



Bridge
NSW

Mentor/Helper's Ideas

How to use this guide

For Bridge Clubs to grow and thrive, new players need to be welcomed and nurtured. Whether you are helping during the lessons, playing with them when they first enter the grade, or acting as a mentor/buddy once they start playing in the club, you have a key role in turning our learners into long-term members of our club. We want them to stay and enjoy many years of playing bridge.

This pack is designed to guide club mentors and helpers and give you the information you need to help new members. Not all sections will be relevant for your club – we suggest that you adapt the guide to suit the specific circumstances and approaches you adopt at your club.

The System We Teach

It is vital that all mentors and helpers familiarise themselves with the bidding system that is taught in the club's beginner lessons.

Bridge NSW teaching resources use the Standard American 5 card major system. If you are unsure on any of the club's current teachings, please contact a teacher. The first few weeks are all about reinforcing what they have learnt during the lessons. Please support the beginners by sticking strictly to the students' system and **not confusing beginners by suggesting alternatives** during this period.

[Insert full details of the system taught including opening point ranges (eg suit 12-19, NT 15-17), responses with a major fit (eg 6-9 2, 10-12 3, 13+ 4), responses to 1NT (eg have they learnt Stayman, transfers,)]

Being a helper at beginner lessons

- ♠ Get a copy of the hand record – pre prepared hand records for supervised play should have the expected bidding sequence for each board (deal files prepared by Bridge NSW have these hand records). Check what they have learnt and don't teach anything new. Please stick to these notes.
- ♠ Always be friendly, courteous, helpful and encouraging.
 - ♥ The lessons should be FUN – you can have a joke, but not at the expense of one of the learners!
 - ♥ Don't offer advice unless you are asked
- ♠ Bid ONLY and EXACTLY to the system taught to the beginners
- ♠ No matter what they bid/how they play – do not criticise.
 - ♥ Don't say "You should have....." Rather say "Sometimes it can work better if..."
 - ♥ Always speak in a quiet, calm voice
 - ♥ Don't comment on the play before they have covered this in the lessons – they have lots to remember as it is!

- ♠ Encourage the learner to work out their choices rather than telling them the bid to make or card to play. Ask things like:
 - ♥ "What has your partner's bid shown?"
 - ♥ "Have they shown a minimum or strong hand?"
 - ♥ "Do you have a fit?"
 - ♥ "Do you want to a) show a minimum, b) invite to game c) show/or bid a game?"
- ♠ ONLY after they have learnt some card play, ask:
 - ♥ "Where would you like the King to be?" "Can that K/Q win a trick?"
 - ♥ "How many trumps are you missing?" "Have you drawn trumps?" "Do you remember the order to play these honours?"
 - ♥ "Which suit will provide you with the most tricks?"

Being a mentor

- ♣ Phone your learner to introduce yourself
 - ♦ Check whether they have any issues they need sorted out
 - ♦ Check that they have a partner organised for the next event/few weeks
 - ♦ Encourage them to swap partners among their learners group for a different event
- ♣ Contact them to see how they've gone each night for the first 4 weeks, then maybe every couple of weeks thereafter
 - ♦ Arrange to play an event with them if you are in that grade
 - ♦ If they drop out or miss a couple of weeks, contact them to see if there are any issues. Try and encourage them to return, and deal with any problems that have arisen. Sometimes they have difficulty finding a partner or wish to change partners – deal with this diplomatically! If there is a problem with behaviour of a member, then refer this to your committee or grade convenor.
- ♣ Encourage the new player to attend any social events the club is running
- ♣ Encourage them to enter a suitable tournament in your region

Being a buddy when partnering a learner

- ♠ All new players from lessons will be permitted to use their cheat sheets for the remainder of the year at any bridge club sessions. Encourage them to learn their way around the cheat sheet so as not to spend lengthy periods looking things up.

- ♠ Encourage polite behaviour at the bridge table. Set the example yourself, and support new members if there is any other behaviour that is in any way upsetting to a new member.
- ♠ Encourage new members to call the director with any queries.
 - ♥ Help new members understand that the role of the director is to assist where any query arises, and restore equity.
 - ♥ They are there to help. They are not there to punish you, and the player is not going to get into trouble.
 - ♥ A director is there like a referee - to resolve matters so that smooth play can continue.
- ♠ Sit either South or East – take all of the scoring duties/worries away from the beginner. Ensure they sit West or North.
- ♠ Help diffuse situations:
 - ♥ Always speak in a quiet calm voice
 - ♥ No matter what they bid/how they play – do not criticise
 - ♥ Only offer advice if asked for it
 - ♥ Never use the phrase, “You should have ... “
 - A good phrase to use is, “Sometimes it can work better if ... “
 - ♥ If an existing member is causing a new member discomfort – be prepared to ask your learner if they are feeling uncomfortable and what you can do to help.

My commitment as a buddy playing in an event with a new member

- 1) I will telephone my new member to introduce myself.
 - a) I will confirm which of the dates they can attend, and which dates I can attend.
 - b) I will ask the club to find substitutes for sessions that I cannot attend
 - c) I will email the teacher or grade convenor with any changes to the schedule provided asap
- 2) I will attend the last beginner’s lesson – this year on
- 3) I will introduce them to everyone at each table as the bridge progresses. (If the sections allow it, it may be intended that the buddies and new members will be in a separate “nursery section” for the evening).
- 4) I will be their partner for the event. However the club introduces beginners.
 - a) I will be seated 15 minutes before the start of any session. I will ensure I have time at the end of the session giving an opportunity for me to discuss any bidding or queries on boards at that time.
 - b) I will introduce all players at my table for all weeks of the event – even though name badges are worn, it is a good friendly practice to reinforce the names so that new people feel “included”.
 - c) I will telephone them before the next night of play for each week of the event, to ensure they are coming and check they are comfortable with everything.

- 5) I will ensure they have a partner for their next series and encourage them to find partners until the end of the year. I will liaise with partnership steward
- 6) I will find my new member at the start or end of the next series they attend, and asking how they are getting on.
- 7) If they drop off from attendance at the club, I will contact them to find out if there are any issues, and to try to coax them back to regular attendance or advise of any problems

If you are concerned about the comfort of new members, etiquette, or any complaints, please contact the teacher or grade convenor. We want to nip any issues in the bud and address them promptly, before a newcomer is discouraged from attending the club.

Contact numbers for advice:

Teacher.....
 Convenor
 Secretary

Bridge NSW has drawn on material previously prepared by **New Zealand Bridge** in compiling this note.



This publication is covered by a Creative Commons Licence CC BY-SA 4.0

Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International

BY: Credit must be given to you, the creator.

SA: Adaptations must be shared under the same terms.

This license requires that re-users give credit to Bridge NSW. It allows re-users to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, even for commercial purposes. If others remix, adapt, or build upon the material, they must license the modified material under identical terms.