

Introduction: The Cards and the Play

Rubber Bridge is played with two decks of cards, usually with different colored backs. This allows the dealer's partner to shuffle a deck of cards while the dealer deals the other deck. Once done shuffling the deck is placed to the right of the shuffler (on the left side of the next dealer). It is customary for no one to pick up their cards until the dealer is completely done dealing. After all the dealer is dealing, his partner is shuffling, but most of all ... the dealer is the first person to bid. If the "opponents" picked up their card as they fell on the table they would be already to start play, yet still be sitting waiting for the dealer to pick up and adjust his cards so he could make the first bid.

Once the deal is completed, the next deck to be played is sitting to the left of the next dealer. This is an easy way to keep track of the deal as it rotates around the table in a clockwise direction. After the play the next dealer simply picks up the cards to his left, offers the cut to the opponent on his right, his partner shuffles the deck just played and this is the procedure.

A standard deck of 52 cards is used. In Bridge each suit has a hierarchy. It is easy to remember alphabetically: clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades. During the bidding the same hierarchy applies with the addition of no trump being the highest of all. Each player receives 13 cards in a clockwise manner starting with the player to the dealer's right. The cards are dealt one at a time for 13 rotations around the table.

The bidding also rotates clockwise around the table, again starting with the Dealer. Different from other card games when you make a bid of say "1♣" you are saying clubs will be trump, and you will take one trick ... plus the "book" which is six more tricks ... you are saying, you will take seven tricks total.

The bidding is a communication between you and your partner (with the opponents actively monitoring, disrupting (in form of their own bids), and possibly emphasizing (by doubling, which will be addressed later) your bid. Therefore each standard bid has agreed upon requirements (by your partnership ahead of time). Most of the time these are "standard" requirements accepted by most average players. These requirements ... this communication ... the bidding ... is what most the remainder of this book is about.

These "requirements" change based on the "role" of the bid, and based on the "position" of the bid. The first person to bid has the role (is called) the Opener. If the opponent to his left bids, his role is the Over-caller (his bid is called an over-call). If the Opener's partner bids he is the Responder (his bid is a response bid). If the Over-caller's partner bids, he is the Advancer. The dealer sits in the "first seat" position, and 2nd, 3rd, 4th seat are the seats clockwise around the table. I played bridge for many years without knowing these things, so don't worry too much about them right now. I would say most people you will be playing bridge with will not even know what an "Advancer" is, let alone the changes in bidding requirements.