

Awareness days and how to organise them

An excellent way of gaining publicity and new members for your club and bridge classes is to put on an 'awareness day' to introduce potential players to the world of bridge. Although it is possible to organise this in the form of an open day or open evening at the club itself, experience has shown that this approach is not always successful in attracting visitors. It is far better to set up a stall at a location or event with a large number of visitors or members of the public passing by. With a few enthusiastic members of the club taking part, this can be fun to organise and fun to take part in, as well as having the desired effect of boosting membership.

The club may also wish to involve the county association which may be able to provide added funding and volunteers.

Any advance publicity you can organize through posters and press releases to local newspapers and radio stations will, of course, be helpful.

Venues

The choice of event or venue will very much depend on what is available locally. Obviously, you will wish to recruit members who live within the club's catchment area, so the location should be reasonably close to the club's premises. Some of the types of event and venues worth considering are:

- Country Shows
- County Fairs
- Exhibitions
- Festivals
- Libraries
- Museums
- Open Days
- Shopping Centres
- Supermarket Forecourts
- Village Fetes

Bearing in mind the vagaries of the English weather, a covered location is preferable, but a stall at an open-air Country Fete on a sunny day can be equally effective. Take a wind-break along!

Format

The format of your awareness event will depend on the space and number of volunteers available. You may be able to arrange for a demonstration game to be in play throughout the event, or you may just have to make do with an information stall. Ideally you will want:

- A bridge table with cards, bidding boxes and four people playing
- One or more further tables where teachers can get visitors to sit down for a few hands of Minibridge
- Two further people to explain about the game and take names and addresses
- Publicity and information material about your club
- [Information leaflet about the game of bridge](#)
- [Information leaflet about Minibridge](#)
- [Information about the health and social benefits of bridge](#)
- Posters
- Refreshments
- (Wireless scoring system with results screen)
- (Promotional gifts)

If you have enough volunteers, you can organise a rota. If it's a big event, any additional volunteers can roam the grounds distributing leaflets drawing attention to your stall. Make sure that the leaflets have contact and website details on them for those who don't have time on the day but may wish to get in touch later. A good use for all those jokers the club throws away whenever it buys new packs of cards is to put a label with the club's website and contact details on labels which can then be stuck onto the backs of the cards and distributed at awareness days

If the club's budget allows, you may have a small stock of simple promotional gifts engraved with the name and website address of the club to give away to interested parties. E.g. the cost of simple pens can be as low as 15p each or even less. A web search on 'promotional products' will turn up some suppliers with their catalogues and price lists.

The kind of people you are likely to attract are: those who have previously played bridge and might like to take it up again; rubber bridge and whist players who would like to give duplicate a try; people who have always wanted to have a go at the game but never had the opportunity; and bridge players new to the area who have not yet made contact with any other bridge players.

If they have time and are able, you could let them try joining in for a hand or two at the table. For this reason, it may actually be better to play [Minibridge](#) at the table, because this can be explained more quickly to novices. Otherwise, it is just a question of answering their questions, explaining about the game, how enjoyable it is, what the health and social benefits are, and so on.

You need to be prepared to offer all these people a way in to your club. For existing bridge players without a partner, there should be a way to provide them with a club member to partner them in an introductory club duplicate session. For newcomers to the game, you should be able to tell them when the next beginners' classes start at your club. If there is no teaching at your club, try to get some going by sending one or more of your members on an [EBU Club Teacher course](#).

At the very least there should be a teacher associated with your club that you can put interested persons in touch with. This is also necessary for people who have previously learnt the basics but are in need of further tuition before they are ready to play regular club bridge. It is best to take people's names and addresses and follow up with concrete suggestions as soon as possible. Ask if you may pass their details on to your teacher.

The EBU itself periodically puts on awareness days at more major locations and events. If your club might be interested in co-organising such an event, or simply wishes for more information, please contact Matt Betts, the EBU's Press and Communications Officer, on matt@ebu.co.uk.