1 - Partnership Whist - Teacher's notes

Overview

Some so-called learners might not need this topic - particularly those who are returning to the game after a number of years.
By all means move straight on to topic 2 if this is the case.

Others will tell you that they have played whist before, but usually it will not have been partnership whist.

With a group containing true beginners - those who know little more than the names of the four suits - this topic will be worth a whole session.

Start with random deals, collecting the tricks separately and playing in no trumps.
Note that scoring is based on the number of tricks above 6.

After a couple of such deals start pointing the cards in front of each player after each trick.
This helps if you wish to discuss the play on any hands afterwards, and also if the same hand is to be played at other tables as in a club context.

Then play the 12 set hands staying with no trumps in the first instance.

You will probably be ready to introduce trumps after a few deals – say 4 or more.

Note that
the deal moves clockwise round the table and the opening lead is always on dealer's left (in whist and in this module but not in bridge)

Primary objectives

The mechanics of following suit, collecting tricks, counting tricks above 6, and leading to the next trick.
Partnership play - second player plays low.

Choosing the opening lead.
Note that leading out your aces is rarely the best opening lead – it just sets up tricks for the opponents.
Against no trumps attacking a long suit is usually good,
And in any contract leading the top of an honours sequence (e.g. KQJ) is usually good thereby setting up tricks for when you next get in.
Don't rush to introduce '4th highest of your longest suit – that's why my partner led the 5 from AKQ5 thereby allowing declarer to make his J from J7 doubleton. The primary emphasis should be on honours sequences.

Signalling on partner's lead.
Encourage or discourage on partner's opening lead.
If partner leads the Ace and you hold K72 then play the 7 to encourage him to continue.
Similarly, if you hold 762 then play the 2 to suggest that you have nothing to help.

And, if in doubt later in the play, return partner's suit.

So:-

Pointing the cards once a trick is complete in the manner of duplicate bridge (either for postmortems or for other tables to play).

Set up suits rather than lead out top cards, particularly in no trumps.

The opening lead - desirable leads are:-

- top of a 3-card honours sequence or broken honours sequence in a 4-card or longer suit against no trumps (always teach to look for this before 4th highest (one of the most overtaught mantras in the whole game);
- singleton against a trump contract.

Encouraging or discouraging partner's opening lead - returning partner's suit.