

Teaching Principles

You don't have to be born a good teacher – you can learn¹.

Teaching for the first time is daunting. It's perfectly normal to feel nervous. Rest assured teaching will become easier over time. Remember, you know a lot more about playing bridge than your students do.

In this document, we will discuss some principles that underpin good teaching. These are principles that help you to help your students to learn. Then we will discuss some teaching tips and strategies that might help you in the classroom, especially if you haven't taught before. Some of the tips will be things to do and some will be things to avoid. These strategies are underpinned by the teaching principles below and will help you to put the principles into practise. Let's look first at the principles of good teaching.

Teaching Principles – the underpinnings of teaching that can help students to learn.

The teacher's role is to do everything that you can do to foster learning. You do this through your teaching and the environment that you create for your students.

The student's role is to learn. It's essential to understand that a teacher cannot make a student learn. Learning is the student's responsibility.

Students learn best when they are in an environment which feels safe, where they can interact with other students, where they feel socially connected to other students, and where they can learn by doing.

Social interactions allow students to help each other to learn. They can also help students to enjoy the lesson. If students are enjoying themselves, they are much more likely to learn than when they are not enjoying themselves. They also are more likely to return the following week.

While you will spend a little class time showing your students new concepts (like opening a major with 5 cards in the suit and 12+ HCPs), practising will help them to learn those new concepts. We help them to practise by giving them quizzes and playing specially set up hands. Learning by doing helps students to understand the new concepts that you are teaching. Ensure the majority of your class time allows students to be practising.

By safe, we mean things like students aren't worried that you are going to put them on the spot, ask them a question that they can't answer, and then feel foolish in front of their peers. Your students may not have been in the classroom for many years and may well fear making a mistake. We want our students to see you as an approachable person, someone who they feel comfortable asking questions.

¹ Please note that this document has been developed specifically for face to face teaching.

There's a lot of information to learn in an introductory bridge course. It really helps students if that information is structured. We do this by providing an overarching outline of the course, and within each lesson, letting the students know at the beginning what you are going to teach them today. Then you can help them to keep track of where you are up to with headings. Your course materials have been developed with this structure in place. It's important that you highlight this structure for your students.

Students thrive on encouragement. Try to be reassuring of and patient with your students. Some people really struggle with bridge concepts but if you are positive, and helpful, that is sometimes just what a particular student needs. And let's face it, we all value a person who is encouraging of our efforts.

It's important that you be who you are when you teach and not try to be another teacher whom you admire. Perhaps you're funny, or kind, or thoughtful. Whoever you are, let your personality shine through. Remember to smile.

Regardless of your personality, it's important to show your enthusiasm for bridge. There is nothing that turns a student off learning faster than a teacher who is clearly bored and shows no enthusiasm for the subject.