

# Discover the Fun & Challenge of Duplicate Bridge

by Karen Walker, Champaign IL © 2002

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Like any game, bridge is more fun if you play it well. Over 200,000 U.S. bridge players have found that duplicate bridge is one of the best ways to improve their skills *and* enjoy playing their favorite game. These people compete in daily and weekly duplicate games -- some just for novices and newcomers -- held in virtually every city (and many small towns) in the country. Almost all of these club games are open to anyone who knows how to play beginning bridge.



## What's different?

Duplicate bridge is not really a different form of the game than you've learned. You still play "regular" bridge, but the final score on each hand is determined by a comparison method (called matchpoints) instead of just total points. It's called duplicate because each hand you play will be played at several other tables during the session, under the same conditions. Unlike rubber bridge, which depends heavily on being dealt good hands to win, your final score at duplicate depends only on how well you bid and play the cards you actually hold, not on how "good" those cards are.

As you become more experienced with playing duplicate, you'll probably want to adopt some strategies that cater to this form of scoring. Later in this brochure, you'll find some tips on how to make "duplicate-style" bidding and play decisions that will improve your matchpoint scores.

## Are you good enough to play?

If you know the basics of bridge bidding and can play at a reasonable pace, you can play duplicate. The most common misconception about duplicate is that you have to be an experienced player or even an "expert" to enter the games. In fact, playing duplicate bridge is one of the best ways to *become* a better player.

The setup of a duplicate game gives you the opportunity to play against a wide variety of pairs -- from experts to bare beginners -- and to compare your bidding and play with theirs. Your mistakes (and your triumphs) will be clearer because you'll see how several other players bid and played the same cards you held. And because you have the chance to earn a top score on every hand (even if you hold a "Yarborough" with no honor cards), you'll be paying full attention to every trick!

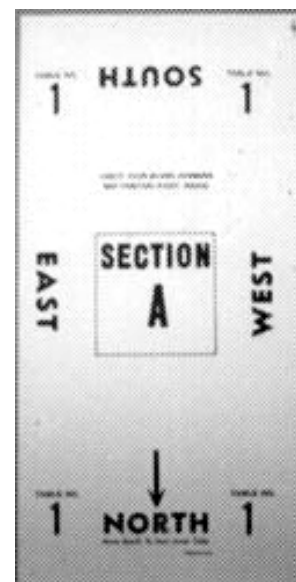
This brochure will introduce you to duplicate game movements, scoring and strategies, but there's really no need to study before you play. The best way to enjoy duplicate is to just jump in and play in the games.

# How a Duplicate Game Works

When you enter a duplicate game, you and your partner will be assigned a table number and a direction (North-South or East-West). Each table will have a large card in the center that designates the table number and which seats North-South and East-West should take. You'll also be given a pair number, which is usually the same as your starting table number.

In most movements of 7 tables or more, if you're North-South, you'll play at your starting table for the whole session. You'll play a round of 2-4 hands against the East-West pair who starts there, then a new pair and new hands will come to your table for the next round. If you're East-West, you'll move to a new table after every round.

In games of 6 or fewer tables, you may play in a scrambled movement where all pairs change tables and directions after every round. The table cards will give you instructions about where to move for each new round.



The number of hands you play in a duplicate session will vary from about 20 to 28, and you'll play against from 5 to 13 other pairs. You don't need any special knowledge of how the game movement works. The director will handle the movement of pairs and boards, so all you have to do is play the people and the hands that come to your table.

## Duplicate boards

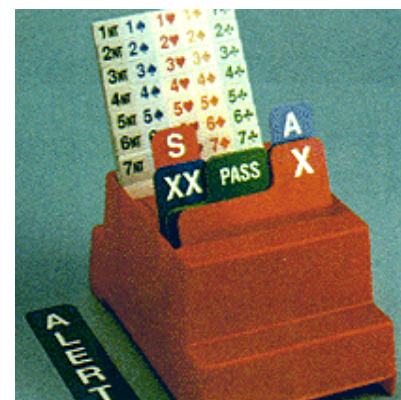
Each hand will come to your table in a duplicate "board" -- a tray with a deck of cards already separated into the four hands. For the first round only, you'll shuffle the cards and place each hand into one of the four pockets in the board. The boards are then placed in the center of the table to match the directions on the table card.



In duplicate scoring, each hand stands alone; part-scores and vulnerability do not carry over to the next deal. Instead, each board has imprints that tell you the conditions for that hand only -- who the dealer is and whether or not each side is vulnerable. The NSEW directions are also marked on the board so you know which hand to take.

## Bidding boxes

More and more clubs are now using bidding boxes, which allow you to make your bids with printed cards. Each table has four boxes, one for each player. The back section of the box has a tiered stack of 35 bidding cards -- one for each of the 35 possible bids (1C through 7NT). The front section contains several Pass cards (green), Double cards (red X) and Redouble cards (dark-blue XX). The box also has a few special cards to be used when you make jump bids (the red "Stop" card) or alertable calls (the light-blue "A" card).



Instead of saying your bid (or pass) out loud, you take the appropriate card (and all the cards behind it) from your box and place it on the table in front of you. If you want to open 1NT, for example, place your thumb on the tabbed 1NT card and pull it and all the cards behind it out of the box. You'll have a stack of five cards labeled 1C through 1NT, with the 1NT card on top. As you make subsequent bids, place the new stacks of cards on top of those you've already used, overlapping them so everyone can see all your previous bids.

When the auction is over and you're ready to begin play, return all the bidding cards to the back of the box (they'll already be in proper order). If you've used the smaller Pass, Double and Redouble cards, place them in the front of the box.

Players like bidding boxes because everyone at the table can always see all the bids made in the auction. In addition to helping hearing-impaired players, this method also saves time, reduces noise and prevents you from "mis-hearing" a bid. Learning to use the bidding boxes is easy and takes just a minute or two. If your local club has bidding boxes, the director or another player will show you how to use them.

## The play

The bidding starts with the hand marked Dealer and progresses normally. Once play begins, though, all four players must keep their original hands intact so other pairs can play the exact same deal later.

To keep your cards separate, play to each trick by placing your card face up in front of you instead of in the middle of the table. When the trick is complete, turn your played card face-down (still in front of you). If your side won the trick, place the card vertically (pointing toward you and partner). If you lost the trick, turn the card horizontally (pointing toward your opponents). This allows you to see how many tricks each side has won at any point in the play.

Although dummy doesn't make decisions during the play, he is responsible for handling his own cards and keeping track of the tricks won and lost. When you're declarer, you don't need to reach across the table to play from dummy. Just tell dummy which card you want to play to each trick ("small spade" or "play the ace", for example) and he'll detach the card for you.

All four players' played cards stay face-down in front of them, lined up so everyone can always see how many tricks each side has taken. When the play is complete and both sides agree on the score, count your cards (to be sure none got mixed in with an opponent's cards) and put your original hand back into the proper pocket on the board.

## The game director

The director sells entries, makes coffee, sets up the movement, adds up scores (or enters them into a computer), awards masterpoints and handles dozens of other jobs involved in running a duplicate game. The director will help you score, fill out a convention card and read the final tallies. Most will even answer your questions about bridge bidding and play.

The director is also there to make sure the game is fair for everybody. If something unusual occurs at your table -- a rule violation, a hand with only 12 cards, an incorrect score on a score slip, anything -- you should call the director to handle it. He uses a rule book to make standardized adjustments for irregularities in the bidding or play (a revoke or a bid out of turn, for example).

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# How a Duplicate Game is Scored

## Scoring each deal

Since each deal is scored separately, duplicate gives no rubber bonus. Instead, you score an immediate bonus for each contract made, whether it's a partscore, game or slam. The bonuses are:

**For all partscores:** Trick score + 50 pts.

**Non-vulnerable games:** Trick score + 300 pts.

**Vulnerable games:** Trick score + 500 pts.

**Slam bonuses and penalties** (for contracts not made) are the same as in rubber scoring. Duplicate does not award points for holding honors.

The score for a 3D contract that makes exactly 3 would be +110 -- 60 for the trick score (3 x 20) plus 50 pts. for making a partscore. A vulnerable 4H game that makes an overtrick would be +650 -- 150 for the trick score (30 x 5) plus the 500-pt. game bonus.

You don't need to memorize the scores or even know how to figure them. Instead, you can refer to a printed scoring table that will be available at your club, or you can ask your opponents to help you. If your club uses bidding boxes, you'll find all the possible scores for each contract on the back of the corresponding bidding card.

The player sitting North records the score for each deal. In tournaments and in some clubs, the scores for each set of boards are recorded on a separate scorecard that the director picks up after each round. Other clubs use a traveling score slip, one for each board, which is folded and put back into the board with the cards. When the board is played by other pairs, they'll enter their scores on the same traveling score. In later rounds, you'll be able to see the results from other tables and compare your scores with theirs.

A completed traveler from a 7-table game might look like this:

Each of the 7 North players filled in the contract, declarer, number of tricks made or down, the score and the pair number of their EW opponents. The last column shows the matchpoint score, which the director (or the club computer) figures after the game.

North scores on the line number that matches his pair number. He fills in the East-West pair number in another column on the right. If North-South earn a plus score, the result is recorded in the N-S column; if East-West has the plus score, it's placed in the E-W column.

One other small difference from rubber bridge is that in duplicate, a pass-out score is recorded just like all other contracts. You do not redeal, even if it's the first round and you're the first table to play the hand. North just writes "pass" in the Contract column and records "0" in the Score column.

OFFICIAL A.C.B.L. TRAVELING SCORE (Mitchell or Howell)								
North player keeps score								Board No.
Enter E-W Pair No.								1
N-S Pair No.	CONTRACT	BY	Tricks Made	Down	SCORE		E-W Pair No.	Match Points
					N-S	E-W		
1	4H	S	5		450		1	6
2	4H	S	4		420		3	4½
3	4H	S	4		420		5	4½
4	3H	S	4		170		7	2
5	3NT	N	3		400		2	3
6	3NT	N		2		100	4	0
7	6H	S		1		50	6	1

## Tallying the final game scores

At the end of the game, the scores on the travelers are used to determine each pair's matchpoint score on each hand. On each hand, you receive 1 matchpoint for every pair you beat and 1/2 matchpoint for every pair you tie. If a board is played 7 times, the top score is 6 -- 1 matchpoint for beating each of the other 6 pairs who played the hand -- and average is 3.

Your result on each hand is compared only with the pairs who held the same cards and sat the same direction (NS or EW) you did. On the traveler above, if you were NS #1, your +450 (for 4H making 5) would earn you a top score of 6 because it beat all the other NS scores. Your opponents on this hand (EW #1), scored 0 because all other EW pairs did better. EW #4 earned the EW "top" of 6.

To complete the scoring, the director adds up the matchpoints from the travelers and ranks pairs by total points. If you play 28 hands in a 7-table game, the average total score is 84 (28 hands x 3, the average matchpoint score on each hand). Players call this average score a "50% game". A 60% score will usually win; 55% often places second or third.

The director may do all the figuring himself, but more and more clubs are now using computers. The director enters the results from each table and the computer figures the matchpoints and total scores and ranks the pairs. The final results from the game will be available within minutes (or seconds) after you play the last hand.

All pairs' scores and rankings will be displayed on a large "recap sheet" the director will post after the game. In most games, there will be a separate sheet for NS and EW. Each sheet will list all the pairs that played that direction, their matchpoint scores and percentages, their ranks, and the number of masterpoints they won. Below the pair listing will be grid that shows the result and matchpoint score for every hand at every table. Ask the director or another player for help if you'd like to learn more about how to read the results. Most clubs can also give you a computer printout of your pair's results and matchpoint scores on each hand.

Winners and runners-up in each game are awarded official masterpoints from the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL). If your club uses a computer and if you're an ACBL member, your club director will send your points directly to ACBL, which will send you a bi-monthly report of the points you've won.

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## The Convention Card

Just like the pairs you play at rubber bridge, duplicate pairs vary in their bidding styles and agreements about the meanings of certain bids. As their opponent, you have a right to know about their special agreements, so each duplicate player fills out a card that summarizes his pair's bidding system.

Filling out this card before the game is a good way for you and partner to discuss your bidding system. The card's main purpose, though, is to inform your opponents about your agreements. During the game, you can consult your opponents' convention card if you want to know how they play a certain bid. The card will tell you about key areas of your opponents' bidding system -- for example, the point range for their opening notrump bids (for 1NT, 15-17 is becoming more common than 16-18) and if they use Weak Two-Bids or Strong Twos, Negative Doubles and other conventions.

The card contains space for all the possible agreements a pair might have. The areas printed in red are non-Standard bids, and your opponents will alert you to their unusual meaning if these bids come up at your table. Players who use a fairly basic, "Goren"-type system probably won't mark any of the red areas on the card.

Blank convention cards will be available at your club. The first time you play, the director will help you and your partner fill it out, which takes just a few minutes. If you play a basic, Standard American system, your card may look like this one. The main sections of the card you would mark include:

<b>SPECIAL DOUBLES</b>		<b>NOTRUMP OVERCALLS</b>		<b>NAMES</b> <u>CHUCK &amp; BETTY GOREN</u>	
Negative <input type="checkbox"/> : thru _____ thru 4♠+ <input type="checkbox"/>		Direct: <u>16 to 18</u> Systems on <input type="checkbox"/>		<b>GENERAL APPROACH</b>	
Responsive <input type="checkbox"/> : thru _____ Maximal <input type="checkbox"/>		Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>		<b>STANDARD</b>	
Support: Dbl. <input type="checkbox"/> thru _____ Redbl <input type="checkbox"/>		Balancing: <u>10 to 15</u>		TWO OVER ONE: Game Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Game Forcing Except When Suit Rebid <input type="checkbox"/>	
Card-showing <input type="checkbox"/> Min. Offshape T/O <input type="checkbox"/>		Jump to 2NT: Minors <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Lowest <input type="checkbox"/>		VERY LIGHT: Openings <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd Hand <input type="checkbox"/> Overcalls <input type="checkbox"/> Preempts <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>		FORCING OPENING: 1♠ <input type="checkbox"/> 2♠ <input type="checkbox"/> Natural 2 Bids <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>SIMPLE OVERCALL</b>		<b>DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP</b>		<b>NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS</b>	
1 level <u>8 to 16</u> HCP (usually)		vs: _____		16 <sup>1NT</sup> to <u>18</u>	
often 4 cards <input type="checkbox"/> very light style <input type="checkbox"/>		2♣ <u>NATURAL</u>		3♠ <u>FORCING</u>	
<b>Responses</b>		2♦ _____		3♣ _____	
New Suit: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> NF Const <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NF <input type="checkbox"/>		2♥ _____		3♥ _____	
Jump Raise: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>		2♠ _____		3♠ _____	
		Dbl: _____			
		Other: _____			
<b>JUMP OVERCALL</b>		<b>OVER OPP'S T/O DOUBLE</b>		<b>2NT 21 to 23</b>	
Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		New Suit Forcing: 1 level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 level <input type="checkbox"/>		Puppet Stayman <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Jump Shift: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>		Transfer Responses:	
		Redouble implies no fit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Jacoby <input type="checkbox"/> Texas <input type="checkbox"/>	
		2NT Over Limit+ Limit Weak		3♠ _____	
		Majors <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		<b>3NT 24 to 26</b>	
		Minors <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Conventional NT Openings:	
		Other _____		_____	
<b>OPENING PREEMPTS</b>		<b>VS Opening Preempts Double Is</b>		<b>MAJOR OPENING</b>	
Sound Light Very Light		Takeout <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thru <u>4S</u> Penalty <input type="checkbox"/>		Expected Min. Length 4 5	
3/4-bids <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Conv. Takeout: _____		1st/2nd <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Conv./Resp. _____		Lebensohl 2NT Response <input type="checkbox"/>		3rd/4th <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Other: _____		<b>RESPONSES</b>	
<b>DIRECT CUEBID</b>				Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>	
OVER: Minor Major Artif. Bid				After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				Conv. Raise: 2NT <input type="checkbox"/> 3NT <input type="checkbox"/> Splitter <input type="checkbox"/>	
Strong T/O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				Other: _____	
Michaels <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>				1NT: Forcing <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-forcing <input type="checkbox"/>	
				2NT: Forcing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> _____ to _____	
<b>SLAM CONVENTIONS</b>				3NT: <u>16 to 18</u>	
Gerber <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4NT: Blackwood <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RKC <input type="checkbox"/> 1430 <input type="checkbox"/>				Drury <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Way <input type="checkbox"/> Fit <input type="checkbox"/>	
				Other: _____	
vs Interference: DOPI <input type="checkbox"/> DEPO <input type="checkbox"/> Level: _____ ROPI <input type="checkbox"/>				<b>MINOR OPENING</b>	
				Expected Min. Length 4 3 2 Other	
				1♠ <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
				1♦ <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>LEADS</b> (circle card led, if not in bold)		<b>DEFENSIVE CARDING</b>		<b>RESPONSES</b>	
versus Suits		vs SUITS vs NT		Double Raise: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>	
versus Notrump		Standard: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		After Overcall: Force <input type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weak <input type="checkbox"/>	
xx xxxx xx xxxx		Except <input type="checkbox"/>		Conv. Raise: 2NT <input type="checkbox"/> 3NT <input type="checkbox"/> Splitter <input type="checkbox"/>	
xxx xxxxx xxx xxxxx		Upside-Down:		Other: _____	
AKx T9x AKJx AQJx		count <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		1NT/1♠ <u>6 to 10</u>	
KQx KJTx AJT9 AT9x		attitude <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		2NT Forcing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inv. <input type="checkbox"/> <u>12 to +</u>	
QJx KT9x KQJx KQT9				3NT: <u>16 to 18</u>	
JT9 QT9x QJT9 QT9x				Other: _____	
KQT9 JT9x T9xx					
<b>LENGTH LEADS:</b>		<b>FIRST DISCARD</b>		<b>DESCRIBE</b>	
4th Best vs SUITS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Lavinthal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		2♣ _____ to _____ HCP	
3rd/5th Best vs SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>		Odd/Even <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Strong <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
Attitude vs. NT <input type="checkbox"/>				2♦ Resp. Neg <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Primary signal to partner's leads</b>		<b>OTHER CARDING</b>		2♦ _____ to _____ HCP	
Attitude <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Count <input type="checkbox"/> Suit preference <input type="checkbox"/>		Smith Echo <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Trump Suit Pref. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		2♥ _____ to _____ HCP	
		Foster Echo <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>SPECIAL CARDING</b> <input type="checkbox"/>		<b>PLEASE ASK</b>		2♠ _____ to _____ HCP	
				Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Conv. <input type="checkbox"/>	
				OTHER CONV. CALLS: New Minor Forcing: <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Way NMF <input type="checkbox"/>	
				Weak Jump Shifts <input type="checkbox"/> 4th Suit Forcing: 1 Round <input type="checkbox"/> Game <input type="checkbox"/>	

- **NOTRUMP OPENING BIDS:** Fill in your point range for 1NT, 2NT and 3NT opening bids. If you play Stayman, put a checkmark or X in the "2C Stayman" box.
- **MAJOR OPENINGS:** If you play 5-card majors, mark the "Never" or "Seldom" boxes (under the heading "1H-1S Opening on 4 Cards"). If you play a jump raise of partner's opening major (1H-3H) is a forcing bid, mark the "Forcing" box after "Double Raise". If you play this jump as invitational (10-11 pts.), mark the "Inv." box.
- **MINOR OPENINGS:** Mark the "3+" boxes next to 1C and 1D. Mark "Forcing" or "Inv." to indicate the strength you show for a jump raise of partner's minor (1C-3C). On the "1NT/1C" line, fill in the point range you show when partner opens 1C and you respond 1NT (usually 6-9 or 6-10 pts.). Then fill in the point ranges you promise when you respond 2NT and 3NT to partner's opening bid of a minor.

- **2C, 2D, 2H, 2S:** If you play Strong Two-Bids, you can write "Strong" or just leave these boxes blank. If you play Weak Two-Bids, fill in the point range next to each bid.
- **OTHER CONVENTIONAL AGREEMENTS:** If you and your partner have any special bidding agreements that don't seem to be covered by the other areas of the card, just write a short description of them here.
- **DIRECT NT OVERCALLS:** Fill in the strength you show when your right-hand opponent opens and you make a direct overcall of 1NT (15-17 or 16-18 pts.).
- **SIMPLE OVERCALL:** Fill in the point range for your suit overcalls (usually around 8-16 pts.).
- **JUMP OVERCALL:** Mark the "Weak" box if your jump overcall (1S on your right, 3C by you) is a weak preempt.
- **OPENING PREEMPTS:** Most players mark the "Light" box. If your opening 3-bids routinely show as many as 10 pts., though, mark the "Sound" box.
- **DIRECT CUEBID:** This designates the meaning when you bid the suit your opponent opened (1H on your right, 2H by you, or 1C-2C). If you play this is strong, mark the "Major" and "Minor" boxes next to "Strong Takeout".
- **LEADS:** Circle the card you would lead from each of the listed examples. The standard leads from each holding are printed in boldface, so if that card is the one you would lead, you don't need to mark it. At the bottom, circle "4th Best" to indicate the card you lead from a long suit.

### The private score

On the back (inside) of the convention card is space for you to record your score on each hand. This part of the card is "unofficial" -- it's for your use only, so you can write in anything from the contract and score to a description of your opponents. Since the private score has information on hands your opponents may not have played yet, be sure to keep your card folded so this part isn't visible to anyone else during the game.

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## Matchpoint Tips & Strategies

First and foremost, remember that duplicate is bridge; it doesn't require you to learn a new bidding system. The only real change is in how your final result is scored. Your matchpoint score is based not on how much you beat the other pairs by, but on how many pairs you beat. This one difference from rubber bridge can affect a number of your decisions during the bidding and play. Here are some general tips that will help you adapt your style to matchpoint scoring:

### Choose the highest-scoring game.

For game contracts, you should be most anxious to play in a major, willing to play notrump and reluctant to play in a minor. If you have an 8-card trump fit, it will usually score one trick more than a notrump contract and therefore more matchpoints, especially if it's a major -- your score for 4H making 4 (+420) will beat the pairs who play in 3NT making 3 (+400).

In minor suits, though, this one-trick advantage doesn't give you a higher score -- 5C making 5 (+400) will score



fewer matchpoints than 3NT making 4 (+430). For this reason, contracts of 5C and 5D are somewhat rare at duplicate. Duplicate players will stand on their heads to bid 3NT instead, even if the minor-suit game might be safer.

### **Choose the safest partscore.**

If you're stopping in a partscore, your first choice should still be the major suit, but your choice between a minor and notrump isn't as critical. You should almost always play in the major if you have an 8-card fit -- 2S making 2 (+110) beats 1NT making 1 (+90) or 2C making 2 (+90). If your decision is between notrump and a minor, though, it may be better to play in the suit contract if you have a fit, especially if you have bare-minimum points. Getting a plus score is important, so when you have limited high-card strength, you'll usually want the safety of a trump suit.

### **Go for the big reward.**

Don't settle for a sure contract if you think the odds are good of making a higher-scoring one. Duplicate players tend to bid more "close" games and slams than you might at rubber bridge, so you may want to be a little more liberal in your game and slam bidding, too.

At rubber bridge, if you bid a vulnerable 4H and win all 13 tricks, you may be satisfied with bidding your game and winning the rubber, even if you and your partner had 35 high-card points. At duplicate, though, this will be a poor matchpoint score. With this much combined strength, most of the other pairs will be bidding and making 6H or 7H with your cards, and you may earn 0 matchpoints for your 4H contract.

### **Switch to 15-17 for your 1NT notrump opening bid.**

1NT is one of the most desirable opening bids because it gives such a good description of your hand and because all the responding bids are so well defined. To increase the number of hands that can be opened with 1NT, most duplicate players have shaded down the old point range of 16-18 and are now using 15-17 for 1NT and 20-22 for a 2NT opener. Some use 15-18 for 1NT, and other pairs use lower ranges.

Changing your notrump range to 15-17 will put you on more even footing with the rest of the players in your duplicate game. You don't need to learn a new bidding system to make the change. Just add 1 pt. to the requirements for responder's bids.

### **Make more overcalls.**

Duplicate players often stretch to compete after an opponent opens, so you may want to liberalize your rubber-bridge overcall requirements somewhat. If you're not vulnerable and have a decent 5-card suit, feel free to make a one-level overcall with as few as 8 or 9 pts. (depending on suit quality). You'll want to be a little stronger if you're vulnerable. If you have to overcall at a higher level, you're more likely to be doubled, so be sure your 2-level overcalls are *very* sound (usually a good 6-card suit).

### **Be more aggressive on partscore hands.**

In a duplicate game, even low-level bidding can be quite lively because the players compete more actively for partscores. If your opponents stop at a low level, you should be more willing to balance and try to bid your own partscore (especially if you're short in the opponents' suit and you're not vulnerable). If the opponents can make 2H, your 2S contract may be a winner even if you go set -- your -50 or -100 will beat the pairs who lost -110 defending 2H. If you're vulnerable, though, be more careful. Going down 2 (or down 1 doubled) may be a disaster. Losing 200 points is sure to be worse than the score for letting the opponents make a partscore contract.

### **Sacrifice more often.**

Duplicate players are quite willing, even happy, to sacrifice when their opponents are vulnerable and they are not. At rubber bridge, if you make a non-vulnerable sacrifice over the opponents' vulnerable game and go down 3

doubled, you lose 500 points. That's better than letting them have their 700-pt. rubber bonus, but you've still suffered a sizable loss. At duplicate, however, this minus score could earn you a top matchpoint score. If all the other pairs who held your cards allowed their opponents to bid and make their vulnerable game, your score of -500 will beat their -620's.

### **Look for overtricks.**

A simple overtrick can also make a big difference in your matchpoint score. If other pairs holding your cards bid 3NT and make exactly 9 tricks, they score +400. If you can make 10 tricks, you'll score +430, beating all the other pairs and earning a "top". Unlike in rubber bridge, you may even make a somewhat risky play to try for an extra trick. The search for the "elusive" overtrick is often the explanation if you see a declarer go set in a game that appeared to have a sure 9 or 10 tricks.

However, if you think you're already in a high matchpoint-scoring contract, you can play it safe. Suppose you're declarer in 4S. When dummy comes down, you see you're going to make 10 tricks, but that partner made a very aggressive bid and you have only 21 high-card points between you. Just making your contract will probably be a good matchpoint score, since most other pairs holding your cards won't bid the game.

### **Play with the "field".**

If you're confronted with a key decision during the bidding or play, you should rely on your own bridge judgment, but you may also want to think about the other players holding your cards. Based on what you know about them, do you think they'll be trying for the overtrick, accepting a game invitation, bidding the slam? If so, it may be wise to go for a similar result.

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## **Duplicate Customs**

Most duplicate clubs offer a social, friendly atmosphere, but the bridge played there is a competition, so the players follow rules designed to ensure an even playing field. The "coffeehousing" that is sometimes accepted in a home game is understandably off-limits at duplicate. Some other customs and matters of "etiquette" you'll want to follow include:



### **Keep the play moving.**

You're expected to play the boards in a reasonable amount of time -- about 7-8 minutes per hand (sometimes longer in a novice game). To give yourself maximum time for the play, try to score quickly and limit your "post-mortem" discussions until after the round.

### **If you're dummy, don't look at partner's hand until after the play.**

You're actually a participant, so stay in your seat to turn the cards for your partner. If you remain neutral in this way, you're allowed to warn partner if he's revoking or leading from the wrong hand.

### **Make your opening lead face-down.**

This gives partner a chance to ask questions if he needs information about the opponents' bidding. It also keeps you from leading when it isn't your turn. If it wasn't your lead, someone will tell you and you can replace the unseen card in your hand.

### **Play your cards in tempo.**

Try to play in an even tempo, without hesitations that can give away information about your hand. When you play to a trick, place your card on the table in front of you. Don't show your satisfaction (or lack of it) by "snapping" or tossing the card.

### **Make your bids in an even tempo and voice.**

Try not to use mannerisms or voice inflections that might convey unauthorized information. Sighs, grimaces, slow passes and loud doubles aren't appropriate. Neither are extra words in your bids -- "I guess I have to pass" or "I'll double you" aren't proper bids.

If you have a tough decision to make during the bidding or play, you're entitled to take extra time to think. Your partner, however, *cannot* take advantage of the knowledge that you had a problem. He must bid his hand normally, ignoring any information that might be suggested by your pause for thought. In these situations, the partner of the player who hesitated should take care not to make any bid or play that might be construed as even slightly unusual. In most cases, if your partner thinks for a while and then passes, you should pass, too, unless that would be a *totally* illogical action with your hand.

Don't be offended if your opponents call the director after a hesitation, especially if you think a long time and then pass. The director was *not* called because you violated a rule -- it's a standard practice that protects everyone's rights, yours and theirs. The director will affirm that you were entitled to think and he'll remind your partner that he can't use any inferences suggested by your hesitation. If your partner bids normally, that's the end of it. If the opponents question his action, they may ask the director to adjust the score.

### **Make the best use of bidding boxes.**

If your club uses bidding boxes, try to decide on your bid *before* you reach into the box. If you're still thinking when you start touching the bidding cards, you may inadvertently communicate unauthorized information to partner. If, for example, you start to pull the 2S card and then change your mind and pull out the Pass card, that may suggest that you have "almost enough" to bid 2S. This amounts to thinking out loud, and it puts a lot of pressure on partner to ignore it and bid his hand normally.

As you pull cards from the box, look at the top card to be sure it's the bid you want to make. Occasionally, your thumb may slip and you'll pull out a wrong card. If this happens, you're allowed to take it back -- just say "oops" or the equivalent as soon as you see the wrong card and replace it with the correct one. Note that this applies only to mechanical errors, not to mental ones. If you intentionally pull out a bidding card and then change your mind, no matter how quickly, you are not allowed to change your call.

Place your bidding cards on the table in the same way you place your played cards -- overlapping, so everyone can see all the bids you have made in order. Be sure that you don't communicate any extra information by tossing or slapping the cards.

### **Be familiar with the "Skip-Bid" warning.**

When an opponent makes a preempt or a jump, you may be surprised to hear, "I'm about to make a skip bid, please wait: 3H," or merely, "Skip Bid, 3H". This duplicate novelty is a way of warning the next bidder that a higher-than-expected bid is coming. The warning gives you extra time to plan your action.

With bidding boxes, the red "Stop" card is used to announce a skip bid. To use it, place the Stop card on the table first, then make your bid. Wait about 10 seconds and then remove the Stop card

After your right-hand opponent makes a Skip Bid, you should study your cards for about 10 seconds (or until he picks up the "Stop" card), and then make your bid. You aren't required to give the Skip-Bid or Stop warning when you jump, but it's a good idea. By using the warning, you can reduce the chances that your opponent will make a

fast pass or slow double that might convey unauthorized information to his partner. However, whether you use the warning or not, the next player to bid should still wait about 10 seconds before he makes his call.

### Use the "Alert" procedure if you use special conventions.

If you and your partner use conventions that are not part of basic Standard American bidding, you must "alert" your opponents to this fact when one of these bids comes up during an auction. To do this, the *partner* of the person who made the conventional bid says "Alert" as soon as the bid is made. (Bidding boxes have an "Alert" flag that you tap at the same time you make your verbal Alert.) This tells the opponents that your partner's bid is artificial and has a different meaning than they might expect. The next player to bid can then ask you about the meaning of your partner's bid.

You probably won't hear many Alerts in a novice game, and you may not use any bids that require them. Stayman 2C, Weak Two-bids, Unusual Notrumps, Michaels Cuebids and Negative Doubles are so common that they are *not* Alerts. Some popular bids that require alerts or announcements are:

- o **Jacoby 2NT** (forcing major-suit raise). All of opener's rebids after 2NT are also alertable.
- o **Jacoby Transfers** (after partner opens 1NT) -- When this bid is made, the partner of the bidder *announces* its meaning by saying "Transfer" (instead of "Alert").
- o **1NT opening bids** -- Since different pairs play different point ranges for 1NT, the partner of the 1NT opener announces the point range ("16 to 18" or "12 to 14", for example).
- o **Forcing 1NT response** (after partner opens 1H or 1S) -- This is another "announceable" bid. To let you know he is forced to bid again, opener will simply say "Forcing" when his partner responds 1NT.

The list of "alertable" bids changes from time to time, and beginners aren't expected to be experts on them. If you're in doubt about whether or how you should alert a bid, just ask the club director or the other players for help. If your opponents use an Alert, you can look at their convention card or ask them what it means. To save time and be courteous, wait until it's your turn to bid before you ask questions.

### Rely on the director's help.

Don't be shy about calling the director. The players should never make their own adjustments for revokes, leads out of turn, insufficient bids or any other irregularities. The director is there to do it for you, so call if anything unusual happens.

### Have fun and enjoy the social atmosphere.

Duplicate clubs are social groups, too, so greet your opponents when you arrive at the table and, time permitting, enjoy a conversation. You'll find that duplicate players are intelligent (and often fascinating and unusual) people who welcome newcomers. Just by trying duplicate, you have something in common with every person there, so take advantage of the chance to get to know the players and learn from them. Most are happy to answer questions and will be flattered if you ask their advice after a hand.

## You're ready!

Club and tournament players will tell you that once you experience the excitement and challenge of duplicate, party bridge will pale by comparison. The only way to find out is to try it for yourself.

Duplicate bridge is love at first deal for many rubber-bridge players. For others, it's an acquired interest that takes some time to develop. To find out how much enjoyment the game can offer, you need to give it a chance and play several times.



You can play in both the novice and open games at your local club. If you don't have a partner, call the director and ask to be matched up. If there's a tournament in your area, don't be afraid to give it a try, too. Tournaments are not just for experts. In fact, almost all tournaments cater to newcomers by offering special novice sections and point awards.

You probably won't win the first few times you play. And if you're like most new players (remember that everyone at the game was a once a first-timer), you'll come in last. But as you get to know the people and become more comfortable with the scoring and play -- and experience the excitement of winning your first masterpoints -- you'll be glad you kept trying. And you'll probably find your rubber-bridge game improves dramatically, too!

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## And finally . . . a quotation to give you inspiration:



**" Of all competitive activities, bridge is unique because it offers you the opportunity to improve by competing against better players. The amateur golfer can't play a foursome with Nicklaus; the average tennis player could never hope for a match against Navratilova. But even novice bridge players can sit down at a tournament and play against experts and world champions. "**

*-- Mike Lawrence, bridge writer & world champion*

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