

## What is this Game of Bridge?

Bridge probably originated in the Middle East in the 19th century although some say it was around in some form even earlier. Auction bridge, one form of the game, was developed by the British in India and later became popular in England and the United States. It is still played but has largely been replaced by contract bridge. In 1925 Harold S. Vanderbilt adopted bridge and made important changes to it, but it was Ely Culbertson who was largely responsible for its increasing popularity. When that craze subsided in the 1940's Charles Goren appeared on the scene and attracted the attention of Milton Work who had developed the Work Point Count System that we know today. Goren played a lot of tournament bridge and helped Work with his bridge articles and columns eventually writing them himself.

Supposedly the famous playwright George S. Kaufman summarized his fondness for the game of bridge with this one brief sentence: "I'd rather be South than President." What is there about bridge that makes people like Mr. Kaufman and you and I feel so strongly about it and keep us coming back for more?

Duplicate bridge is unlike other card games that might otherwise fall into the same category. First and foremost it's very competitive. Thus people who play and become addicted to this game are generally very competitive people.....often ones without some other output for those competitive urges. It may well be this feature that gets people to begin playing this stimulating and challenging card game and it is not until they are hooked that they realize that it takes a very long time to learn and even longer to master.

It's also a serious card game for people who like to analyze situations and work out logical solutions. Every hand is

different and thus each hand may well present a new challenge.

It attracts people who are statistically and/or mathematically inclined. These people are lured and intrigued by the game's percentage and symmetry applications.

Perhaps it is the concept of partnership and/or teamwork that helps to distinguish bridge from the many other games combining luck and skill. In my opinion Danny Kleinman's comparison of bridge to basketball explains that aspect well. He said: " What makes basketball distinctive, and the most fun to play or watch, are the team interactions: moving without the ball, setting screens and passing on offense; switching and boxing out on defense; using court sense and maintaining court balance. So it is with bridge. There will be opportunities for three-point shots and slam dunks, but complete bridge players are also forever helping their partners and receiving information in return. Playing good bridge is like throwing an outlet pass, running downcourt, getting open, and receiving the ball back in perfect position to score." It is this partnership aspect of the game that, while extremely important, is often overlooked.

Duplicate bridge games also serve one other important purpose and that is the need to socialize. It affords us the opportunity to be around people we like and who share our love for this game.

Thus bridge is not only intellectually challenging it's also competitive, entertaining and fun. You pursue perfection by playing to win, but along the way the inevitable mistakes and judgment errors cause you to encounter the reality of losing.

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