

# TEACHING BRIDGE

*Setting Up  
for Success*



## **NEVER FORGET**

*Playing bridge is supposed to be fun  
Teaching bridge is ALSO supposed to be fun!*

## FORWARD/INTRODUCTION

Teaching beginning bridge requires a solid foundation of beginning bridge knowledge, patience, respect for your students' efforts and the ability to:

- Put yourself in the mindset of a new student – Empathy. Remember what it was like when you first learned bridge!
- Smother your own ego – be less interested in showing them how much YOU know. Keep to the basics. Trying to give them information they have no context for (as yet) will simply confuse and discourage them.
- Let them make mistakes and help them see how to avoid it the next time, rather than telling them. How do you learn any technique or skill in sports? By doing again and again until you succeeded.

Teaching a complex topic to adults or children bridge is similar, but there are a few differences in your approach to teaching kids.

## TEACHING KIDS VS. ADULTS

| KIDS PLUSSES                  |
|-------------------------------|
| Used to studying and learning |
| Less embarrassed by mistakes  |
| Understand gaming & strategy  |
| More accepting of new ideas   |
| Enthusiastic                  |
| So Darn Cute!                 |
| Fearless                      |

| KIDS MINUSES                   |
|--------------------------------|
| Shorter attention span         |
| Want to know everything        |
| Little control over their time |
| May bend to peer pressure      |
| Very obvious when bored        |
| Vocabulary is not as extensive |
| So darn cute!                  |

## TEACHING TIPS

For those of you who are not educators by trade find below some general teaching tips. These general tips are the same whether you are teaching someone who is 8 or 80!

- Limit talking to 5 minutes, then have students do something.

*When teachers talk too long, students lose focus – especially in a beginning class. Their minds begin to drift. Keep them awake!*

- Communicate important information multiple times in multiple ways (repetition-repetition-repetition).

*Remember flash cards? Remember ‘writing 100 times on the chalk board I will not talk in class? Reviews and repeating the same information multiple times, helps students remember.*

- Avoid putting students on the spot.

*You ask ‘Jane’ (who you KNOW understands the material) a question in front of the class. She freezes. She’s shy. She simply can’t bring the answer up at that moment. She’s embarrassed and she’s lost her enjoyment in the class.*

- Find a positive spin when correcting a wrong answer.

*Someone says, “I would overcall 1♣,” but they hold 3+ clubs and 12 HCP. Your reply should be something like, “That would be a perfect opening bid with this hand but remember Overcaller needs a 5+ card suit.” Validating that their bid would have been correct for Opener and minimizing they forgot that Overcaller needed more cards.*

- Don’t assume students know something that you haven’t specifically covered.

*Most of us grew up playing cards or maybe you play poker. I had a student who had never played any cards and didn’t know which suit was clubs and which was spades. It never hurts to go over (at least once) even the most basic information.*

- Watch your vocabulary. Don’t use ‘bridge words’ before you explain what they mean.

*Bridge has its own unique vocabulary (doubleton, game, part-score). As bridge players we use the words without thinking. Make sure you define bridge vocabulary before or when you use it.*

## TEACHING TIPS

- Pull information out of the students, rather than pushing information on them, whenever possible.

*Some aspects of play are intuitive, bidding is not, with bidding guidelines you are forced to give them the information, but in teaching play it's often possible to give them puzzles to solve. Students solving problems and arriving at answers together is ALWAYS a more productive learning exercise than a teacher telling them the answer.*

- Use catchy phrases and mnemonics as memory tools.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Hand High, Third Hand Low, High Five.... easy to remember the words and the meaning. Anything you can give them to help retention is great!*

- Utilize verbal, tactile and visual techniques to teach.

*Students have different learning styles, and many will lose focus if you don't have variety in the way, you present your information. A mixture of techniques and vehicles for learning information helps keep their minds alert and will offer the best learning opportunities for all of your students, regardless of how they learn best. Mix it up!*

- Limit content to one or two concepts or techniques per class.

*Learning theory initially said that people could hold seven things at one time. (Ever wonder why phone numbers are seven digits? This is why.) More modern theory says three or four. What's worse, students don't just stop retaining information when you introduce more ideas... they also start to forget what they learned earlier in the class! If your students actually learn and retain one or two important concepts in each sitting...you're successful!*

- Score the hands.

*Scoring the result after each hand helps them understand the strategy of bidding.*

- Let students play as much as possible.

*Playing is (generally) fun. It's a chance for them to sit back, talk with their friends and play a game. Try to always make sure you end a class with them playing cards.*

## TEACHING TIPS

- Avoid calling on a specific child, unless their hand is up.

*I've listed this twice as it is one of the most important concepts you should take-away from this talk. Students need to feel safe to be attentive, look at the teacher and nod their heads... without being afraid they'll be 'picked'.*

- Use open-ended questions to spark student thinking about ideas or concepts. PAUSE so they can think, before you provide the answer.

*Pause 15-20 seconds before you answer. Give them a chance to think before you speak.*

- Provide opportunities to play the actual game, it is important.

*Winning is why most of us play games. Yes, it's fun to play. Yes, we know we can't always win... but we want to win. Playing an actual game is more exciting than simply playing a hand. Every class doesn't have to be a game. But some of them should be.*

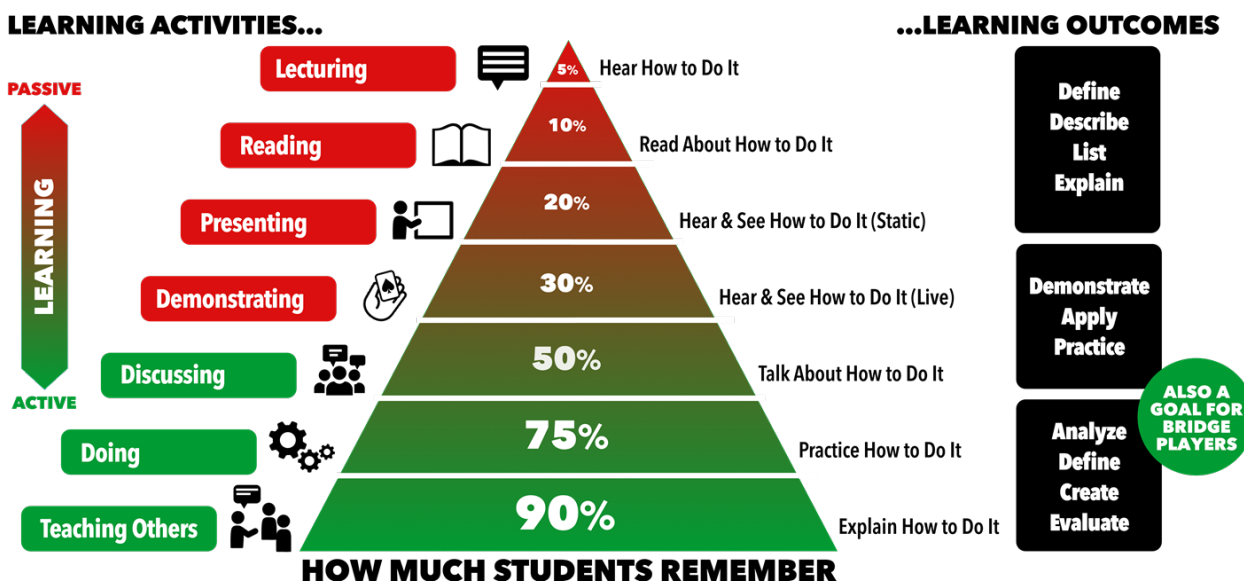
- Mix up the tables and the partnerships between activities and/or classes.

*Many kids will have 'best friends' they want to play with, but one part of the allure of bridge is meeting new people and making new friends. In life you can't always pick your co-workers and getting along with them is important. Bridge class can also create a good 'life-lesson'.*

- Leave them with something 'fun' to do between classes.

*Have something they can do (online, by themselves or with other people) to practice what they have learned in class. If they do nothing with bridge in the week between classes, they will forget most of what they learned.*

## THE CONE OF LEARNING



Regardless of whether you are teaching children bridge to help them improve scholastically, to become bridge players for the future or improve their STEM skills for later in life; structuring your lessons to hone their analytical, creativity, evaluation and planning skills is critical to their success... In bridge and in life.

Let's create a lesson for a beginner bridge class that gives our students the best learning experience available. If you are teaching online now, adjustments indicated in RED can allow you to offer this lesson virtually.

## WHAT WOULD YOU OPEN? CLASS

### Presentation (READ, HEAR & SEE)

- Reminder Purpose of Bidding
- Reminder Priority of Contract
- Present Guidelines for Choosing an Opening Bid



## WHAT WOULD YOU OPEN? CLASS

### What Would You Open Hands (COLLABORATE & DO)

- Preset 4 hands at each table (Online classes, create a virtual card table with preset hands in [PlayingCards.io](https://PlayingCards.io))
- 4-5 students to each table (Online set up breakout rooms)
- 6-7 minutes to count points and answer with an opening bid



### Review (HEAR & SEE)

- Review responses to practice hands
- Answer any questions



### Additional Practice (COLLABORATE & DO)

Remainder of class, ask students to practice choosing an opening bid by randomly dealing cards. If a hand can't open, then say, 'if I had enough points,' based on my distribution, what would I open? Offer help if needed. (Online use [PlayingCards.io](https://PlayingCards.io) for a virtual card table to generate hands)



### Take Home Practice

Use a deck of cards to deal, count points, pick an opening bid. Question? Take a photo or write it down and ask next week.

## HOW DID WE DO?

**Auditory (HEAR)** – Review of previous concepts, guidelines for choosing an opening bid, answering questions, and giving directions

**Visual (SEE)** – teacher presentation, cards, and student handout

**Collaboration (DISCUSS)** – interacting with others at the table (or in an online breakout room) to work out answers

**Tactile (DO)** – playing with actual cards (or virtual cards online) to count points and choose an opening bid

***With the technology now available, any class you can teach in the classroom you CAN adapt to teach online!***

## ONLINE VS. FACE-TO-FACE

Online offers a myriad of options for the kids to play and practice.

What new players PREFER is Face-to-Face. Online has been described with words like:

- Not a real game  
*Online doesn't feel like a real game*
- Boring  
*Even if other people are at table, it feels like I'm playing against robots*
- Not Fun/Social  
*Can't really talk or meet people... just not fun*

Learn, Practice and Play Online

- PlayingCards.io
- ACBL Learn to Play Bridge
- Solitary practice
- Trickster (13+ years old only)
- Shark Bridge (Robots better for new players, but still best if they have a foursome)
- BBO (Minibridge, Declarer Play Only)
- BBO (Play not suitable for new players unless they have a foursome to play with)

## DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT TEACHING KIDS

Bridge is too hard → *In 8 hrs. they can learn to bid/play a hand.*

They just want to play cards → *They love the strategy. They want to play.*

They want Apps → *They want to play with friends and meet new ones.*

Bidding is too complicated → *Not if you stick to the very basics.*

They want to compete → *They like competing, it's exciting, but are more interested in socializing with friends.*

They can't understand → *They understand many concepts better than adults.*