

Contract Bridge – Joker Variations

The idea here is to add Jokers to the deck, introducing some variety and also parity in a particular case when all Jokers are used

The sub-variations look at using 1, 2 and 4 Jokers. 1 & 2 may seem uneven, but the rules governing these will compensate for that. There is also an alternative that loosens up for wildcard status. As long as all the Bridge players agree, this should loosen up their evening as well.

Power of the Joker

Firstly, the various powers and rankings of the Joker cards needs to be established.

These are:

Major power – Jokers High in Trump and No Trump contracts (including Offsuits)

Major/Minor power – Jokers High in Trump and Jokers Low in No Trump contracts (including Offsuits)

Minor/Major power – Jokers Low in Trump and Jokers High in No Trump contracts (including Offsuits)

Minor power – Jokers Low in Trump and No Trump contracts (including Offsuits)

Lets examine the position of Jokers High (denoted by “JJJ”) in a given Suite;

JJJ – A – K – Q – J – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2

Lets examine the position of Jokers Low (denoted by “JJ”) in a given Suite;

A – K – Q – J – JJ – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2

So the Joker is classed as an Honour-guard and forms part of the High Card distribution

The Jokers must be assigned Suits before any Bidding can begin (unless they are wildcards)

Players will also need to work out some communication system to notify their partners about the Joker/s in their hand (but please don't ask me, Im just a beginner)

Honours & HighCard Points

The Joker powers will determine the allocated bidding points, such that;

With Jokers High in Major, Major/Minor and Minor/Major applications

JJJ – A – K – Q – J – 10

5 4 3 2 1 ½ pts

and with Jokers Low in Major/Minor, Minor/Major and Minor applications

A – K – Q – J – JJ – 10

5 4 3 2 1 ½ pts

Understandably, in a Major/Minor or Minor/Major power application where there may be uncertainty if the Joker will fit a Trump suit or not, and go High or Low, then Averaging out the Bidding value of the Joker in question might have to be applied,

so $JJJ + JJ / 2 = 5 + 1 / 2 = 3\text{pts}$

[Note: with the extra 5, 3 or 1pt, the conventional Bidding system will have to be adjusted accordingly]

Sub-Variation x1 Joker – 13t / 53c

One Joker is introduced to the deck, so there will be an offset of 53 cards, and 13 tricks are still played out. Deal normally around the table to the cardinal points N E S W, but the cardinal player that receives the 53rd card will have it placed face down by the Dealer, so nobody knows its value or type.

At the end of the game this card will be upturned and scored by the players' team holding it, and will give a bonus value if they won the round, or negative value if they lost the round, and the points weighting is as follows;

(based on the Numbered card values, and deuce increments for the Picture cards)

Jokers High:

JJJ – A – K – Q – J – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2

20 18 16 14 12 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 +/- points

Jokers Low:

A – K – Q – J – JJ – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2

20 18 16 14 12 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 +/- points

Alternatively, for more even higher increments

Jokers High:

JJJ – A – K – Q – J – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2

30 25 20 20 15 15 10 10 10 5 5 5 5 5 +/- points

Jokers Low:

A – K – Q – J – JJ – 10 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2

30 25 25 20 15 15 10 10 5 5 5 5 5 5 +/- points

These weightings are arbitrary and may also vary with Suite type, as long as players agree or perhaps implement Houserules around this

It can be further established by agreement that the single Joker automatically be assigned to the Trump group, otherwise, an Arbiter (neutral non-player) must verify its Suited position within a given hand.

Sub-Variation x2 Jokers – 13t / 54c

Two Jokers are introduced to the deck, so there will be an offset of 54 cards, but 13 tricks are still played out. Deal normally around the table to N E S W, but the cardinal players (from opposing teams) will receive the 53rd and 54th cards, and will have them placed facedown, so that nobody knows their value or type, and by nature adding more uncertainty to the game.

At the end of the game these cards will be revealed and scored respectively by the players' team in possession of them, either bonus or penaltywise.

1 Black Joker assigned to either ♣ or ♠,
and 1 Red Joker assigned to either ♦ or ♥.

An Arbiter will need to verify their Suited positions in the hands of either teams

Sub-Variation x4 Jokers – 14t / 56c

In this case, 4 Jokers are introduced to the deck, one for each Suit, so there will be an even keel of 56 cards and a further 14th trick, which will now allow for Draws to occur.

Note the Bidding process will need to be adjusted for this extra trick.

Each of the Jokers can be labelled with each of their respective Suits (♦, ♥, ♣, ♠), penciled in or stamped, so that there is no sleight of hand occurring anywhere, and may call in an Arbiter if necessary.

Bidding: can either start Bidding from Parity, so that the first 6 tricks are Book and 1suit bid = 7tricks, up to 8suit bids = 14tricks, or

Non-Parity, so that the first 7 tricks are Book, and 1 suit bid = 8tricks, up to 7 suit bids = 14tricks

Wildcards

With 1 and 2 Jokers applied, these may shift between Suits as the player desires, until they are actually played out. This creates more freedom and variability, much to consternation at the opponents' expense. So the single Joker can shift to the Trump suit when that is established at the end of the Bidding process.

So the Red Joker can shift between ♦ and ♥ and the Black Joker can shift between ♣ and ♠.

However with the 4 Jokers, they are assigned to their respective Suites already, so not as shifty.

Honours Scoring at endgame

If a player has 4, 5 or all 6 Honour cards in their hand, then their side scores extra points Above the Line compared to that of conventional Contract Bridge scoring.

So for example, if a player has 6 Honour cards in hand, then their side scores 200 pts Above the Line, further example, if a player has 4 Aces and 1 Joker in hand on a No Trump contract, then their side could get awarded, say 175pts AtL.

Of course this is arbitrary, and if players agree to score more or less, then House Rules apply.

Some example dealings:



In this deal with 54 cards – 2 Jokers – Major/Minor power. If E-W won the contract with ♠, then the Black Joker in East's hand goes high above the Jack, but the Red Joker in South's hand goes low below the

Jack. Note the 53rd and 54th cards by North and East (which would stay turned down until the end of that game)



For the sake of example, turning up the 53rd card is 8♥ and would be worth +/- 8 pts to N-S partnership (using the numbered card system), and the 54th card is A♦ and would be worth +/- 18 pts to E-W partnership respectively.



Again, for sake of example, if N-S won the contract with ♣ then there is only a slight swap in Easts' hand where the Black Joker now goes below the Jack (and is already assigned this suite as sighted by the arbiter, however in the Wildcard variation, East could shift the Black Joker to their clubhand above the Queen)

Also there would be a slight increase in the valuation of the A♦ to +/- 20pts for the E-W partnership as their Joker went low.



With this deal of 53 cards – 1 Joker – Minor/Major power; N-S establish a ♦ contract, where the Joker in East's ♠ hand goes high above the Ace (and hence is treated as a black Joker).

Note that the 53rd card (only revealed at the end of game) is the 7♠ and would be worth +/- 10pts according to the stepped increment system, and because the only Joker in the game went high (but N-S wouldn't know this until the Joker was actually played)



In this frame, if E-W established a ♠ contract instead, then the Joker goes low and gets put behind the Queen. Now the 53rd card is devalued to +/- 5 pts for N-S partnership because the Joker went low.



In this example of 54 cards – 2 Jokers - Major/Minor power; if N-S establish an **NT** contract, then both East's Red Joker and South's Black Joker goes low, below their respective Jacks. Other contracts could also be determined depending on how the bidding process pans out.



With the 53rd & 54th cards upturned, reveals 10♠ which is valued at +/- 10pts for the N-S partnership under the numbered card system, and the Q♠ valued at +/- 16pts for the E-W partnership.



If N-S arrived at a ♠ contract, then this would cause high movement in Souths Black Joker above the Jack, whilst Easts Red Joker remains low. However, the +/- endgame points allocation for 10♠ remains the same according to the table on page 3.



Just say that N-S score a ♥ contract, which means Easts Red Joker gets promoted above the King, and Souths Black Joker stays put. This makes things very interesting as East harbours 3 high cards in this suite, and N-S have 3 high if the 10 is included. East holds deadly tenaces/pincers over Norths Ace and Queen. Now the Q♠ points allocation at endgame for E-W partnership is +/- 14pts.

I'm sure there will be more innovations to add in future, as one learns the great cardgame of Bridge.

for Lilly