

# PLAY BUMBLEPUPPY BRIDGE

Learn the world's most popular card  
game in no time

Julian Laderman



An Honors Book from Master Point Press

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Dedicated to the members of the American Bridge Teachers' Association for helping so many enjoy the pleasure of playing bridge.

### **Illustration Credits**

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Pages 37, 46, 61, 76, 78: *The Rubâiyât of Bridge* (Harper & Brothers Publisher, 1909). The author was Carolyn Wells and the illustrator was May Wilson Preston.

Page 82: *Punch's Almanack* for 1913.

Page 90: two player game called *Double Dummy: Two-Handed Bridge Whist Board*, patented Nov. 28, 1905.

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## INTRODUCTION

(Questions to the author)

***The expression “in no time” on the front cover is an inherent lie. How long in minutes, hours, days etc.?***

Bumblepuppy bridge can be played without reading the whole book. It is only necessary to read the first two chapters, follow the first example in Chapter 3, and watch the part of a free video which corresponds to that example. This requires approximately 50 minutes of reading and 15 minutes more for watching the YouTube video. The 10 minutes required for reading this lengthy (probably too lengthy) ***Introduction*** is not included in the tally.

***How can one learn a complicated game so quickly? Sounds like a total lie!***

No, it is only a partial lie. I prefer to call it misleading. A complete beginner will learn to play a game in the bridge family, called *bumblepuppy bridge*. Some features of this game are identical to standard bridge but in other respects very different. Many difficult aspects of standard bridge were removed. Remember, I am only promising that you will be able to play the game, not that you can play well. Actually, I can even guarantee that you will play extremely poorly.

***Why learn to play this artificial game? Let alone, play it poorly?***

The primary purpose of this game is to provide a stepping-stone to standard bridge.

***I played bridge in college forty years ago. Will that reduce my time commitment?***

No. Even though prior bridge experience will make Chapter 1 faster to read, surprisingly, Chapter 2 will be slower. You will be assuming the game is more complicated than it actually is.

***Bumblepuppy bridge sounds like a game for children. Is that so?***

No. Despite its name, this new game is appropriate for players from age 6 to 106. Nothing dangerous to swallow at either age limit.

***What is bumblepuppy bridge and where did it come from?***

I will use the term *modern bridge* to refer to the standard form of bridge that your friends play. Modern bridge is a very involved challenging game. This is what makes playing well so rewarding for the experienced player, but makes the game often overwhelming for a total beginner trying to learn the game. When beginners take lessons, they go through many lessons before they can have the fun of playing bridge.



As a bridge historian, I am familiar with many earlier forms of the game. Each form had some very simple features and some very complicated ones. I created bumblepuppy bridge by blending (stealing) the simple features from the different forms to create a “new” game. I feel a little uncomfortable even calling it a new game since it is totally based on very old forms of bridge. Sort of like Frankenstein’s monster, I used parts from old dead games.

In 2011, I wrote an article for the American Bridge Teachers’ Association Quarterly describing this game. In 2014, Master Point Press placed an updated description on their website as a free download (updated again in 2017). Those descriptions were meant to be used by experienced bridge players who would like to teach bridge to their non-playing friends. With this website, any experienced bridge player, who is curious about bumblepuppy bridge, can learn in a few pages how the game is played.

The goal of this new small book is to enable total beginners to learn bumblepuppy bridge on their own. No experienced bridge player required.

Bumblepuppy bridge is very similar to the first form of bridge which was extremely popular between 1897 and 1910, but became extinct more than a century ago. In its heyday, this form was usually called *bridge* but at times by the longer name *bridge whist*. The longer name reflected its heritage as a descendant of a card game called *whist*.

If you describe to modern bridge players the mechanics of the game you are learning in this book, they will

understandably tell you that you are not learning real bridge. They will certainly request seeing the book and belittle me. You actually can make the argument that you are the one playing “real” bridge. Modern players play a game called *contract bridge* which is a greatly modified mutation of the original form of bridge. This two-word name was standard in the 1930s and is still often used. Around 1930 when a player used a shorter form of the name, the game would be called *contract*. It would have been confusing to call it *bridge* at that time, since some people would think of the old turn of the century game.

### ***What is a bumblepuppy?***

In 1880, the word *bumblepuppy* was defined as: “Bumblepuppy is persisting to play whist, either in utter ignorance of all known principles, or in defiance of them, or both”. Even though that word was defined in the days of whist, it was still used occasionally to describe poor bridge players during the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I have already indicated that this book will provide you with the mechanics of a game in the bridge family but not with the ability to play it well. Since all new bridge players meet the definition’s requirement “in utter ignorance of all known principles”, I feel bumblepuppy bridge is an appropriate choice as a name for this new game. Besides, I have found that the word bumblepuppy makes people smile. If you wish for a one word name for this game, please call it *bumblepuppy* or *bumblebridge*. For anyone desperate for a still shorter option, *bumble* can be used. I

don't particularly like it, but this name is certainly better than calling it bridge, which would be too misleading.

If your annoying modern day bridge playing friends insist that the word *bumblepuppy* does not exist and go so far as to accuse me of making it up, please suggest that they check *The Official ACBL Encyclopedia of Bridge*. All seven editions include a definition.

### ***What is the purpose of this book?***

As already mentioned, I see it primarily as an instructional tool that can be used as a stepping-stone to the modern game of bridge. Bridge teachers can use it as an independent source of enjoyment while they teach the more rigorous aspects of the modern game. At least new students of bridge will quickly be able to enjoy playing a card game.

The lowest level bridge class that one can take is described as a course for beginners. But not all students in the class will actually be real beginners. Most will have had some experience, admittedly possibly not since the Kennedy Administration. Some may have enrolled because they are not quite prepared for the course for advanced beginners. If you are really a total beginner, playing a little bumblepuppy bridge may save you from drowning on your first day of class. You can at least do a dogpaddle.

In **Chapter 4** bumblepuppy bridge players will learn how to convert themselves into modern bridge players. I provide information on how one can find beginner bridge

classes and private teachers in most any locality. I also recommend several books, websites, and software.

In **Appendix 3** I describe a version of bumblepuppy bridge that is designed to be an enjoyable single-player game. It has the potential to be an appealing game for a smartphone or an airplane passenger entertainment system.

Most words have the same meaning in both bumblepuppy bridge and modern bridge, but some only apply to one game. Remember to refer to the **Glossary** that appears at the end of the book.

Bumblepuppy Bridge is far inferior to modern bridge. Hopefully all readers will move on to the much more exciting game. There are unfortunately some individuals who just cannot master the more challenging aspects of modern bridge. But hopefully, they can derive some pleasure from playing bumblepuppy bridge. Studies have shown bridge to be a worthwhile mental exercise for the elderly. It is a shame that many experienced players give up bridge entirely as their skills diminish. Perhaps they can still enjoy themselves with the mental exercise required to play this simpler version.

There is another way bumblepuppy bridge has the potential to generate interest in the game of bridge. A spectator, even if totally unfamiliar with bumblepuppy bridge, will be able to follow a deal being played after merely a two-minute lesson. The two-minute lesson can be removed if a commentator is describing play-by-play. Would it be possible to have bridge stars playing for large cash prizes

on TV, a la Texas Hold'um? Maybe with a mix of celebrities who are playing for their favorite charity. This did actually occur around 1960 on a television show, *Championship Bridge with Charles Goren*. I guess I am dreaming when I think of bridge on TV, but please let me dream for a minute.

***I glanced through the book and you always use the pronoun “he”. Don’t women play, or are you a misogynist?***

Actually, throughout history, more women have played bridge than men. The illustrations in this book depict more women than men, so I compensate by always using the pronoun “he”, except when I am referring to a woman in an illustration or on the video.

***Speaking of illustrations, why do they all depict players in old fashion dress?***

Since bumblepuppy bridge is similar to the form of bridge played around 1900, I use illustrations from books and magazines published at that time. Also, conveniently, these sources are all centenarians so they are no longer under copyright laws. The sources are listed on the same page as the **Dedication**.

***Do readers have to unlearn a lot of stuff when they convert from bumblepuppy bridge to modern bridge?***

I am happy to say that virtually nothing has to be unlearned. I do have to admit that this positive statement is greatly the

result of readers learning so little from this book. But, at least they quickly have a new game to play.

***Was the method used in this book tested on real people?***

To some extent it was tested. I tested it on a few groups of close friends who initially possessed absolutely no knowledge of bridge. In retrospect, apparently, some wished to remain that way. The good news is that they could play the game very quickly. The bad news is that I now have fewer close friends.

This experiment was flawed since my friends are more intelligent than the average person. I tried to compensate by putting up a notice on the bulletin board in my apartment building (600 apartments) requesting neighbors with below average intelligence to take part in my experiment. Would you believe, no one showed up!

# CHAPTER 1

## The Tricky Nature of Bridge

You will notice that the title of the chapter does not say bumblepuppy bridge. Nor will I ever need the term in this chapter. All the material in this chapter is relevant to both games, and I will just refer to the game described as bridge.

### *Required equipment: cards, table, and people*

A standard deck of 52 playing cards is required (no jokers). Each card is in one of four suits: clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades, represented symbolically as ♣, ♦, ♥, ♠. Usually the cards in the diamond and heart suits are red while clubs and spades are black. Each suit consists of thirteen cards: Ace, King, Queen, Jack, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, and 2. This is all very nice and uniform. We must appreciate what a fine job our forefathers did, more than five centuries ago, when they designed our present deck of playing cards. The above listing indicates the relative ranking of the cards in a given suit (from highest to lowest).

A square shaped table, named appropriately a bridge table, is required. Obviously, four chairs are useful. If all four players are younger than ten, only a floor is required. They prefer it to sitting at a table.

Most bridge tables are folding tables. I recommend that they should be folded and put away when a session of

bridge ends. If a table is not folded, the table will quickly become part of the home office furniture with the chore of supporting books, computer, etc. Having to clear off such a table in order to play bridge is a major deterrent. I speak from multiple bad experiences.

Four people, all eager or at least willing, are required to play bridge. For simplicity, they will be each assigned one of the four names: North, East, South, and West, often abbreviated N, E, S, and W. These names are useful to describe each player's relative position at the table. Bridge is a partnership game. North and South are playing together as partners while East and West are also partners.

## North

West

bridge table

East

## South

The bridge arrangement of four players (two partnerships) is ideal in many ways. Everyone has one partner and two opponents. What symmetry! In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, often two married couples would get together, gossip about mutual friends during dinner, and then spend the evening



playing bridge. Usually the partnerships were one couple against the other or men against women. Rarely did a man play with the other man's wife, at least at the bridge table.

Players are always sitting facing their partners. Emotions are often all too visible. The woman seated second from the right is clearly not pleased with her partner's play. We will return to this player in the next chapter when we consider behavior and ethics.



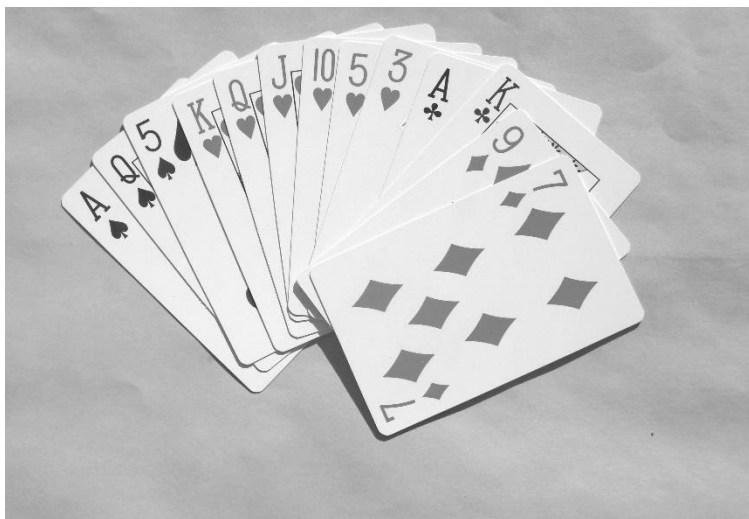
Back in the 1700s, whist writers already realized that having partners facing each other was not best to insure honesty at the gambling game. In 1739, the author Richard Seymour suggested the use of curtains in order to prevent

players from facing their partners. As screens are presently used for top events at major bridge tournaments, the author was quite prophetic.

### *The mechanics of dealing cards to players*

After the cards are shuffled by the dealer, all 52 cards are dealt out face down to the four players. The dealer deals the cards out in a clockwise direction, one at a time, with the first card going to the player seated to dealer's left. Therefore, each player will eventually receive 13 cards. These 13 cards form what is called a *hand*. The four hands together are called a *deal*. After the dealing ends, each player will look at his own hand, but a player is not allowed to tell his partner anything about his cards. Boy, if players could, it sure would make the game much easier. But the limited methods of communication that are allowed between partners is what makes the game so challenging and fulfilling. While perusing their hands, players hope to find great cards, such as aces and kings. After sorting the cards by suit, with suits alternating red and black to avoid mistakes, cards in each suit are ordered by rank (highest to lowest). On the next page a non-color photo of a sorted hand can be found. By fanning it in this fashion all 13 cards can be held with a well-placed thumb at the middle bottom.

But how is the dealer chosen? Prior to the first deal being dealt, each player draws a card. Whoever draws the highest card becomes the dealer for the first deal. For subsequent deals, the dealer is the person sitting in the next position clockwise from the previous dealer.



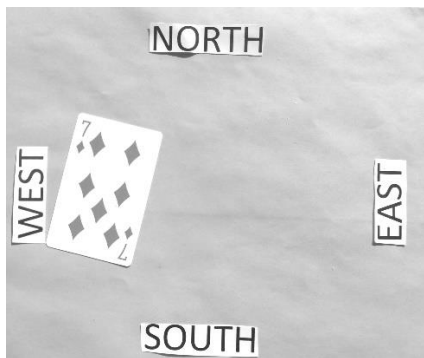
***The main building block is a trick***

A *trick* consists of four played cards (one by each player). Confused?? Don't worry, the remainder of this chapter will provide meaning to this definition.

Many readers may find that they are already familiar with the idea of a trick as there are many games that are in the same family of trick-taking games. Some popular family members are the games, bid whist and spades.

The first card played to a trick is called the *lead*. For example, suppose West leads the diamond 7. This means the diamond 7 is placed face up (exposed) near the center of the table. Obviously, everyone can see it. Since play is clockwise North plays next. North must play a diamond if he has a diamond. It too is placed face up on the table in full view of all four players. Suppose North holds the

diamond queen, diamond 8, and diamond 4. North must play one of those three cards. This requirement on North to play a diamond is called *following suit*. The laws of the game require each player to follow suit. The lead determines which suit it is. North can decide which of his three diamonds to play. If North has five diamonds, he can choose which of the five cards to play, but nothing else. Even though he has a partner, he cannot consult with his partner as to which card to play. If North has only one diamond, this card must be played: there is absolutely no choice as to which card to play. What if North does not have any diamonds? In five minutes, we will look at that situation. After North plays a diamond, East must follow suit (play a diamond), and South must play a diamond. Now the highest of the four cards wins the trick. We already started with the premise that West led the 7. Suppose North played the diamond 8, East played the diamond king, and South played the diamond Ace. The highest card played on this trick was the ace, so South won this trick. To see this trick in progress, and the order in which the four cards are played, look at the four photos.



## WHAT IS BUMBLEPUPPY BRIDGE?

Bumblepuppy Bridge is a wonderful stepping-stone to standard bridge. A total beginner can learn in an hour how to play the game — without any help from a bridge player. This novel game was created by award-winning bridge author and historian Julian Laderman, by blending simple features from several early forms of bridge. The game is appropriate for ages 6 to 106. A free video enables readers to watch the examples in the book being played.

This book is an essential gift for your non-bridge playing friends. This may be your last chance to save them from living their entire life without bridge. Haven't they suffered long enough?

Warning: Anyone who has played more than three hands of bridge in the last decade is far too advanced for this book.



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