

# *Conducting a Class*

by Less Ismore

Handz is designed to be self-taught by players in their mid-teens or older. This lesson plan is aimed at players under the age of 14. An instructor should modify the advice accordingly.

Avoid bringing bridge knowledge to the table until Level 8 of Handz.

The objective of the Handz instructor is to insure that everyone has fun. Keep this priority first.

The ability to manage a class of young players is far more important than game mastery. An instructor's bridge skill can lead to illogical advice.

The introductory Level of Handz, Level 1, is the hardest both to teach and to learn because it covers the greatest number of new concepts. If the group gets through these rules, the rest of the game will be easy.

Players control the pace. Jumping two Levels at a time is perfectly reasonable for adults. If young players want to stop at Level three for a few weeks, that is fine so long as everyone is having fun.

Handz can easily accommodate 3-player tables. This is a huge feature for odd-numbers of players—above five. Become familiar with the rules.

Score cards differ for 3-player and 4-player contests. Score cards, like fact sheets, are reusable with the dry erase markers, supplied. Conservation!

Do what works. The conditions under which Handz groups form differ wildly. No single method nor rigid set of steps will be appropriate for all.

Handz was developed to make the introduction of bridge card-play more accessible, not more rigid.

Traditional bridge instruction asks players to apply complex rules and conventions in the **right** way. Handz is designed to make the playing field even, letting players excel at every Level.

## Elementary School Lesson Plan

For older players, this can be modified as the Instructor deems appropriate.

### Starting

Explain, as much as necessary, the deck of cards.

Get players to answer questions:

- *How many cards in a deck without jokers?* 52
- *How many suits are there?* 4
- *What are the names of the suits?* spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs
- *What is the highest card in a suit?* ace *What is the lowest?* 2
- *If all the cards are dealt, divided evenly among four players, how many cards does each player get?* 13

Pass out playing cards, typically already dealt for efficiency.

Pass out Fact Sheets, purple side up to start, and Handz dry-erase markers.

Ask the players to sort their hands into suits. (If available, give young children card holders.)

### Distribution

Have the students write the distribution in the boxes on the Fact Sheets, (spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs).

Ask students to confirm that the numbers on their Fact Sheets add to 13.

Ask students to add the suits around the table, perhaps asking North to count spades, East hearts, *etc.*

### Partnership Game

*“The player sitting across from you is your partner. Work together.”*

*“Your Fact Sheet and your partner’s Fact Sheet describe your side’s power.”*

### Hand Strength

*“How many aces are there in a deck of cards?”*

*“How many kings?” “Queens?” “Jacks?”*

*“How many aces should each hand have on average?”*

Explain “average” in a way that works for the age group:

- A hand with one of each is an average hand.
- An extra king or ace is a good hand. With two extra, a great hand!
- Missing an ace or king, a sad hand. Missing two or more is blah. No face cards, Yipes! (Exaggerate as appropriate.)
- Mark the Fact Sheet with “0” for average, “+” for good, “++” for great, “-” for sad, “- -” for terrible.

**Tricks** (Time to learn some rules.)

Handz is a trick-taking game. *“Does anyone know what a ‘trick’ is?”* —one card from each hand

*“How many tricks are there in a deal?”* —thirteen

Someone has to play first. We will call that player the “leader.”

Other players must **follow suit**. *“What does that mean?”* (Players must play a card in the same suit leader’s card, unchanged by a card played in another suit.)

*“What if a player cannot follow suit?”* —Play anything.

After every player has played one card, the trick is complete. *“Who wins the trick?”* Highest card in the suit led.

*“Who starts the next trick?”* The player who won the previous trick.

## The Super Suit

Sometimes one of the suits (♠♥♦♣) is named a **super suit**, bigger than the other suits. (*“Trump”*)

When a card in the super suit is played on a trick, it wins. If two or more super suit cards are played, the higher[est] wins.

A player can only play a super suit if it is led or if that player cannot follow suit—has no more cards in the suit led.

## Bidding

Each player, starting with the Dealer, can claim that the partnership will make more than half the tricks by bidding.

*“How many tricks are more than half?”* (seven) Start with **1** to mean seven tricks; **2**, eight, *etc.*

*“What is the bid that promises to make all the tricks?”* (7)

Each player, clockwise after Dealer, can make a bid, but it must be higher than the previous bid.

A player who does not want to bid higher may **pass**. If no one bids (four passes), the deal is thrown in (not played).

Otherwise, the bidding continues until there are three passes in a row.

## “What’s the Point?”

The highest bidder gets to name a super suit. The partners should have a combination of eight or more cards in the suit.

If no one bids, no one scores, so someone must bid to win points. (The point of games is to **WIN!**)

The side that wins the bid (bids the highest amount) must win the number of tricks bid plus six or more.

If the side that wins the bid fails to take the required number of tricks, the opponents win points.

## “How Do We Know What to Bid?”

With two average hands (bidder and partner) and eight cards in a suit (that will be the super suit), bid 1.

With more cards in a suit, bid more.

With better than average hands “+” hands, bid more.

*This is just a guess, do not worry about it. We will show a better way soon.*

## **Start of Play**

When someone wins the bidding (highest bid), that player announces whether there is a super suit (there does not have to be one), and that player is called the “Declarer.”

The player to the left of the winning bid leads the first card—any card.

The partner of the winning bid places that hand on the table, face up for all to see, with the super suit on the right. This player is called the “Dummy.”

The Declarer calls a card from the Dummy, remembering to follow the suit led, next the partner of the leader, then the Declarer. When each has played a card on the trick, everyone agrees on which player won the trick. The players keep their cards, turning the card face-down. Place cards horizontal (dead duck) if their side lost the trick, and standing the card up vertically (cool cat) if their side won the trick. (Show how.)

The player that won the trick leads a card to the next trick.

## **End of Play**

Ask if everyone agrees about the number of tricks won by each side.

Did the Declarer make enough tricks? If so, that partnership earns 30 points for every trick above 6.

Did the Declarer fail? If so, the defenders earn 50 points for every trick below the requirement.

## **Scoring**

All players can keep a private score, but the North player records the official score on the erasable score sheet.

For each hand (board #) enter the contract (bid and suit), the player (NSEW) the result (made or down) and the score.

Go on to the next hand.

## **Play as partners**

Do not take partner’s tricks just to win it for yourself. You will both score less.

Do not outbid your partner just to play the hand. Higher bids have higher risks.

Cooperate and graduate!