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## MEMORY SYSTEMS AT BRIDGE

Hello Bridge Friends,

I'm looking for a good memory-method so that I can remember all the cards that have been played / cards that are still outstanding. What is the best/fastest method to "see" all four hands? How is the best way to train this skill other than years of experience? This is one of the most difficult parts of the game for me.

Thanks alot for any suggestions.

Jim Baston

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Much more important than remembering the cards played is to infer what the remaining unseen hands are. In general, you should speculate what the missing cards are by analyzing the bidding and then adjust your picture of the hands as each card is played. As you are thinking what the remaining hands must be after each card is played you will naturally start remembering more about the hands. Basically, if can't remember anything about a hand you are really saying that there was nothing to think about the hand so of course you will remember nothing.

Eric Leong

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Try All Fifty-Two Cards by Marshall Miles. I believe you will like it. It is only 142 pages long and was published in 1963. You should be able to get a copy in a second hand bookstore. I forget where the stores are.

Dick Casey

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As a good starting point, I recommend that start by focusing on groupings of four that add to 13 (4-4-3-2, 6-5-1-1, 7-3-3-0). You can do that with a set of 13 coins, marbles, etc.

On every hand that you ever play, each suit will be divided in one of these patterns around the table. So, as a first step, you want to get used to visualize everything in terms of these patterns.

Start doing this when drawing trump. For example, if you have five trumps and dummy has four, there are only three possible divisions of the outstanding cards: (5-4)-4-0, (5-4)-3-1, or (5-4)-2-2. When you play the first round of trumps, you will discover whether they are 4-0. If both follow, only two possibilities remain. When you lead the second round, all will be revealed.

I think you'll find that visualizing the cards in this manner helps you remember how the cards were divided later in the play - "Oh yes, the hearts were 3-1 because West showed out on the second round . . . and I was watching."

For the most part, this is much more valuable than trying to memorize the individual cards that have been played . . . although that will come as well.

More importantly, the visualization of patterns that add to 13 will help you in the second step . . . figuring out the distribution of the entire hand. As you may have already noticed, not only are the cards in an individual suit distributed in one of these patterns around the table but the suits in a hand are distributed in the same manner (4 spades, 4 hearts, 4 diamonds, and 1 club - 4-4-4-1).

As you start to watch and remember how the individual suits are divided around the table, you'll find that you can start building up a picture of the missing hands. "The trumps were 3-1, and West held 3 of them. The defenders clubs were divided 4-4, and West held only 2 spades. Aha! West started with 2 spades, 3 hearts, and 4 clubs. West must hold 4 diamonds since 4-4-3-2 is the pattern that adds to 13." Hope that helps get you started.

David Lindop

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Count at most two suits to start with and only count the missing cards. We had eight trumps and I've seen 4 of the missing ones - there is one left

John (MadDog) Probst

Perhaps, consistently creating an expectation to which the unseen cards must conform would be helpful. Take high card points as an example, from the standpoint of a defender.

In the course of play, always, the opening lead is made and dummy is tabled. Train yourself, at this point, to add the high card points in your hand and the dummy and subtract that total from forty. The resulting number can be examined in light of the auction and subsequent play. The conformity to this predetermined number might help develop your visualization and high card tracking abilities.

The same technique of creating an expectation is available for tracking distributions. The opening lead is made, dummy is tabled, and the number of hidden high card points is determined. Next, use a similar process to determine the number of hidden cards (not points) in each of the four suits. Add the number of spades in your hand to those in the dummy, subtract from thirteen. Do this for each of the suits. You generate four numbers that total twenty-six, the number of hidden cards in each suit that can be examined in light of bidding and play. Again, the expectation of conformity to these predetermined numbers can be helpful.

Tedious? After a while, surprisingly, no.

Hey, it's a game. Johnny Sheehan

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What works for me is this: I don't make a conscious effort to memorize anything at all. What I have developed is the ability to recall, as/when I need to. So, for example, at trick 7, I can remember the bidding, what the opening lead was, and what was led on each subsequent trick, and thereby reconstruct the hand. I also "sort of" keep track of what the highest remaining card in each suit is, although that's not that important. I guess what I am trying to say is that if you stay focused and concentrate on the hand as it's being played you won't have any trouble. But none of the above, although it has served me quite well, would substitute memorizing each card as it is played.

wiltonhc@aol.com

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The easiest way to "memorize" is to revise and reconstruct the hands each play round before you turn over your card, taking into account the previous bidding and previous play. Just by going through the process of analyzing the cards played each round will make you remember better. Usually fatal is to not think or make a hypothesis of where the remaining unseen cards and just play mechanically for a round or two and then suddenly realize you have to make a decision and you wished you paid attention a round or two earlier.

Eric Leong

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There are many techniques that people use for this; what works for one might not be ideal for you. A suggestion: Start by counting only one suit, say the trump suit. It is easiest when you are declarer. Add your trump to that in dummy. Now you can figure out how many the opposition have between them, so remember this number. After each round of trump, reduce the number outstanding by 2, or 1 if someone didn't follow (and make a mental note of who showed out). After a while this will become second nature and take little effort. Now progress by adding a second or third suit to your repertory. You only need to develop the habit of concentrating and counting as you play each trick. Don't wait until a crucial moment and then try to reconstruct the whole play (that can come later).

Stu Goodgold

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A trick I learned from one of Hugh Kelsey's books ("Killing Defense at Bridge" I believe) is that most inexperienced players count tricks as, "One round of spades is 4, a second round is 8, a third round is 12 so somebody has the 13th. Oh wait, did someone show out on the third round?" Instead, count a suit as, I have X, dummy has Y and the two hidden hands have 13 - X - Y between them. When one of the hidden hands shows out then you have a complete count on the suit - i.e. me 5, dummy 3; pard followed once and showed out so declarer had 4 and now has two left. You can start one suit at a time (trump or some other key suit) and build up how many suits you count to develop a complete picture of the hidden hands.

I also recommend getting and studying extensively Kelsey's books such as "Killing Defense at Bridge", "More Killing Defense at Bridge", "Advanced Declarer Play", etc. It's hard to go wrong with any one of his books (same is not necessarily true of books that he co-authored). I know it's not necessarily as much fun as playing or using a computer program for most people. However, Kelsey did an excellent job of selecting hands that develop a consistent theme and aid you in learning what he has to teach. You just won't run across a consistent set of hands like this from dealing them out or using something like ProBridge

Regards Pete

It seems that humans in general are much better at recalling events when they can be divided into sub-groups. Remembering a sequence like 235348535 isn't that easy, but remembering 235 348 535 is a lot easier. This is very strange, but that's just the way our brains function. What about bridge? Well, each trick is a sort of "sub-group" of cards, and the easiest way of reconstructing the cards played so far is to recall what happened in each trick. As stated earlier in this thread, it is best to form a revised opinion of the opponents hands every now and then during a board.

Peter Karlsson

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If you're talking about counting only the cards played by the defenders (and assuming you can remember how many you and dummy started with) instead of counting every card played, I first read the suggestion in a Dorothy Hayden book long after my first reading of "Five Weeks". It took some getting used to, but I can't imagine counting any other way now. It's probably the single most useful bit of bridge advice I have ever read.

Tim Goodwin

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