

Welcome to Duplicate Bridge – it’s the same bridge you’ve always played, but more fun!

Why is it more fun? Because you and your partner will play the same hands as all the other East-West or North-South pairs. At the end, you can see how you did overall AND on each hand compared with all the other pairs playing the same direction. Plus, you can view the actual hands with printed hand records or online.

How does the play proceed? You and your partner (if East-West) will play two to four hands against one North-South pair, then move to the next table to play new hands against a new North-South pair, and so on. When you sit down at each table, you’ll find duplicate boards with cards in a separate slot for each player. Dealer will be indicated and of course, this person has the first chance to bid. Take out and count your cards, then proceed to bid by taking the bid you want to make out of a bidding box—someone at the table will show you how.

As you play the hand, 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’ll tell your partner which card to play instead of pulling from the dummy yourself. At the end of the hand, place your cards back in “your” slot to be sent to the next table where they’ll be played again.

How are the hands scored? Each hand is played and scored separately, and the boards indicate which pair(s) are vulnerable on which hands. Scores per trick made are the same as in rubber bridge and there are similar bonuses for bidding and making a game or slam. However, overtricks are even more important because your score on each hand is compared to that of other pairs on the same hand. Example: you may bid and make four spades (scoring 420 or 620 depending on vulnerability) but if most other pairs bid game and made an overtrick (scoring 450 or 650), you won’t do so well on that hand.

A few other helpful things to learn:

- **Choose to be East-West** when you’re starting out. North has to enter the contract and scores for each hand on a small electronic device. East or West then checks and “accepts” them.

- **Make your opening lead face down**, to prevent problems such as leading out of turn.
- **When it's your turn to bid, you're allowed to ask** the partner of an opponent what the opponent's bid means if you're not sure. Especially if the opponent says "alert," his partner's bid probably means something unusual. Other players may also ask you what one of your partner's bids means—for example, is a jump bid strong or weak? If so, just be honest. In duplicate, no player is allowed to make bids that only his partner understands.
- **Directors are there to help:** If there's an irregularity, such as a player leading out of turn or exposing a card not played, someone at the table should call the director. He'll try to make a decision that's fair to everyone. All of us at times do something that warrants a director call—he's there to help, not to chastise anyone.
- **Before playing, you and your partner may want to fill out a few things on a convention card** such as your point-count range for opening 1 NT, whether you open 4- or 5-card majors, whether you bid weak 2-bids or are all your opening 2 bids strong. Someone can show you how. But, don't worry too much about the convention card the first few times you play.
- **More about scoring:** Matchpoints are awarded for results on each hand. You'll receive one matchpoint for each pair whose result you beat and one-half a point for each pair whose result you tie. At the end of the game you'll see your total matchpoints and how you did compared to all other pairs playing the same direction. Play well and you'll be awarded masterpoints, which allow you to work toward new ranks on your way to becoming a Life Master. (You must join the American Contract Bridge League, however, for your masterpoints to count toward new ranks.)
- **This is a friendly club!** Everyone will be happy to help you learn anything about duplicate you want or need to know, or anything about all the other games and learning opportunities offered by this club. If you encounter someone who makes you uncomfortable (very unlikely), let the director know either right away or when you've left the table. This club has a zero tolerance policy toward any player who doesn't behave as he should.