

Rubber Bridge

Rubber Bridge is a form of contract bridge and is played with four players. It is most often played for fun but is also played seriously for money. Rubber Bridge involves a high degree of skill but there is also a fair amount of luck involved in who gets the best cards. At the Bridge Centre we play a form of Rubber Bridge called Chicago. For the most part, Rubber Bridge is played the same way as duplicate bridge with a few modifications.

There are several versions of this game, also known in the official rules as Four-Deal Bridge. As this name suggests it is a game for four players which is complete in four deals, unlike Kitchen Bridge, where the length of a rubber is indefinite. This greater predictability has made it popular in some North American clubs where Rubber was formerly played. The vulnerability varies from hand to hand in a fixed pattern as follows:

- Hand 1: Neither side vulnerable
- Hand 2: Non-dealer is vulnerable
- Hand 3: Non-dealer is vulnerable
- Hand 4: Both sides vulnerable

Note: the original version of Chicago had the vulnerability reversed in hands 2 and 3, so that the dealing side was vulnerable. The more modern scheme, which has the non-dealing side vulnerable as shown above, tends to lead to more competitive bidding.

If all four players pass, the cards are shuffled again and the hand is re-dealt by the same dealer.

Scoring: The scoring is based on the trick value of each suit (minors worth 20 points, majors worth 30 points and no-trump worth 40 points for the first trick and 30 points for each subsequent trick; Trick values start after the first six tricks have been collected). As in all forms of bridge, game is achieved once a side has accumulated 100 trick points. The game bonus is 500 when vulnerable, 300 when not vulnerable. If a team makes a part score this is carried forward to subsequent deals until one side makes a game. The game bonus awarded is at the prevailing vulnerability. This is the main difference between duplicate bridge and rubber. For example, if your side was to bid and make 2♦ on the first deal you would receive a leg of 40 points. On the next deal, you would only need 60 more points for game; therefore if you played in 2♥ and made it on the next deal, you would receive your game bonus! If a team makes a part score in hand 4 that is not sufficient to complete a game, they score a bonus of 100, but there is no bonus for any part scores made in earlier hands. A final twist to the scoring is honours. In Rubber Bridge we get to claim honours! Honours are the top five cards in trump or the four aces in no-trump. If you have all five top honours (or all four aces in NT) your side

receives a bonus of 150 points. If you have 4 of the top five honours in a trump contract, you receive a 100 point bonus.

At the start of the game, you draw for positions with the two highest cards playing together and the two lowest cards playing together. After the first four hands are complete, you redraw for seats in the next rubber so that you play with a new partner. You would play with the last person of your foursome in the third set which would complete your movement. After that, you simply repeat the original movement. If you have five players, the movement is simple. The four highest cards start playing with the fifth as a kibitzer. After the first rubber, the person who drew the lowest card is removed from the game and replaced with the kibitzer and the two people to the right of the new player switch seats. This change happens after ever four deals.

At the end of every four hands (called the rubber), the scores for each side are added up and the difference in score (rounded to the nearest 100) is entered in the ledger either as a plus or a minus. This is the running score for the game.

Some advantages of Rubber Bridge: There are several advantages to Rubber Bridge that attract people of varying skill levels to the game. First, the speed of the game is dictated by the players in the game. If the goal is to be social or instructive, hands can take 5 to 15 minutes each depending on the complexity of the situations; and since there is no one waiting for you, the director is not concerned with the speed of play. For the slightly more competitive group of players, you can speed the hands up to between 3 and 5 minutes per hand. This allows you to play 10-15 hands per hour. This translates into between 30 and 45 hands in the time it takes to play one duplicate session. Another advantage is the ability to play with multiple people. This increases the social aspect of the game as well as lets you practice with more than one partner at a time. Also, your score is not dependent on the actions of players at another table, just your partnership efforts at your table. Finally, you get to choose your own group of partners and opponents which enhances the social aspect of the game and allows for a more controlled environment.

The basic strategy of Rubber Bridge is similar to that of IMP or team scoring. Overtricks do not matter much and the most important thing is to bid and make your available contracts. There are a lot more subtle strategies that come up and if you are interested I would be happy to expand on them with you in person.

As mentioned earlier, this form of the game can be played for any stakes or none at all, either of which is acceptable. At the Bridge Centre, we often have games that range in stakes from pride alone to at times several cents per point. The most important thing is to have fun at the game we all love!

As with all games at the Bridge Centre, the goal is to have fun! If you are interested in coming out for rubber bridge, we have organized games on Saturdays however, you can come and play rubber on any day of the week in which the club is open however a foursome will need to be organized. If you have any questions in regards to Rubber Bridge, please feel free to approach me at any time and I would be happy to sit down with you and discuss the game. As always, Matthew is also available and is a fantastic resource for you to exploit as well.

Chris Buchanan