



## PLAY BRIDGE - KEEP YOUR MIND FIT, MAKE FRIENDS AND HAVE FUN

Recently the BBC showed some members of the Oxford Bridge Club playing their favourite game to show the benefits it has on the mind.

Research has proven that undertaking some form of activity which tests mental agility on a daily basis can help protect our older population from dementia. Additionally research shows that social interaction amongst the elderly can stave off cognitive decline.<sup>1</sup> The card game bridge provides both mental stimulation and social engagement.

Although the game is not a cure for dementia, research proves that bridge can help keep the brain healthy. In 2003, the Washington Post reported on findings by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine that showed seniors regularly involvement in pastimes stretched their minds: *“Seniors who regularly engaged in pastimes that stretched their minds... lowered their risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other dementias by as much as 75 percent, compared with those who didn't exercise their minds...[The] team also solved a chicken-and-egg problem... Do mental activities really prevent dementia, or does dementia cause people to lose interest in mental activities? By screening out anyone who might have had dementia at the outset from their analysis, the researchers showed that leisure activities influenced dementia in their study, and not the other way around.”*<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, a November 2000 study by the University of California, Berkeley found that playing contract bridge leaves people with higher numbers of immune cells: “Bridge was ideal for what we were after. It is the closest activity to a challenging card sorting task that also contains multiple factors that should stimulate the dorsolateral cortex. Bridge players plan ahead, they use working memory, they deal with sequencing, initiation and numerous other higher order functions with which the dorsolateral cortex is involved.”<sup>3</sup>

Bridge is an excellent way to make friends and keep your mind healthy. The English Bridge Union has lots of information available on how and where to learn bridge, please visit: [www.ebu.co.uk](http://www.ebu.co.uk).

### **Further information**

Further information on the EBU and bridge can be found on the Media section of our website, please view [here](#). Or, please contact Matt Betts, EBU Press Officer on 01296 317 200 or email [Matt@ebu.co.uk](mailto:Matt@ebu.co.uk)

### **Who plays bridge?**

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, tennis legend Martina Navratilova, actor Omar Sharif and the world's top investor, Warren Buffett...to name just four. In this country an estimated 150,000 people play bridge regularly in hundreds of clubs in cities, towns and villages up and down the land.

### **What is bridge?**

Bridge is a trick-taking card game of skill and chance. It is played by four players who form two partnerships (sides); the partners sit opposite each other at a table. The game consists of the auction (often called bidding) and play, after which the hand is scored. Further information on the EBU and bridge can be found on the Media section of our website, please view [www.ebu.co.uk/media](http://www.ebu.co.uk/media)

### **About the English Bridge Union**

The English Bridge Union was formed on 23 May 1936 and is a non-profit making membership-funded organisation committed to promoting the game of duplicate bridge. It is also a National Bridge Organisation in its own right affiliated to the European Bridge League and the World Bridge Federation. New players are the lifeblood of the game and the EBU are keen to encourage them. For more information on the English Bridge Union please visit: [www.ebu.co.uk/media](http://www.ebu.co.uk/media)

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#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> See Annals of Internal Medicine, [American College of Physicians](#)

<sup>2</sup> Washington Post, 2003 reporting on: Verghese, J. 2003. The effects of mind games on Alzheimer's and dementia. Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, USA.

<sup>3</sup> Diamond, MC. 2003. Bridge and its effect on the immune system. University of California, Berkeley.