

FIRST PRINCIPLES IN BRIDGE: BIDDING

1. **Bidding** is designed to **exchange information** in order to get to the best contract. Once either partner has enough information to set the contract accurately, do so—and stop bidding. (Bidding also conveys information to the opponents.) This is known as the principle of **fast arrival**.
2. There are **3 important criteria for bidding: (a) long suits, (b) trump fits, and (c) high cards**. The most powerful hands have high cards concentrated in the long suits.
3. Traditional **High Card Point Count** (Ace=4; King=3; Queen=2; Jack=1) works well for **balanced hands**. For highly **distributional hands, counting losers** is more accurate.
4. **4-4 Major** fits are extremely valuable and accurate bidding is designed to uncover those 4-4 major fits.
5. Given a choice of contracts, playing the hand in a **minor suit** is usually the **last choice**.
6. As Opener and as Responder, classify your hand as **Minimal, Invitational** (inviting game) or **Game-Forcing**. With Minimal hands, stop bidding as soon as possible—looking for any reasonably safe haven. With Invitational hands, usually bid at least twice—inviting partner to go to game (unless you can convey invitational values with a single bid). With Game-Forcing hands, you must get partnership to game.
7. **Hand evaluation goes up and down** (hand gets better or worse) as the bidding proceeds.
8. Partners should try hard to **make descriptive bids**. A descriptive bid is one that informs partner accurately of your (HCP) strength and distribution within a relatively narrow range.
9. When you have made a bid that accurately describes your hand (HCP and distribution), your partner is **Captain**. Captain will place the contract. Captain will ask (through bidding) for further information if s/he needs it. Examples of bids that appoint partner as Captain are: Weak Two bids, preempts, Opening No Trump at any level, Making Two-Suited Overcalls.
10. There are **3 kinds of bids: (a) bids giving information; (b) bids asking questions; (c) bids giving commands**. The Captain usually makes bids that ask questions or give commands.
11. It is more efficient for a very strong hand to ask a weaker hand for information (less to convey). Thus, when you have a very strong, distributional hand (cannot open NT), you will usually open a Strong Two bid—appointing yourself Captain. Subsequent bids involve you asking partner for information. It would be exceedingly rare for partner to start asking you for information (usually too much to tell).
12. When you have **direct support** for partner's suit, it is vital to **inform partner immediately**. If you neglect to support partner with your first call, partner will not believe you have direct support when you support him/her later. (Direct support is 3 or 4-card support for your partner's major opening.)
13. When possible in Declarer play, the **stronger hand should be concealed**.
14. With one exception, **new suits**—when bid by **Responder**—are always **forcing** (partner must bid again).

FIRST PRINCIPLES: DECLARER PLAY

1. **Position** is extremely powerful (play low toward honors; finessing, etc.).
2. **Promotion** of honors (and lower cards) is a fact of life at the table. Use it!
3. When Dummy comes down, **count winners and count losers & make a plan!**
4. In **no trump** contracts, there are **two sources of tricks**: winning through **HCP strength** (and using position & promotion) or winning through **length**. Length winners can be developed through promotion, position, and ducking (giving up early tricks to win later ones).
5. In **suit contracts**, there are 4 sources of tricks: **long suits, ruffing in short trump hand, cross-ruffs, and end plays**. In some hands, you must do a combination of these four approaches. Long suits can be developed by trumping as well as through no trump techniques (promotion, position, ducking)
6. **Avoidance** technique (protecting vulnerable honors from attack) is an important skill (based on position).
7. **Safety plays** (guarding against bad breaks) are useful to know.
8. Have a **back-up plan**. Retaining several different options (Plan A, B, and C) will lead to greater success.
9. Learn **basic percentages**. When you know the odds for different plays, you know which play to try first (because it has a higher likelihood of being successful).
10. **Timing** is vital. Opponents' opening lead may take away some of your options (because you don't have time to develop a suit, e.g.,). In planning the play, must determine what to do first (e.g., pull trumps before developing long suit but do not pull trumps if planning a cross-ruff or needing to ruff in short trump hand).