



Bridge teaching:
the big picture

Why we love bridge – ask your club!

“Bridge is a most fascinating game and you never get bored with playing it”

“A win-win situation, a no-brainer! One of my best decisions was to join a bridge class and club”

“I came to the game of bridge as a youngster and it has given me life-long pleasure”

“Bridge is a much better game than chess because of the very fact that you are reliant on others. It’s more true to life - by working together you can achieve better results”

“Whether you’ve played for a week or for a lifetime, and whether you’re in it just for fun, or for the endless mental challenge, or a bit of both, bridge never fails to enthral at every level”

“Bridge is fun because it fulfils my mathematical fascination with probability with uncertainty and risk whilst at the same time being a game where you can win regardless of the cards you are dealt”

“Bridge has been a constant friend for decades. I’ve lived all over the world, and I’ve always found a club or a group to play with”

“I’d wondered for years what it was about bridge and finally got chance to take lessons and find out what an endlessly fascinating game it is”

Why we teach bridge

- Because bridge has endless benefits. For a child, learn maths and cooperation. For an adult, new friends and a lifetime of enjoyment

And also...

- Bridge has an **aging demographic**. Most existing bridge players learned the game at home or with friends but that route is now less common because of cultural changes
- Clubs that are not actively bringing in new members face **inevitable decline**

The hardest part of teaching bridge is not the teaching

- The first instinct of a club is to teach players in order to increase the numbers at its sessions
- But there are obstacles to new players joining existing sessions especially in smaller clubs, for example:
 1. Hard for a novice to match the standard and getting bad results can be dispiriting
 2. New players may be more social in attitude and don't want a highly competitive session
 3. There is a lot to learn about the "ceremony" of bridge
 4. A single incident where a player is gruff or unfriendly can mean someone never comes again
 5. Learning online has many advantages, but makes transition to face to face a double journey

Principles of successful bridge teaching

- Plan the destination along with the teaching. What is the strategy for how novices progress?
- People who learn together like to play together. They have a lot of fun! Keep the fun, keep the social element, keep the players
- Players want to progress **at their own pace**
- Big clubs have tiered sessions and no problem with room bookings. They can easily run gentle duplicate, improver sessions etc. This is well proven to be a successful strategy in clubs like Stamford, Oxford, Cheltenham and many others

What can small clubs do?

- Consider working with other clubs or the county association to teach together
- A larger cohort of learners works better as they can form a session
- Clubs without teachers can channel enquirers to learn at a larger club or online and then welcome them to gently duplicate
- Important for all clubs to have a positive story for new enquirers
- There are strategies for welcoming novices even to one session. The whole club has to support it. For example, beginner tables alongside club tables, mixed sessions with buddy partners, strong directing emphasising friendliness and allowing novices to consult notes or skip boards

What the EBU and EBED is doing

- Working on new strategies for bridge teaching taking advantage of online resources
- More online seminars planned for the new year on best practice in teaching and transition – hear from board member Tony Russ later
- Teacher training via EBTA (English Bridge Teachers Association)
- EBTA membership is a bargain! £45 gets you discounted **Bridge for All** books, professional indemnity insurance, handbank of over 800 **fully commented** deals, 2,000 **teaching slides**, additional software for displaying and playing back boards, programme of support and training
- We are working hard on connecting clubs, teachers and enquirers