



Bridge
NSW

Running a Supervised Session

There are many challenges faced by novice bridge players transitioning from social or beginner lessons to club duplicates. These challenges primarily include the fast pace of play and potential negative experiences with more experienced players.

The “Supervised Session” format offers a relaxed and educational environment for new players, with key features such as:

- Slower pace: Approximately 9 minutes per board.
- Allowed notes and cheat sheets: To aid decision-making.
- Supervisor guidance: Available to provide advice and support.
- Simplified system: A basic system is used to reduce complexity.
- Friendly atmosphere: Emphasis on enjoyment and learning.
- Start the session with a 10 to 15 minute lesson
- Safety – never criticise, try positive language: “another option for you would have been to bid 1NT”

Hints for supervisors:

- If the bidding has totally gone off the rails, get them to ‘start again’ – it’s not a serious session!
- Know your customers. Teaching an early beginner to solve a bidding problem with a negative double will not work but might be appropriate for a more experienced player.
- A beginning pair bidding 2 and making 9 tricks are pleased. No need to tell them the correct contract was 4 making 11
- Teach the essential protocols of duplicate play. These include:
 - What dummy may and may not say
 - The essentials of alerting (who alerts, when to alert, what to alert)
 - How to manage the bidding pad or bidding cards once the auction is finished
 - Remaining inscrutable at all times
 - Never criticising your partner!

Transitioning those players out of the supervised into the regular duplicate session.

Some players prefer the relaxed atmosphere of Supervised Sessions and do not want to progress – nothing wrong with that.

However, the default situation is that new players play supervised for a time, and then dip their toes in the water of duplicate bridge.

Overcoming obstacles in transitioning

- **Speed of play** – new players will find it difficult to play at 6 to 7 minutes per board. Director can abandon the last board in the round if not enough time to play it. Director can award the opponents “average plus” – a 60% score – on the board if they are upset. This is entirely legal, supported by Law 12C2.
- **Alerts** – play down the importance of alerting, at least at the novice level. Since novices play very basic methods, there is really nothing to alert. By all means, explain the alerting rules to your supervisees, but don’t make a big thing of it.
- **Calling the Director** – One important piece of advice to give to those transitioning is: if something happens out of the ordinary, please call the director. Directors should see themselves as problem solvers, not policemen. Has someone revoked etc? These are not crimes: they are problems to be sorted out. The laws tell the director how to do so.
- **Rudeness** – This is the biggie. Rude behaviour by opponents is the one thing that will drive new players either back to the supervised or right out of your club. It’s not just saying unpleasant things etc. It includes:
 - Failing to greet your opponents at the start of a round
 - Post-morteming a hand where you have gotten a bad result
 - Calling the director without telling your opponents that you are about to do so
 - Offering partner or opponent technical bridge advice

Best to pre-alert beginners it’s not as friendly as Supervised but, also, promote good behaviour at your club.

Bridge NSW has drawn on material previously prepared by Bill Jacobs, that appeared in the Victoria Bridge Association Bulletin, in compiling this note.

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