubs" then Clubs is the Trump suit; if so, then during the subsequent play of the Hand, a 2♣ is more valuable than an a K♦. That is, the Trick is won by whichever team played the 2♣, because a card in a Trump suit is more valuable than a card in any other suit, even if the other suit card is a King or Ace.

The Bidder may decide, during the Bidding process, that her team could win more Tricks if there were no Trump suit. If so, then the Bidder would Bid, for example, "8 No-Trumps".

## WHO BIDS FIRST?

You can make up your own rules, if you like, about who Bids first, but there are certain advantages and disadvantages to Bidding first. One way to make this fair is to always have the dealer Bid first. However, if one person always deals, then keep a scrap-paper record of who Bid first in the last Hand, and the player to the left of that player should Bid first in the next Hand's Bidding.

For any one Trick's Bidding, the Bidding goes round and round the table, the next Bidder always being the player to the left of the previous Bidder. Additional details are given in the next few sections.

## BIDDING DETAILS

Let's assume that the players are arranged around a table like so, and that South starts the Bidding:

North  
West            East  
South

Bidding is done by one player at a time, each player naming a number of Tricks+suit. The very first Bid by the very first player (South in this case), can be any number of Tricks from 1 thru 13.

For example, let's say South Bids "7 Spades". If all the remaining players do not Bid (that is, if they all "Pass"), then the North/South team has won the Bid (and promises to win 7 Tricks in the Hand that is about to be played), and Spades is Trump during the Hand that is about to be played.

If, instead of Passing, West Bids "7 Clubs", and all the remaining players Pass, then the East/West Team has won the Bid, and Clubs is Trump.

If instead of Passing after West's Bid, let's say North Bids "8 Spades", and everyone else Passes, then the North/South team has won the Bid, and Spades is Trump. In EZ-Bridge, no player can repeat the exact Bid of a previous player, even his partner's Bid or even his own Bid. Thus, North could not have Bid "7 Spades".

If instead of Passing, East Bids "10 Diamonds", and everyone else Passes, then the East/West team has won the Bid, and Diamonds is Trump. This Bid demonstrates that you can Bid anything you like, as long as no one else has Bid it, and as long as the number of Tricks Bid is not smaller than the last Bid. In other words, East could not have Bid "7 Diamonds", because the last Bid was for 8 Tricks.

If instead of Passing after the East Bid, South Bids "10 No-Trump", and everyone else Passes, then North/South team has won the Bid, and there is no Trump suit.

Bidding continues round and round the table, until everyone Passes after the last Bid. The person who makes the last Bid is called the "Winning Bidder" (and her team is called the "Winning Bid Team").

A last important note: During the Bidding, if a Player Passes, it doesn't mean that she forfeits the right to Bid in subsequent rounds of Bidding. That is, if North Passes, but East Bids, then even if South and West both Pass, North could choose to Bid after West Passes, like so:

	North	East	South	West
1st round	Pass	Bid	Bid	Pass
2nd round	Pass	Bid	Pass	Pass
3rd round	Bid	Pass	Pass	Pass

In that Bidding, North actually won the Bidding for her team, even tho she Passed on the first round of Bidding.

## Playing

### WHO PLAYS THE FIRST CARD OF THE FIRST TRICK?

There are advantages to the team that plays the first card. To be fair, follow this rule: the first card is played by the player to the left of Winning Bidder.

### WHO PLAYS THE NEXT CARD?

The next card is played by the player to the left of the player who played the first card of the Trick. The subsequent card is played by player to the left of that, and so on. Play always is done in this fashion, going from one player to the player on his left, starting with whichever player played the first card of the Trick.

### WHO PLAYS THE FIRST CARD OF THE NEXT TRICK?

The first card of the next Trick is played by the player who won the previous Trick. That is, whoever played the most valuable card in the previous Trick wins that Trick for her team and has to play the first card of the next Trick.

### HOW TO DETERMINE WHICH IS THE MOST VALUABLE CARD IN A TRICK

The first card played in a Trick determines what the other players must or can do. In each Trick, the other players must play a card from their Hand that is in the same suit as the first card played in that Trick. For example, if the first card is A♥, then the second player must play another Heart card. This is called "following suit".

If a player has any cards of the same suit as the first card played in the Trick, the player must follow suit. He can play any card in his Hand in that suit. However, if the player does not have even one card in that suit, then the player can play any card in his Hand, including a Trump suit card.

When all 4 cards have been played for a Trick, the most valuable card in the Trick "wins" the Trick. Recall, from the "How to Play (the basics)" section earlier in this book, the sequence of increasing value within a suit.

If the 5♥ was led in a Trick, and subsequent players played the 10♥ and J♥, followed by the A♦ (in this case, Diamonds is not Trump), the Trick is won by the person who played the J♥. The fact that the Ace is a more valuable card in general than a Jack is irrelevant, because Hearts was the suit of the first card played in the Trick. Only the cards that "follow suit" count toward the winning of the Trick, unless a Trump card has been played. Here is that same Trick shown a different way (Clubs are Trump, but nobody plays any here):

North	East	South	West	WINNER
5♥	10♥	J♥	A♦	South

If one of the 4 cards in a Trick is a Trump card, then whoever played the most valuable Trump card wins the Trick. For example, in the Trick shown below, North leads the A♥ but nobody has any more Hearts and so all play Diamonds (which in this case are Trump):

North	East	South	West	WINNER
A♥	2♦	3♦	4♦	West (highest Trump)

In that Trick, West won by playing the highest Trump card.

Additional examples of Tricks, and who the winner is, are shown below (for convenience in all these Tricks, North leads, and there are no Trump). In all these cases, the winner is the player who played the highest card in the suit that was led by North:

North	East	South	West	WINNER
2♥	Q♥	K♥	2♦	South (highest Heart)

North	East	South	West	WINNER
A♠	A♥	A♣	A♦	North (highest Spade)

North	East	South	West	WINNER
2♠	A♥	A♣	A♦	North (highest Spade)

North	East	South	West	WINNER
2♣	A♦	4♣	5♣	West (highest Club)

## TO BE OR NOT TO BE DUMMY

The partner of the Winning Bidder has the option to either play the Hand, just like all the other players, or to lay her Hand face up for all to see. The Hand that is thus laid down is called the "Dummy", and the person who laid down the Dummy Hand can take a bio-break, make a phone call, get a snack, etc., or otherwise not be involved in the game, until it's time to Bid the next Hand.

When it comes time for "Dummy" to play a card, the Winning Bidder (that is, Dummy's partner) decides which card is played. Anyone can physically move the chosen card to the center of the table, even a Defending Team member.

The decision to be Dummy or to play is to be made by Winning Bidder's partner, on her own, without consultation from Winning Bidder. This decision must be made prior to Winning Bidder's partner playing her first card in the first Trick. When it is time for

Winning Bidder's partner to play that card, and if she has decided to not play the Hand (that is, to actually be a Dummy), then the Dummy Hand is laid down for all to see, and Winning Bidder decides what is to be played.

If the partner of the Winning Bidder does not want to be Dummy (that is, she wants to actively play the Hand), then she simply keeps the cards in her hand and plays the cards just like all the other players.

## REMEMBERING WHO PLAYED WHAT

There is a great advantage in remembering who Bid what suit, who played what card, and how many cards have been played of a particular suit.

For example, if you are about to lead the first card of the first Trick, and you have the 2♦, and you remember that your partner Bid "8 Diamonds" during the Bidding process, then you might play that 2♦, in hopes that your partner can win the Trick with an A♦.

Another example: If you are about to lead the first card of the 7th Trick, and you know that 12 Diamond cards have been played so far, and you hold the 2♦ (the last Diamond, because there are only 13 cards of each suit), and there is no Trump suit (the winning Bid was "8 No-Trump"), then you can lead that 2♦ and feel confident that you will win the Trick. You win the Trick because you will have played the highest Diamond card in the Trick, (recall from earlier discussions that cards that do not "follow suit" do not count toward winning the Trick, unless they are Trump cards). You win even if the other 3 cards in the Trick are Aces !!

Remembering who Bid what suit, and who played what card, is difficult for most people. In EZ-Bridge, it is OK for someone to keep a paper record of who Bid what suit and who played what card, as long as all the players are allowed to see it at any time. This EZ-Bridge book contains a copy of a form developed specifically for keeping such a record. Use it, or create one of your own design.

## Scoring

After all the Tricks have been played in a Hand, the team that won the Bidding counts how many Tricks it has won. For example, if the North/South team won the Bidding, and North won 5 Tricks and South won 3 Tricks then, the North/South team won 8 Tricks total.

### IF TRICKS WON = TRICKS BID

If the team that won the Bidding wins exactly the number of Tricks they Bid, that is, the number of Tricks they promised to win in their very last Bid prior to starting play of the Hand, then they are awarded a number of points equal to the number of Tricks they Bid. For example, if the winning Bid by North/South was "8 Hearts", and they won 8 Tricks, they have earned 8 points. The Defending Team earns zero points.

### IF TRICKS WON = LESS THAN TRICKS BID

If the team that won the Bidding wins less than the number of Tricks they Bid, then they lose points (or, in case they don't have any points yet, they "go negative, or "go in the hole"). They lose four points for every Trick less than the number of Tricks they Bid. For example, if the winning Bid by North/South was "8 Hearts", and they won only 5 Tricks, they lose 12 of the points that they won on previous Hands ( $3 \times 4 = 12$ ). If they have no points from previous Hands, then they "go in the hole" 12 points. If they "go in the hole" 12 points, and win 13 points in the next Hand, their total score will be then only be 1 ( $13 - 12 = 1$ ). In this case too, the Defending Team earns zero points.

### IF TRICKS WON = MORE THAN TRICKS BID

If the team that won the Bidding wins more than the number of Tricks they Bid, then they are awarded a number of points equal to the number of Tricks they Bid plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  point for each Trick won above their Bid. For example, if the winning Bid by North/South was "8 Hearts", and they won 11 Tricks, they have earned  $8$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  points ( $8$  plus  $3 \times \frac{1}{4} = 8 \frac{3}{4}$ ). And again, the Defending Team earns zero points.

### WINNING THE GAME, SET, MATCH

You probably have realized that you gain the most points in a Hand by Bidding as high as possible, assuming you can win the Bid number of Tricks. For example, if South has the strongest Hand possible (all 4 Aces, all 4 Kings, all 4 Queens, and a Jack), and South win the Bid in "No-Trump", South will win all 13 Tricks. However, if South wins the Bidding with a Bid of "5 No-Trump", the North/South team will not earn 13 points but rather earn only 7 points ( $5$  plus  $8 \times \frac{1}{4} = 7$ ).

You probably have realized that there is a powerful disincentive to over Bidding. For example, if North Bids 13 Tricks but only wins 12, then the North/South team loses four points rather than gaining 12.

The team that wins 30 points first wins the "Game". If you play longer, the first team to win 3 games wins the "Set". If you play longer, the first team to win 2 Sets wins the "Match". If you play all day, you could create additional rules (e.g., the first team to win 3 Matches wins the Tournament).

A Tournament can be played by whatever rules you decide. For example, if several couples play all afternoon, each couple could play only one game with each other couple and switch to a new couple as their opponent for each new game. At the end of the afternoon, the couple who has won the most games (or maybe the most points) wins the Tournament.

## 3-Person EZ-Bridge

### How To Play (the basics)

3-Person EZ-Bridge is played with three persons instead of four persons. That is the major difference between EZ-Bridge and 3-Person EZ-Bridge.

### Players and Partners

3-Person EZ-Bridge does not involve teams of players. Instead, each player is playing to win on his or her own. And there always is a Dummy Hand (in effect, Dummy is the fourth player).

### Table and Seating

The same comments made previously for EZ-Bridge apply to 3-Person EZ-Bridge regarding size and shape of the table used.

There are some significant differences between EZ-Bridge and 3-Person EZ-Bridge regarding seating. Dummy is assigned a permanent position at the table, like so:

Dummy  
West            East  
South

Now comes the only difficult instruction in 3-Person EZ-Bridge: Whoever wins the Bidding prior to playing a Hand must then get out of his chair, and exchange places with the player who is sitting opposite Dummy, prior to starting the play of that Hand. That is, the Winning Bidder must always sit opposite the Dummy Hand. For example, if East wins the Bidding, then, after the chair switching, the seating will not look like the configuration we just saw but rather will look like this:

Dummy  
West            South  
East

Notice that East switched places with South.

This new seating arrangement is maintained until after the next Hand's Bidding has been completed, at which time whoever has won the Bid exchanges places with East. For example if the next Bidding were won by West, then West would exchange seats with East, and the resulting new seating arrangement would be:

Dummy  
East            South  
West

## **Shuffling and Dealing**

All that has been said so far about EZ-Bridge shuffling and dealing also applies to 3-Person EZ-Bridge. However, because players are frequently changing their seating arrangement (as just described, above), it is best to keep a paper record of who dealt last, and to proceed alphabetically to the next player. For example, if South deals the first Hand, then West should deal the next Hand, and East the following Hand, no matter where they are actually seated. Or make up your own system of a rotating the deal, or don't rotate the deal at all (as described above for EZ-Bridge).

## **Bidding**

All of the instructions given previously regarding EZ-Bridge apply also to 3-Person EZ-Bridge. Keep in mind, however, that you are Bidding for how many Tricks you can win together with the Dummy Hand. In a sense, Dummy and the Winning Bidder are a team.

Also keep in mind that if the Deal is not rotated (as described in the previous section on "Shuffling and Dealing"), then it is best to keep a paper record of who started the Bidding last, and to proceed alphabetically to the next player. This should be done to be fair, because there are advantages and disadvantages to Bidding first.

3-Person EZ-Bridge has one exciting difference from regular EZ-Bridge, a difference which usually results in very high Bidding. Prior to the start of any Bidding, the Dummy Hand is laid out for all to see. Thus, even though you have a weak Hand, if Dummy has a strong Hand, you may decide to Bid 8 or 9 Tricks.

## **Playing**

After the Winning Bidder has moved into the chair opposite Dummy, the person to the left of the Winning Bidder plays the first card.

Other than that, there is no playing difference between EZ-Bridge and 3-Person EZ-Bridge. Of course the "Defending Team" is not really a team, but a temporary partnership that comprises the 2 players who did not win the Bid. The job of the Defending "Team" is to try to prevent the Winning Bidder "Team" from gaining any points.

## **Scoring**

There is no difference in scoring between EZ-Bridge and 3-Person EZ-Bridge, except that points are won by individuals rather than by teams. Keep in mind that the Winning Bidder gets to count not only the Tricks he has won, but also the Tricks won by Dummy.

Tournaments could be played as described above, in the Chapter on EZ-Bridge, except that the Tournament winner would be an individual player rather than a team.

# Advice and Strategy

## Bidding

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

During the Bidding, the goal is to Bid exactly the number of Tricks that you and your partner can win during the subsequent play of the Hand.

However, you can't see each other's Hands, and it is unfair to use hand signals or code words or show facial expressions that tell your partner what you have. The only honest way to learn about the strength or weakness of partner's Hand is to listen to how partner Bids for that Hand.

There are only 4 Aces, 4 Kings, 4 Queens, 4 Jacks, and 4 Tens. Those are the 20 most valuable cards; these are called the "Honors" cards. If you have 5 Honors, then you have an average Hand in that respect. If you have 6 of them, you have an above average Hand. If you have 3 Aces, 1 Jack and 1 Ten, that too can be considered an above average Hand because it has 3 of the very topmost Honors.

There are only 13 cards in each suit. On average, each player will have 3 cards in each suit, with somebody having one extra card. If you have 2 suits with 4 cards each, or 5 cards in a suit, or none at all in one suit, you have an above average Hand (assuming you have at least a few Honors somewhere in your hand).

### OPENING ROUND BIDS

There are 13 Tricks and two teams, so one of the two teams is surely going to win at least 7 Tricks. If you have an above-average Hand, and your partner has an average Hand or even a slightly less than average Hand, then you and your partner can most likely win at least 7 Tricks.

Therefore, if you are the first player to Bid on the first round of Bidding, and you have an above-average Hand, you should Bid at least 7 Tricks. Whether you Bid  $7\spadesuit$ ,  $7\heartsuit$ ,  $7\clubsuit$ , or  $7\diamondsuit$  is a choice you have to make depending on which suit you have that is strongest (or if you have equal strength in all suits, you might choose to Bid "7-No-Trump").

The first player must not Bid too high, but also must not Bid too low. For example, suppose that North was dealt this unlikely Hand:

♣ A K Q J 10 9 8 7

♦ (none)

♥ K Q 8

♠ A J

If North Bids "7 Clubs", and everyone else Passes, and subsequently North-South win 11 Tricks, then North/South win only 8 points ( $7 + 4 \times \frac{1}{4} = 8$ ). If North had started the

Bidding with "10 Clubs" and everyone then Passed, then North/South would earn  $10 \frac{1}{4}$  points for their 11 Tricks ( $10 + 1 \times \frac{1}{4} = 10 \frac{1}{4}$ ).

Bidding too low on the opening Bid also allows the other Team to Bid, and that may result in their winning the Bid (even if they don't have the better Hand).

For example, suppose that these very unlikely Hands were dealt::

	♣ A K Q J 10 9 8 7 ♦ (none) ♥ K Q 8 ♠ A J	
♣ (none) ♦ Q J 5 4 3 2 ♥ 5 4 ♠ K Q 7 4 3	<b>North</b>  <b>West</b> <b>East</b>  <b>South</b>	♣ (none) ♦ A K 10 9 8 7 6 ♥ A J 10 9 ♠ 9 8
	♣ 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ (none) ♥ 7 6 3 2 ♠ 10 6 5 2	

North has 9 Honors, East has 6, South 1, and West 4. Both teams have 10 Honors. If Diamonds are Trump, East-West will likely take a minimum of 9 Tricks. However, if Clubs are Trump, North-South will likely take a minimum of 10 Tricks.

Suppose that North is the first Bidder. In order to prevent East-West from Bidding (and discovering that they too have a great Hand), North might start the Bidding with "10 Clubs". East might not feel confident enough to then Bid "10 Diamonds" without knowing what West has, and so may Pass; South and West will then surely Pass, and thus North wins the Bid.

Alternatively, suppose South is the first Bidder. South has a much lower than average Hand, so opening the Bidding at 7 Tricks is unwise. However, South does have 5 Spade cards. South could Bid "2 Spades" (that is, promises to win 2 Tricks if Spades is trump), in order to let Partner know that South's Hand is very weak and that its strongest suit is Spades. Keep in mind that if South does open with such a Bid, the East/West team also now know that South's Hand is very weak but relatively strong in Spades, and such

information could lead to East/West winning extra Tricks during the subsequent playing of the Hand.

### SUBSEQUENT BIDS

After all players have Bid once, the next round(s) of Bidding usually proceed differently than the first round. For example:

	North	East	South	West
1st round	Pass	3 Hearts	8 Diamonds	8 Clubs
2nd round	9 Diamonds	9 Clubs	Pass	Pass
3rd round	10 Diamonds	Pass	Pass	10 Clubs
4th round	Pass	Pass	Pass	

In that Hand, West won the Bidding for the East/West team. Notice that even after a player has Passed once, she can still Bid in subsequent rounds. Also notice what North did: North has such a weak hand that he passed on the first round. However, North must have a lot of Diamonds, because after hearing that Partner (South) has a very strong hand in Diamonds (1st round Bid of 8 Diamonds), North proceeded to Bid up to 10 Diamonds!! In such a case, it might have been better for North to have opened Bidding with, for example, 3 Diamonds, just to let partner (South) know something about his hand.

### Playing as the Winning Bid Team

The goal is to win as many Tricks as possible. However, playing Aces may not be the best way to do that. For example, if the face-up Dummy Hand (let's pretend he's South) has the Ace and Queen of Hearts, Winning Bidder (North), who doesn't know who has the King of Hearts, may start a Trick by leading Hearts. After the first Defender (East) has (most likely) laid down a low Heart card, Winning Bidder (North) may choose for Dummy (South) to play the Queen, in hopes that East actually had the King. East may have the King but might not want to play it for fear that Dummy would win the Trick with the Ace. If East actually has the King but doesn't play it, then Dummy's Queen wins the Trick. This scenario is shown diagrammatically below:

If Dummy (South) has **A♥** and **Q♥**, and East has the **K♥**, this is what happens:

North	East	South	West	WINNER
<b>2♥</b>	<b>5♥</b>	<b>Q♥</b>	<b>10♥</b>	South (highest Heart)

but if West has the **K♥**, this is what happens:

North	East	South	West	WINNER
<b>2♥</b>	<b>5♥</b>	<b>Q♥</b>	<b>K♥</b>	West (highest Heart)

Having Dummy (South) play that Queen may be a good strategy, no matter what the outcome, if Winning Bidder (North) is afraid that East or West may have only 2 hearts total and therefore may be free to Trump the third Heart played. In other words, if the first Heart Trick is won by the Ace, and the second Heart Trick is won by the King, then the third Heart Trick lead would, theoreticly, be won by the Queen, if it isn't Trumped.

Sometimes it is best to play Trumps at first, to eliminate all Trump cards in Defenders' Hands. This strategy may work well if the Winning Bid Team has many valuable cards in at least one other suit; after the Defending Team has played all their Trump cards, the Winning Bid team can play that other suit as if it were a "No-Trump" situation, and can lead that suit for many winning Tricks in a row without fear of being Trumped.

There are many other possible strategies. The best ones are those that you can remember how to use. Such knowledge will come from experience.

## **Playing as the Defenders**

The job of Defending Team is to frustrate the Winning Bid Team. In general, Defenders should try to win the first Trick and as many Tricks as possible prior to the Winning Bid Team earning their first Trick. However, in some cases a better strategy might be to hold on to high Honor cards that are sure winners (for example, the Ace of trumps), in order to prevent the Winning Bid Team from getting on a Trick-winning streak.

There are many other possible strategies. The best ones are those that you can remember how to use. Such knowledge will come from experience.

## **Final Comments:**

The purpose of EZ-Bridge is to enjoy yourself with family and friends. The game can also be intellectually challenging and rewarding. Because it can seem to be self-gratifying to crush, destroy, and humiliate the opposing team with your brilliant play, you may find yourself tempted to dominate your opponents rather than to have fun with them. If you give in to such temptation, your opponents (friends and family) may not want to play with you the next time you ask. I suggest that you keep in mind as your primary goal the maintaining of good relations with your fellow players.

I hope you enjoy playing EZ-Bridge and 3-Person EZ-Bridge. If so, drop me a line to let me know. My email address is:

**JOHNZORICH@YAHOO.COM**

From time to time, I will put new information about EZ-Bridge on my "website", which is

**[HTTP://BRIEFCASE.YAHOO.COM/JOHNZORICH](http://BRIEFCASE.YAHOO.COM/JOHNZORICH)**

(the new information will be in a sub-folder named "EZ-Bridge" on that website).

John N. Zorich, Jr.  
Sunnyvale, California  
April 28, 2002

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EZ-Bridge is the first in a series of "EZ" books.

Other EZ-books currently under development are titled:

EZ-Statistics

EZ-GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices)

EZ-OSHA Compliance

EZ-CE Marking

## Glossary of Terms

### BID

Before the start of each Hand, each player is given the opportunity to "Bid", that is, to verbally state how many Tricks the player thinks that her team can win in the subsequent Hand. The Bid states the number of Tricks and which suit (if any) will be Trump.

### GAME / SET / MATCH

If you are keeping score while playing EZ-Bridge, then the team that earns 30 points first wins the "Game". The team that first wins three Games wins the "Set". The team that first wins 2 Sets wins the "Match".

### HAND

The term "Hand" has more than one meaning. It refers to the 13 cards that you possess at the start of play after Bidding (for example: "Dummy sure has a very strong Hand!"). It also refers to all 52 cards that everyone possesses (for example, "Who dealt this Hand?" (or, as my father says when he has a weak Hand: "Who dealt this mess?").

### NO-TRUMP [ see also "Trump" below]

"No-Trump" describes the situation where the winning Bid has been for "No-Trump", that is, no suit has been chosen to be Trump.

### PASS

If you do not Bid, then you are "Passing", that is, you "Pass" or have "Passed".

### TRICK

A Trick comprises four cards, one from each player, placed into the center of the table. The most valuable card wins the Trick. There are 13 Tricks in a Hand.

### TRUMP [ see also "No-Trump" above]

Trumps are like wild cards in poker. They are the most valuable cards in the Trick. During the play of a Hand, only one of the four suits can be Trump; that is, all cards in that suit are Trump during the play of that Hand. For example, if Hearts are Trump, then all the cards from 2♥ thru A♥ are Trump. The winning Bid determines which suit is Trump; for example, if the winning Bid is "8 Spades", then Spades are Trump.

## Summary of Rules (EZ-Bridge)

(see next page for Summary Rules of 3-Person EZ-Bridge)

### EZ-Bridge

1. Shuffle the deck very well, and deal each player 13 cards.
2. Dealer Bids first (or make up your own rule). The player to the left Bids next, and so on around an around the table.
3. Bids must be for the number of Tricks to be won by the Bidder and Bidder's team member combined, and for the suit that is to become Trump (or the Bidder can say "no Trump").
4. No Bid can be a duplication of a previous Bid (in that Hand). No Bid can be for less than the last Bid (in that Hand). The last player to Bid wins the Bidding. He is the Winning Bidder (because everyone else has Passed).
5. The player to the left of the Winning Bidder plays the first card of the first Trick. The winner of the first Trick plays the first card of the next Trick. The winner of that Trick plays the first card of the next Trick, and so on for the rest of the Tricks.
6. After the Defender to the left of Winning bidder has played the first card of the first Trick in a Hand, the next player (Winning Bidder's partner) may decide (on her own without consultation from anyone) to either continue play as a regular participant, or to sit out the Hand (as the "Dummy") by laying down her Hand face up and allowing her partner to choose which card to play whenever "Dummy" is supposed to play a card.
7. All players must "follow suit" in a Trick after the first card has been played in that Trick. If a player does not have a card in the suit that was led, then the player can play any other card in his Hand.
8. The most valuable card in a Trick wins the Trick.
9. Only the team that wins the Bidding can earn points for winning Tricks; they earn points only if they (combined) win at least the number of Tricks that they Bid, otherwise they lose points.
10. The first team to earn 30 points wins the game.
11. It's OK for someone to keep a paper record of who Bid what suit and who played what card in a Hand, as long as all players get to see it.

## **Summary of Rules (3-Person EZ-Bridge)**

(see previous page for Summary Rules of regular EZ-Bridge)

### **3-Person EZ-Bridge**

1. Same basic rules as for EZ-Bridge, except that one of the players is the permanent "Dummy" Hand.
2. The Dummy Hand is laid out face up prior to the start of Bidding.
3. Whoever wins the Bid must change seats with whichever player is seated opposite the Dummy Hand.
4. Whichever individual player earns 30 points first wins the game (the Winning Bidder gets to count the Tricks earned by both her and Dummy).

# EZ Bridge Memory Help Form

Hand #

Player's Names				
Rounds of Bidding				
Cards Played	A♣.	A♦	A♥	A♠
	K♣.	K♦	K♥	K♠
	Q♣.	Q♦	Q♥	Q♠
	J♣.	J♦	J♥	J♠
	10♣.	10♦	10♥	10♠
	9♣.	9♦	9♥	9♠
	8♣.	8♦	8♥	8♠
	7♣.	7♦	7♥	7♠
	6♣.	6♦	6♥	6♠
	5♣.	5♦	5♥	5♠
	4♣.	4♦	4♥	4♠
	3♣.	3♦	3♥	3♠
2♣.	2♦	2♥	2♠	
Hand results				