

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

The coming months will be exciting on all fronts. Initially, I will hold the third set of beginner bridge classes starting on March 30. We'll be in the children's room, down the hall from our main practice room. After the class finishes on May 4, expect to see a number of new novice players show up for practice.

In that light, I plan to set up a couple of "learner tables". These tables will be for those who want to continue the bridge learning process – frequent questions, regular use of the bridge bidding sheet, etc. We'll set up more such tables as needed.

Please be supportive of our new members when they arrive. Our club is very new and many of the current players have less than 8 months of experience. That number will increase in May. Help them when you can; be patient otherwise. With time we'll build a vibrant community where you'll get all the competition you can hope for.

I'll also be bringing in some more bridge tables. I'll ask for donations in coming weeks to cover the cost for those who show up to practice. I think \$3 to \$5 apiece should suffice – give what you can. If there are any excess funds, I'll use them to buy more cards later in the year.

As always, practice, practice, practice! And convince your friends to join us! Our message to the community: bridge is fun and intellectually stimulating – come join us! All ages are welcome!

Beginner Bridge Lessons

Next Class:

Lesson 1: Intro to Bridge – Mar 30

Lesson 2: Declarer Play – Apr 6

Lesson 3: Opening Bids – Apr 13

Lesson 4: Responses – Apr 20

Lesson 5: Opening NT Bids – Apr 27

Lesson 6 (optional): Defense – May 4

Each class is from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

Every Saturday from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

Four Is Fast

I hadn't noticed that four-deal bridge is the new popular scheme for social bridge groups. I'll make up for my slowness by discussing two variations of that four-deal approach. Note that four-deal bridge is often called "Chicago", based on the city that popularized the approach in the 1960's.

All variations have similarities. First, the setup, bidding, and play are the same as in rubber bridge. Second, a "rubber" consists of 4 hands (rather than the rubber bridge best two of three games). In addition, the vulnerability is pre-defined for each of the four hands. By default, no one is vulnerable in the first hand, the dealer is vulnerable in the second and third hands, and both are vulnerable in the fourth hand. Optionally, the players may all agree that non-dealer is vulnerable in the second and third hands.

This structure provides for quicker turnaround of hands than found in rubber bridge. In particular, when we have extra players waiting at a table (with an insufficient number to form a new 4-person table), they can switch in after four hands.

No matter the format of the scoring sheet, two crossed lines (in the form of an “x”) are inserted at the top of the scoring sheet to track the number of the hand. A “1” is placed in the proper quadrant (in relation to the scorer) to mark the first dealer. Subsequently, “2”, “3”, and “4” are placed in the other quadrants sequentially. This set of four markings is called a “wheel”.

The main difference between Chicago and rubber bridge is in the scoring. The main variation, described in the ACBL *Laws of Rubber Bridge*, maintains the “below the line/above the line” scoring of rubber bridge. Moreover, the rules allow part scores to accumulate. For example, if a team scores part scores in the first and second hands that total 100 points or more, that team will score a game bonus based on the vulnerability for the second hand.

However, the bonus for winning a game is different. A non-vulnerable game adds 300 points above the line, while a vulnerable game adds 500 points. Additionally, a part score in the fourth game adds 100 points above the line. Richard Pavlicek shows an example of Chicago scoring at <http://www.rpbridge.net/1ub9.htm>.

Another major variation, popular with duplicate bridge players, further simplifies the scoring. Each of the four hands is scored separately, with no accumulation of part-score games. All scores for a hand are totaled for that hand – there is no above or below the line scoring. Furthermore, each part score contract made is awarded a 50-point bonus. Eddie Kantar shows an example of this variation in *Bridge for*

Dummies. You can find it online by googling “Eddie Kantar Chicago wheel”.

Other variations blend together miscellaneous parts of the above methods.

I’ll teach Chicago bridge scoring to the beginner class starting March 30. I hope others in the practice group will try it out too.

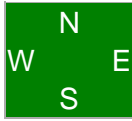
The Negative Double

Let’s discuss another topic related to use of the double. In previous articles the double was used by a defender with 13+ points to enter the bidding after their opponents’ opening bid.

A new use of the double – the **negative double** – is made by the responder to an opening bidder after an opponent’s overcall. Of course, the call is “double” (not “negative double”!), and it is used to show support for the unbid suits, particularly the unbid major(s).

When will responder use this form of double? When they don’t have an easy way to show their holdings in the unbid suits.

The responder must have at least 6 points (preferably 8+) but may have much more. The subsequent bidding will clarify the strength of responder’s hand. Here is a typical example:

	♠ A 7 2	
North Deals	♥ K 9 6 4	
None Vul	♦ K J	
	♣ Q J 5 3	
♠ J 4		♠ K Q 10 8 5
♥ A 10 7		♥ 8 2
♦ 10 9 6		♦ A 5 4 2
♣ 10 9 7 6 2		♣ A 8
	♠ 9 6 3	
	♥ Q J 5 3	
	♦ Q 8 7 3	
	♣ K 4	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	All pass	

This is the negative double pattern. North opens at the one level, East overcalls at the one or two level, and South doubles. What does the double mean? It says “Partner, I don’t have the right hand to bid a suit directly or to support your suit. However, I have 6+ points and support for the unbid suits. In particular, I have 4 cards in the unbid major (hearts).”

Why doesn’t South just bid 2H directly? First, to bid at the two level requires 10+ points (average hand or better). Second, a two-level bid of hearts usually is made with 5 hearts rather than 4. The other choice – 1NT – is risky with no spade stopper. So, without the negative double, South would be stuck – they would have no good bid.

North rebids as if East hadn’t overcalled: as if South had directly bid 1H (as would happen if the overcall had not occurred). So, with 4 hearts North bids 2H to show a minimum hand. With a medium hand North would bid 3H (or double jump to 4H with 19+).

Many players allow a negative double after any overcall up through 2S (I recommend this level for most beginners). More advanced players allow negative doubles through 4H. You can explore this use of the double with your partner as you gain experience.

Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is a hand from the March 5, 2024, Common Game. I’ve simplified the bidding from that hand to illustrate the basic negative double sequence discussed in an article above.

		♠ A 9 4	
North Deals		♥ A 9 8 7	
None Vul		♦ A 10 5 2	
		♣ 5 3	
♠ 6 5			♠ K Q 10 8 2
♥ J 4 3			♥ 6 2
♦ K J 3			♦ 6 4
♣ 10 9 8 7 4			♣ A K Q 6
		♠ J 7 3	
		♥ K Q 10 5	
		♦ Q 9 8 7	
		♣ J 2	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	All pass	

The bidding is pretty straightforward. After the 1D opening bid, the 1S response shows 10 – 17 points and a 5-card spade suit. South can’t bid 2H directly. That would require 10+ points and 5 hearts. The double (negative) is perfect for the situation. North, with a minimum hand, bids 2H and all pass. (Note: a more aggressive East will double to see if West has club support).

The play is a little tricky. After East takes the AK of clubs, they’ll probably lead a trump. North sees 4 immediate losers (the two clubs plus two spades). There may be two losers in diamonds. However, North knows that East has strong spades and continues accordingly.

After drawing trumps in three rounds, North leads a small spade toward the jack. After East wins the king, they are partially “end-played”. What does that mean? East is forced to lead and will give away a trick. We will discuss other end plays in a future article.

In this case, if East leads a spade, N/S will win an extra spade trick (one loser

eliminated). If East leads another club, N/S will discard a spade from one hand and ruff in the other (a “ruff and sluff”). Again, one spade loser eliminated. So, East leads a diamond, South covers with the nine, West plays the jack, and North wins the ace. Now North will drive out the king of diamonds, the only loser in the suit, taking 8 tricks. There are other approaches that may even make 9 tricks.

So, add the negative double to your repertoire. There are many more examples online. Check out my bridge site for a few references:

<https://bridge.careytutor.com/bidding.html#negativedouble>.

Famous Bridgies

Sharon Osberg earned a degree in political science from Dickinson College in the early 1970's. She moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and took a programming course with Bank of America. She later worked in programming for Wells Fargo, advancing to Vice President in charge of their online banking platform. After retiring from Wells Fargo in 2000, she continued as a consultant, board member, and chief operating officer at various organizations.

In parallel with her early career she became a world-class bridge player, competing in numerous world championships. She is a World Grand Master and has won five national and two world championships.

But she has gained greater prominence as the partner of Warren Buffett (and, later, Bill Gates) after meeting in the early 1990's. She functions as Warren and Bill's bridge teacher and frequent bridge partner. She was also the person who convinced Warren to finally buy a computer (on which he plays bridge – he doesn't need it to track stocks because he owns only one). Sharon and Bill

have also been partners in the Bridge Base (including BBO) software product since 2008.

Bridge Quotes

Everyone loses more than they win. Losing is much more common. You have to develop a thick skin. **Sharon Osberg**, quoted in the *Washington Post*, July 28, 2017.

Olney Bridge Club

The primary purpose of the Olney MD Bridge Club is to teach and encourage social bridge in the areas including and surrounding Olney, Maryland.

We meet regularly (Saturdays from 2:30 – 4:30) at the Olney library for practice playing sessions.

Please feel free to send email to bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com with any questions, comments, recommendations, or other correspondence for the editor. In particular, if you have a bridge article to include in a future newsletter or a suggestion of a possible topic, any such submission would be much appreciated.

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