

EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES OF BRIDGE

The study commissioned by the EBU at St. Paul's School in Manchester clearly shows a positive development of the young people involved. This study concentrated more on social skill development, rather than improvements of a purely academic nature. Experience shows that bridge teaches:

- **Sorting into groups**

For young children the idea of grouping items is central to early learning in mathematics. In MiniBridge and bridge cards have to be sorted into the four suits (♠, ♥, ♦, ♣) which, in turn, have a hierarchy and then into ranks within suits. This requires knowledge of the ranks (ace, king, queen and jack rank above 10, 9... 3, 2).

- **Aids to numeracy:**

There are many opportunities to use numbers whilst playing MiniBridge and bridge.

- Counting points
- In MiniBridge, adding the point count of the partnership hands to decide whether to try for part-score or game
- Counting suits as the cards are played. This is a very difficult concept for all but the best bridge players. At an elementary level it is only practical to count one suit (usually the trump suit)
- Calculating the score after each hand has been played

- **Probability**

- There is opportunity to use probability at all levels of the game
- Knowledge of how cards split (with 5 cards out the likely split of 3-2 is 68%, 4-1 split is 28%, 5-0 split is 4%)
- Knowledge that a finesse is an evens chance, in the absence of other information

- **Deduction**

- Know from the allocation of points in MiniBridge or by listening to the auction of opponents in bridge that one line of play may be superior over another
- Deduce that a finesse is a better line of play by using the opponents auction, even though numerically it may appear inferior

- **Rule following**

- Bidding and playing in turn

- Knowing that the absolute rule of card play is to follow suit when you can
- Keeping a 'poker face' and not letting your emotions give away vital information

- **Developing strategy**

- Planning the play of the hand before playing a card to the first trick by using a SWOT analysis. In bridge this takes the form of

Strengths:	Counting your top winners
Weaknesses:	How many tricks you are short of your target
Opportunities:	Which suits offer the prospect of generating the additional tricks you need
Threats:	What can your opponents do to thwart your plans; what steps can you take to avoid danger

- Learning that in the bidding you must plan the way you will describe your hand

- **Team building**

- Unlike chess, which is a single player game, bridge is a partnership game
- You have to work as a team
- Understanding that bidding is a dialogue between partners aiming to reach the best contract
- Understanding that defence is a partnership activity

- **Mental capacity**

- Bridge requires concentration. You have to think about what you are doing, who bid what and who played which card
- It requires great mental stamina. At the highest international level you need to be able to play for 8 hours a day for up to a fortnight. The equivalent of 2 marathons a day for 2 weeks.