

TWO HANDED SOLO BRIDGE

(Revised Version January 2019)

An idea by Tony Crow

1/33 Torrens Road

Middleton

Christchurch 8024

Phone: 022 626 3123

© 2019

Introduction:

It has amazed me that this idea hasn't come up before now for someone to come up with a good competitive two handed version of bridge.

Bridge is an excellent game so why does it have to be played with only four players? This limits the game to needing exactly four to make the game work. Most other games that bridge players enjoy, such as Bowls, Golf, Croquet, and Tennis etc; can either be played as singles or doubles, so why not Bridge.

I have always had an interest in modifying and inventing new indoor games. e.g. I have invented versions of Chess and Draughts, which can be played with four players, with partners, instead of two players, and I had a similar version of two handed Solo Bridge, slightly different to the 2019 version, but players got confused with the order of the play of the hand and dummy order of play, so I have come up with this revised version, which people are finding a lot easier, with the order of the play of the cards.

I am a regular player at the Crockfords Bridge Club in Christchurch. I was promoted into the Senior grade in 1986, when the club had about 850 members, which has now reduced to approximately 330 members, and often the Senior grade in the late 1980's and 1990's had about 30 plus tables playing. Now we only have about 15-20 tables playing. This is not only a Crockfords' problem as most Bridge Clubs are declining in size in New Zealand, so I believe, so I am thinking that this would be a good time to try to introduce my two handed Solo Bridge to other Bridge Clubs in New Zealand. especially bigger clubs.

Two Handed Bridge is a lot easier for a Bridge beginner to learn, but at the same time this game is very competitive to play, keeping to the main basis of regular bridge and using the same bidding and playing equipment to play the cards.

Bridge Clubs, depending on their size and the number of people interested in the Two Handed Solo Bridge, may have several choices.

- (1) Dedicate a night to Two Handed Solo Bridge
- (2) Split the room into two sections – one side playing regular bridge and the other side playing Two Handed Solo Bridge
- (3) Having a 3-6 night match with a prize for the highest percentage playing Two Handed Solo Bridge.

These are a few examples, which Bridge Clubs could do, which, hopefully, would boost the number of members in Bridge Clubs in New Zealand.

I have written down some advantages and disadvantages of Solo Bridge, compared to the conventional game.

Advantages:

- (1) New Concept
- (2) Easier to learn
- (3) No sitting out as Dummy, which averages out to one in four hands.
This may total up to about half an hour of your bridge evening at a club (there is no skill or challenge in being dummy!)
- (4) No partner required – This may also solve the problems amongst Bridge players who always have misunderstandings and arguments with their partners.
- (5) More strategic card play and technique required to master this game. A player is forced to look several tricks ahead more often, like a Chess player, but at the same time pay more attention to the cards played out.
- (6) The game may act as a stepping stone for more people learning conventional bridge, as well as drawing more players to Bridge Clubs. e.g. a person visiting on a business trip might want a game of bridge, but without knowing anyone to play with decides to go to the local Bridge club to play Solo Bridge.
- (7) Easier to play and practise at home, because only two people are required to play, instead of four.

Disadvantages:

- (1) The bidding has no partnership communication skills to the game to master and there is no defensive bidding
- (2) Less of a social game, because of only having two players
- (3) The two players have to sort out two hands (instead of one hand) into suits etc; which will take a slightly longer time, at the start of each hand.

HOW TO PLAY TWO HANDED SOLO BRIDGE at the Bridge Club

Player (1) sits South

Player (2) sits North

Player (1) plays the South Cards in the travelling board as in conventional bridge, but he/she also plays the cards from the East cards in the travelling board as his/her dummy.

Player (2) sitting North plays the North Cards, as in conventional bridge, but he/she also plays the cards from the West cards in the travelling board as his/her dummy.

So, the Dummies of each player are always on their right hand side.
The EAST & WEST Dummy hands are kept in their pre-dealt sequence.

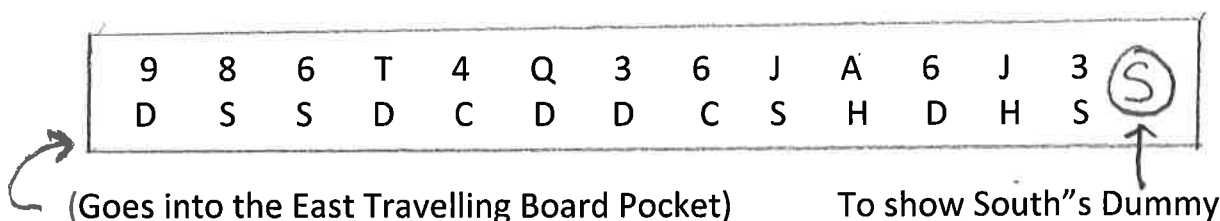
THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT

The dummies **do not** get sorted into suits, and it is very important that the dummies remain in their exact pre-dealt sequence throughout the whole game, so that each player is forced to play the dummy in the same, exact, order they are dealt. To keep a record of the order of the two dummies, a piece of paper is added to the East and West card holding pockets, with E for East, W for West and the hands written down.

e.g; Figure (1)

(E) South Dummy

Paper Slip



At the end of each round players check if the order of the cards in the E/W dummies are put back to their pre-dealt sequence order and at the start of each hand re-check if the cards are in their exact pre-dealt order as well. HOPEFULLY, this will rule out mistakes of cards being out of order.

The EAST and WEST cards, that are the dummies, should be placed about 10mm on top of each other, so that the spot value of each card is on display.

Figure (2) shows the correct layout of the Dummies. See Page 4B.

THE BIDDING:

The bidding order is the same as in standard bridge i.e. No Trumps, Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs. The bidding proceeds until a pass (or No Bid) is reached. Doubling and redoubling still apply in the bidding process.

Note: The bidding stops when there has been two No Bids in a row by each player, **NOT** four bids in a row, as in a standard game.

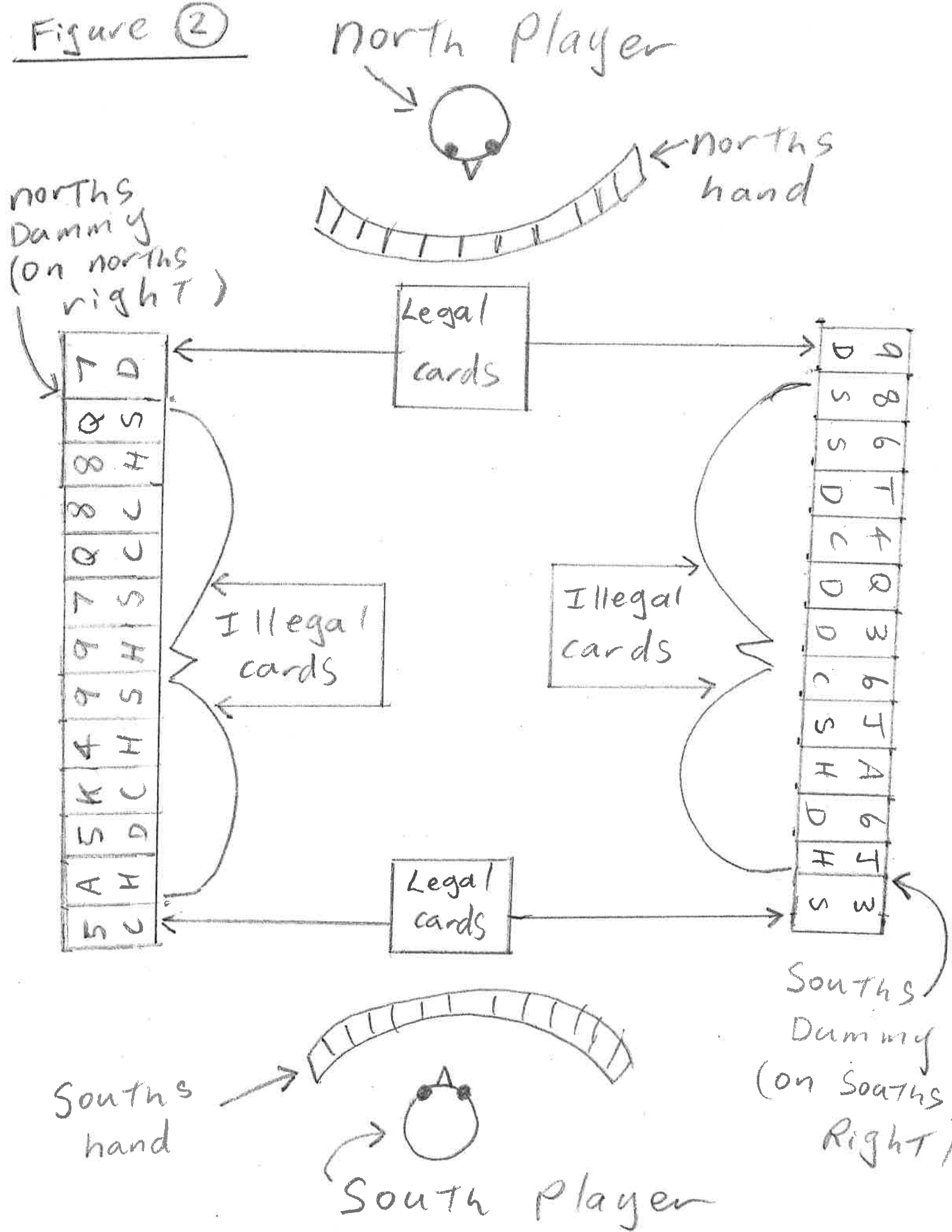
Once the bidding is completed the Defender makes the opening lead out of his/her hand, as in a standard bridge game.

THE PLAY OF THE HAND and DUMMIES HAND:

When the bidding is in progress all four hands and the dummies hand are placed face up on the table, so the players can see all the 52 cards. This makes the bidding process faster. Once the bidding is over the two players pick up the hands in front of them and keep these cards hidden from their opponent, as in a standard game of Bridge.

The dummies stay face up on the table, as shown in Figure 2 (Page 4B)
The card play from the two players hands is the same as a standard game. These cards are sorted into their four suits and players must follow suit to the card lead, same as standard bridge, but when playing a card from the dummy hand, only an END card can be played, as shown in Figure 2, where it says legal cards. This dummy play process is used throughout the whole game.

Figure ②



Players must follow suit if they can, if an END card is the same suit, but if a card of the suit led is not on an end card of a dummy a player may discard or have a free cross trump of that trick, even though a card of the suit led may be buried in towards the centre cards of the dummy. This is a unique feature of Two Handed Solo Bridge.

This system makes the card play technique strategy much more advanced and unpredictable than conventional bridge, which makes the game a **Strategic** game, such as Chess or Connect Four, where a player must look ahead and get the correct sequence play correct for the **maximum Number of Tricks**, for either the Declarer or the Defender.

Note: If a player wins a trick from the dummy hand he/she can lead off any end to the next trick, even though the previous trick was won on the opposite end.

The play of the cards goes in a **clockwise direction**, as in standard bridge. The previous hand or Dummy that won the previous trick leads to the next round and two players hands alternate play to each other and the two dummies alternate play from each other throughout the whole game.

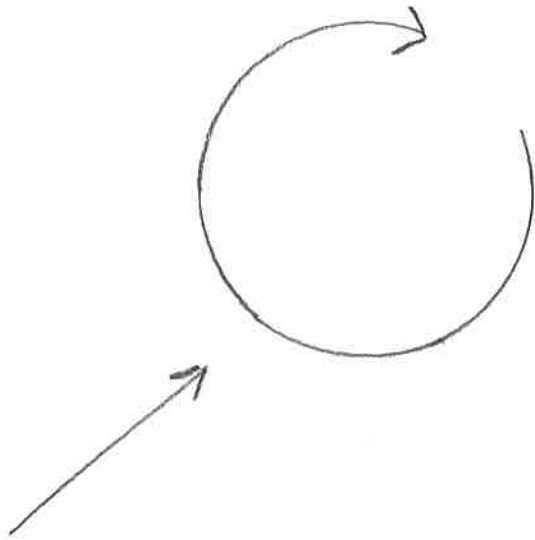
See Figure (3)

On Page 6B shows you in more detail how the game is laid out in a match point game, if played at a Bridge Club.

Note: When bidding players bid straight off the number of tricks they think they are able to make. There is no bidding communication system used in Two Handed Solo Bridge, as there is no partner. (This is what makes Two Handed Solo Bridge easier to learn).

THE SCORING:

The scoring is exactly the same as in a standard bridge game, except the South player score is entered in the North/South section, **BUT**, the North player score is entered in the East/West section, and the North player is treated like an East/West pair, like in a standard game, and the North player changes tables and the East/West Board Pockets governs his/her vulnerability.



See Page 6B

Represents: The general direction, clockwise, of the play of the hands, (same as in a standard game) except the players dummies are adjacent to the players hand (not opposite).

Note: The travelling board can stay in the centre of the table throughout the whole game. This should cause no interference to the dummy hands.

The two paper slips showing the layout of the cards of the Dummy hands are turned upside down, once the dummy hands are checked (described on Page 3) .

Figure 3 on Page 6B shows the complete layout of a Two Handed Solo Bridge game ready for action at a Bridge club at the start of a game in more detail.

Figure ③

Table

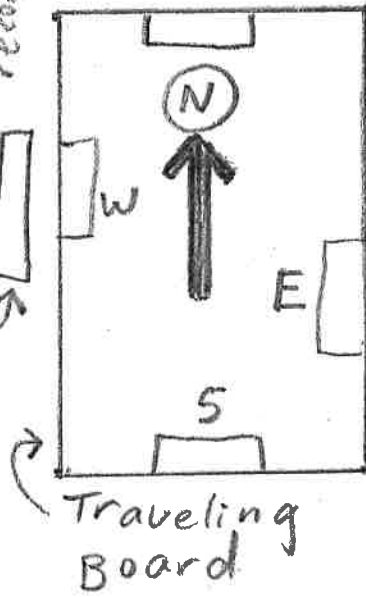
North's
Dummy

5	A	5	K	4	9	9	7	Q	8	Q	7
C	H	D	C	H	S	H	S	C	H	S	D

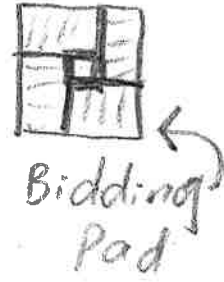
(on North's
Right hand side)

North's Dummy hand
record

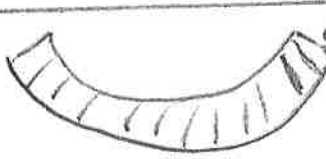
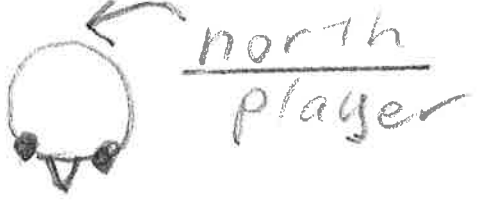
(up side down)



South's dummy hand
record (up side down)



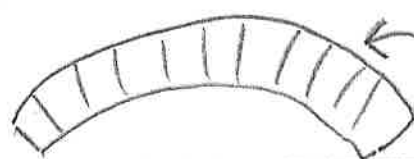
Scoring
Tablet
(if used)



North player's
hand (Face up)

South's Dummy (on South's
Right Hand side)

3	S	6	A	5	C	3	D	Q	4	T	8	9
3	H	9	4	S	S	6	D	D	C	D	5	8



South player's
hand (Face up)



BASIC TIPS on GOOD PLAY:

1. Use the point count system, e.g; Ace = 4, King = 3, Queen = 2, Jack = 1
To work out which player overall holds the most strength in both hands and dummy combined.
2. Look for a basic 4+/4+ fit or 5+/3+ fit etc; in a major suit, same as you do in a conventional game of bridge, looking at your hand and the dummy to try and estimate the number of tricks you can make, taking into consideration that high ranking Trump cards are buried in towards the middle of your dummy and your opponents dummy.
3. Dummy hands that have a lot of high cards buried towards the middle of the dummy are less likely to make a high number of tricks compared to hands holding strong high card points.
4. It is more important for the Defender and Declarer to plan several tricks, like a Chess player does, to master the skill of this game.
5. Like any other strategic game, the more you practise the better you become. Don't be put off this game if you don't do well to begin with.

FINAL COMMENTS:

I mainly recommend this game for a match point scoring game at Bridge Clubs for maximum strategy and competition. A Howell movement may be introduced, if only a few people turn up for the game, but players can also play a very challenging game at home etc; When playing at home a good simple, but effective, scoring system is to play each game out of four deals, with no-one vulnerable in all four deals, using duplicate scoring. (The game should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.) Players may use Rubber Bridge scoring, also, for this at home, if desired.

Also, the NZBCA may introduce D,E and F Master points if Two Handed Solo Bridge becomes popular in Bridge Clubs. They may even wish to hold Team events, of two, compared to teams of four.

I suggest testing this game out by having about a dozen deals with different bridge players, to see how they enjoy the game and if they find it easy to learn, and if it has any potential to be introduced to the NZ Bridge Clubs.

I have tried to explain myself as clearly as possible in these notes. If you have any queries or if there are things that are unclear please contact me for more details and I would welcome any suggestions for improvements from you.

I feel that I have come up with the best formula for a two handed game of bridge, (based on the Conventional four handed game) which is at least 50% easier to learn, but holds a high skill potential to master, and is still interesting to play and holds unpredictable surprises throughout the game.

Note: This method can also be used in games such as Whist, 500 etc; when playing with two players.

I have written three small books on inventing and modifying indoor games.

1. Alternative Games For The Family
ISBN 0-473-00576-X
2. Alternative Games for Those Who Like a Challenge
ISBN 0-473-00997-8
3. Alternative Games For The Studios
ISBN 0-473-00998-6