

Teachers' Manual

2024

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1. Introduction

Thank you for helping to build the future of bridge, as you inspire, teach, and mentor new members. You are the face of bridge for new members, and the person who will have the greatest influence on their decision to join your club.

NZB is committed to giving you the support and resources you need to be a great teacher, and ambassador for the game.

The Teaching and Learning Committee constantly reviews, updates, and upgrades the resources we provide, including developing online programmes for the next generation of bridge enthusiasts.

The best way to learn bridge, is to play bridge. We highly recommend that you enlist other club members to help you during the lessons, and mentor learners. The last thing you want is to burn out, especially if your club is amongst the 40% of clubs with fewer than sixty-five members.

Ideally, you will be able to enlist a mentor within your club to guide every beginner, or partnership, through their first months. We recommend that you invite suitable club members to volunteer to help during lessons, and mentor learners, before your lessons start.

We wish you every success in teaching new players and making their transition into the club as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

Teaching and Learning Committee

2. Connecting with Other Teachers

Our WhatsApp group, NZB Teachers, has been set up to help you easily connect and engage with other teachers.

The group is restricted to bridge teachers only, and we recommend that you join the group. Please feel free to ask questions, share your thoughts and suggestions, and interact with other teachers throughout New Zealand.

You can join by contacting Douglas Russell by texting 021 235 2220, or by email, douglaskeithrussell@gmail.com

The Teaching and Learning Committee occasionally organises a Teachers' Conference to encourage sharing of ideas. Notice of upcoming live or online events will be noted on the app, and emailed to your clubs, for forwarding on to you.

You are also welcome to reach out to any member of the Teaching and Learning Committee. Current members are Douglas Russell, Phil Noye, Shirley Newton, Kate Terry, Mary Christensen, Sonya Adams, Alan Grant.

3. Our Teaching Philosophy

This manual, along with all the resources provided by NZB, are designed to help you run Beginner classes.

The modules provided on the NZB website are self-contained, and may be taught in any order you prefer, as long as your lessons flow in a logical sequence.

These modules are being reviewed and updated regularly, including a major update in 2024 to simplify both the lessons and the resources NZBridge provides.

From the time you start your lessons, it will take from three to four months to teach the basics, hook new players onto the game, and introduce them to the club.

However, the process of welcoming new members to the club starts from their first enquiry about lessons. Your warmth, empathy, and communication skills will play a major role in how many come to lessons, stay until the end, and become club members.

Learning bridge will be more rewarding if you make it as simple as possible. Enthusiasm is infectious. If you are enjoying yourself, and making it fun, you, and your beginners, will have a great time.

Set realistic expectations from the start. It's unlikely that a fully-fledged bridge player will emerge from your class. Bridge tends to attract success-driven people, who are more likely to persevere if they understand that mastering bridge takes time.

Too much information will confuse and discourage most beginners. Let them know that you will teach only the basics, as they begin their journey.

Encourage them to listen only to you, for the duration of the lessons. Trying to absorb advice from several directions will be counter-productive, and misguided or unsolicited help may have the opposite effect.

Enlist the club members who will help beginners merge into the club, at the earliest opportunity, particularly at the session they will filter into. The more people they know the more quickly they will absorb into the club, and find partners. Our research has shown, that not being able to find partners is one of the main reasons people stop coming to the club.

Choose mentors with patience and warmth, including players who recently graduated from lessons. By not sending out a general request, you will avoid having to offend eager, but unsuitable volunteers. Instead, approach your preferred mentors personally. We all respond best to a personal invitation, and you know which members have the personality, and skills to assist new players.

Keep the club informed as to how many beginners are attending lessons, and sharing their progress. Regularly acknowledge your mentors and club members for their support.

Again, thank you for stepping up as a highly-valued teacher. We wish you every enjoyment and success as you conduct lessons, and help new players integrate into your club.

Lessons are regularly reviewed for content and flow. Please regularly visit the Teaching and Learning section on the NZB website, to ensure you have access to the most recently updated beginner, improver, and intermediate lesson. We will add new and updated resources, as they become available, on this link at [Teaching and Learning Resources \(nzbridge.co.nz\)](https://nzbridge.co.nz/teaching-and-learning-resources)

Please also take advantage of the videos that accompany beginner lessons. They are ideal for beginners who miss a lesson, or wish to review lessons afterwards. You will find them under Learn Bridge on the NZB website:

[NZB - Beginner's Teaching Materials \(nzbridge.co.nz\)](https://nzbridge.co.nz/nzb-beginners-teaching-materials)

4. Other Teaching Resources

You don't need to be an advanced player to teach bridge, as long as you have a sound knowledge of the basics. It is more important to have a friendly personality, and enthusiasm for the game.

A motivated, organized teacher, a pleasant environment, and the right support and resources, will set you and your learners up for success.

NZ Bridge Teaching Material includes downloadable Introduction to Bridge student notes. You can print lessons individually, or together, and use plastic binding to create a booklet. They include pre-set hands with commentary and quizzes (with answers), to encourage learners to do their homework.

You can order 20 Introduction to Bridge Student Notes booklets free from NZB, and there is a small charge for extra copies.

Ideally, you need a screen or television for lesson power points, and can use your own laptop or projector to show your PowerPoint presentations, quizzes, and pre-set hands, as well as access online resources.

Many teachers run successful lessons using a whiteboard, or prepared presentation notes folded over the whiteboard frame.

Other key materials include name badges, bidding pads, pens, handouts, and a folder for student notes. A 20 pocket A4 display book is perfect. Cardholders are recommended for players who have difficulty holding thirteen cards.

Hopefully, you will have access to a dealing machine to pre-deal cards for each set of lessons.

NZB also supports you by organizing a series of ninety-minute online Supported Play sessions throughout the year. They are free for learners, and available at www.playbridge.co.nz. An Introductory session for Teachers will precede each series of online Supported Play sessions. For details of upcoming lessons, email sonya.adams@nzbridge.co.nz

The right environment will help. Ensure that the room is neat and tidy, with clean table cloths, pre-dealt hands, and student notes ready to hand out. There should be name badges for all participants, including the teacher and assistants, to make it easy to learn and remember names. Try to provide refreshments if possible.

Teaching assistants play a critical role, and there are many ways that members can help you at lessons:

- Taking table money
- Handing out name badges
- Making up the numbers so that every table has four players
- Following your directions when helping students in a large class
- Assisting you with housekeeping chores

Administrative support will allow you to focus on teaching. Invite another club member to assist, by contacting and enrolling students, compiling phone lists and email addresses, and following up on members who miss lessons.

You and your students now have excellent support on-line. NZB frequently offers online lessons, which will appeal to younger players, players who are eager to master the game, miss lessons, or need extra support.

Even the most eager learner may have to miss a lesson. You may also like to refer them to YouTube, where they can watch a tutorial on the topic they missed.

If you don't have a preferred presenter, here are some additional video sites researched by the Teaching and Learning Committee (which you may also enjoy watching yourself).

- <https://bridgeplay.uk/Lessons/Menu>
- http://www.neilandinga.co.uk/CLASSES/classes_teaching.html
- <http://www.neilandinga.co.uk/CLASSES/beginnershands.pdf>
- <https://www.nofearbridge.co.uk>
- <https://bridgewhiz.org>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@LearnBridgeOnline/videos>
- <https://www.stellar-bridge.co.uk/free-bridge-lessons/>

You are also welcome to poll other teachers on our WhatsApp group for video recommendations.

5. Advertising Beginners' Lessons

There are many ways to find new members to join your beginners' lessons, and the more you try, the more success you will have.

The free advertising section of your community radio station or newspaper is usually eager for interesting, timely, content, and some even run a *Join a Club* promotion. Others welcome photos for their Community Pages.

Send *Learn to Play Bridge* or *New Lessons Starting* announcements to your local paper, community groups, and high school newsletter.

Promote your lessons on your own club website, Facebook page, and club newsletter, with dates, times, location, and contact details. Make sure the club member who manages these communication channels keeps them current and fresh.

Build a relationship with your local media to increase your club's profile. Regularly submit stories, such as:

- Local player wins Tournament
- Ten new members inducted into Bridge Club
- Bridge is Booming
- Local Bridge Club runs Fundraiser

- Bridge Club Announces *Bridge for Beginners* lessons.
- Pair Win Series, after Close Race!
- Theme Night a Huge Success at Bridge Club etc.

You will increase your chances of being published if you make it easy for them. Make sure you include a high-quality photo (with names and caption) and restrict your copy to 200-250 words (easily done by editing out the boring details and focusing on eye catching copy). Your goal should be to inspire potential bridge players to contact the club, not explain everything.

Ask your local business and community groups if you can post a flyer or leave leaflets on their noticeboard. Colourful posters will stand out more than black and white copy. Don't forget to make it easy for people to contact you via email, text, or phone.

Place posters everywhere you are allowed:

- Library, Business and Community Notice Boards
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Local cafés and tavern, and supermarket bulletin boards
- Golf, Bowling, and other sports clubs notice boards
- Retirement Villages
- Shopping areas, centres, and malls
- School staffroom notice boards
- Service Clubs such as Lions, Rotary, Altrusa, Friendship Club.
- Doctors, Dentists, Accountants, and other professional practices

Ask club members who have businesses, or belong to other clubs and societies, work at a library, school, or volunteer at the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to help get a poster into these places.

Many international bridge clubs have had success by promoting bridge to people who live on their own. If you have not yet tried that angle, it would be worth considering.

Be creative! Create and drop off bookmarks at your local library, promoting bridge and your club. Set up a table and banner and play bridge at the pub, outside a café – anywhere public where people can come and chat to the players.

Make sure the member who responds to club emails, texts, or phone calls, is able to respond immediately, and has a welcoming, interested, and helpful manner. If they are planning to be away, organize a stand-in to take over enquiries.

Offer to send a club member along to local service clubs, or associations to give an entertaining speech on the fascinating game of bridge.

Word of mouth is one of the most powerful ways to reach new members. Invite members to promote upcoming Beginners' Lessons, by taking promotional leaflets for friends and family, or sharing with friends, family and groups they belong to.

Search for local community groups on social media and publish posts inviting locals to the club for a free introductory lesson.

Set up a stand at your local fair, A&P show, or market day. Inviting some members to come along and play will help attract visitors to your stand.

Offer to run bridge lessons at your local high school (teachers and parents can come too) or set up a demonstration stand at the school when they run events.

Design and print a leaflet advertising lessons for mailbox drops. Invite club members to distribute, while they are out walking the dog or exercising. Make sure that you record what streets they will be covering, to avoid doubling up.

If your club budget allows, you can also use paid advertising to promote lessons.

Your regional committees may be able to provide some funding for promotional activities. Contact them directly to discuss financial support.

This link will take you to the marketing resources available through the NZB website.

<https://www.nzbridge.co.nz/marketing-material-for-clubs-regions.html>

Reach out to NZ Bridge Marketing Manager, Mel Auld, for assistance – mel.auld@nzbridge.co.nz.

6. Keeping Learners Engaged

It will be months from their first contact, that learners become committed club members.

Some who show an interest in lessons, won't show up to the first lesson. Some will drop off for reasons beyond your control, others because they are told that bridge is too difficult or too serious. They may feel uncomfortable entering a new environment on their own.

You can reduce that likelihood, by keeping in regular contact, saying how much you are looking forward to meeting them, and reminding them that everyone starts where they are about to start.

Constantly reinforce the message that bridge is a game, a hobby, and a fun way to stay socially and mentally active. That bridge can be played at any level, from social to

competitive, and at any age or time. Let them know about timing, parking, and what they need, or don't need to bring.

Keep them engaged by sending a weekly email to learners throughout the course. Make it encouraging, reassuring that it is common not to grasp bidding at first, and reminding them to do their homework before the next lesson.

Online Practice during Beginners' Courses. The ability to practise between lessons is invaluable both in terms of bridge knowledge and also in terms of keeping up students' enthusiasm. Graeme Tuffnell has generously provided NZB practice hands that match the lessons. These are ideal for learners who want to practice in their own time.

Feel free to share this link with your learners www.graemetuffnell.com/practice-hands

The videos listed in the Teaching Resources section above are also a way to encourage your beginners to gain extra insights. There are many varied presentation styles, and hearing a lesson or topic, presented in a different way, and by a different person, will help to keep them engaged and interested.

People go where they feel welcome, and stay where they feel included and engaged. The key to attracting and keeping members is to make it easy for them to come, and hard for them to leave. That will happen if they persevere with lessons, enjoy the game, the socializing, and the way they feel when they are at bridge.

7. Helping New Players Integrate into the Club

Bridge lessons, and accompanying play practice, are only 20% of the task of retaining new members. 80% relies on how well they are welcomed and integrated into the club.

New players can be discouraged by the unacceptable behaviour of a few club players. All clubs should adopt a zero-tolerance attitude to rude, thoughtless, or intimidating behaviour. What will get the beginners through the learning period is friendliness, kindness, and encouragement. No one wants to feel like a failure.

You can help in many ways.

- Introduce beginners at the sessions they attend, and remind club members that everyone started as a beginner. The best help they can give, is to make them feel welcome, while offering praise and encouragement.
- Don't expect beginners to start playing at the normal speed of 24+ boards per session. Playing 12 to 20 boards is more realistic, and if your club is large enough, seat beginners as a separate group, until they feel ready to join the main section.

- Arrange supported (supervised) play sessions for beginners, and choose your helpers carefully. You may find that shorter sessions with fewer boards (between 10 and 12) will be more effective. NZB now regularly offers these online, to help you and your learners.
- Encourage beginners to use cheat sheets for at least a couple of months.
- Ask one of your most helpful and patient Directors, to attend a lesson to explain their role i.e. setting up the session, and restoring equity when mistakes are made (everyone makes them).
- You and the Director can explain that everyone makes mistakes, and other players are not allowed to rule on mistakes or infractions. Only trained directors are qualified to rule, and if other members try to make a ruling, they should immediately call the Director.
- Experienced players calling the Director for minor infringements by new players is poor sportsmanship. Remind them to offer encouragement and praise, instead of criticism.
- Send club newsletters/bulletins etc. to beginners from the start of lessons.
- Some clubs discourage members from doubling new players for penalties, for their first few sessions. However, when beginners understand that doubling for penalties is just another bid, they will be less stressed by them.
- You may also like to show this video to learners as it will introduce them to unacceptable, or unethical behaviour they may unfortunately experience during their first integrated sessions at the club.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smOG-ungzyk>

If possible, it would be good to show all club members to help prevent such behaviour.

- You can also download the pdf which lists the 33 breaches shown on the video (see appendix)

8. More Retention Initiatives

When new players are introduced to the Club, ask the Director and/or President, to introduce them warmly, and remind existing members to be encouraging and friendly.

Consider celebrating their first session as Beginners' Graduation, and making it a relaxed and happy session. You may like to provide nibbles and drinks, or a special afternoon tea/supper to make the session special.

Seat beginners East / West for a limited time, so they don't have to score and play at the same time.

Invite all club members to play one series a year with a beginner.

Offer free lessons to any club member wishing to repeat all, or part of, the beginners' course.

Run ongoing lessons for both beginners and intermediates.

Encourage beginners to arrange social games outside the club to practice bidding, playing, and defending in a social, low-pressure environment. This will also help new players find partnerships.

Direct beginners to online sites to practice. Some sites are free, while others require a subscription. You may like to recommend sites, or beginners can easily locate sites by searching online.

If your Club decides to use mentors to assist new players, avoid asking for volunteers. Remember to hand-pick members with empathy and patience.

A list of Beginner Lessons is available on NZBridge. There are alternatives for the order you teach suit, and No-Trump openers.

Note: Many teachers recommend starting lessons with a couple of sessions of MiniBridge, so that beginners can experience basic card play before they start to learn bidding.

9. New Zealand Bridge Lessons

The system taught in New Zealand is Basic Modern Acol, as follows:

- 4-card suits as one level openers.
- Weak 1NT (12-14 HCP)
- Weak 2D 2H, 2S openings
- Strong 2NT and 2C openings
- Pre-emptive 3 and 4 level openers

No conventions except Blackwood 4NT, the strong 2C opener, and its negative response of 2D.

Stayman is not covered in Beginners lessons, but may be taught as an extra module if you feel that your learners are ready, or in Improvers' Lessons later on.

NZBridge Beginner Lessons offer comprehensive coverage of Basic Modern Acol, in ten lesson modules. So that these lessons can be fitted into ten weeks, some are weightier than others. You may wish to take more than one session to cover these lessons, or offer follow up classes.

Each Lesson Package includes:

- Student Notes
- Teacher Notes
- Power Point Presentation
- Quizzes and Answers
- Pre-set hands
- Dealing File
- YouTube videos

A good lesson is well prepared. You should study the student and teacher's notes prior to the lesson, so that you use the same terminology. Try to have both of them in front of you during the lesson.

Divide lessons into two parts, with a short refreshment/comfort break half way. If you are talking too much, students will not have enough time to play.

Each lesson includes eight practice hands. You should aim to play at least six, preferably all eight hands.

Ideally, each table should play the same hand at the same time, at least for the first half of the lesson, so that you can emphasise the important teaching points to the whole class.

Time to socialise before, or after lessons will help members get to know each other, and form future partnerships.

10. Bridge Etiquette

All lessons should incorporate bridge etiquette, so that new players know what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is a tricky subject to get across, so be careful not to use your learners as examples.

The basics of being a good player include:

- Never criticize your partner. "Well done!" and "Bad luck!" are ideal comments. Comments such as, "The 9 of diamonds was good, why didn't you play it?" will only distract your partner from the next hand.
- Never offer advice to an opponent. It's not your business.
- Avoid extreme facial expressions, as they give away unauthorised information.
- Do not comment or indicate that you have made a mistake, or don't know what to bid, as this gives unauthorised information, and is considered unethical.
- Thank your partner for the dummy hand regardless of its quality.
- When you are declarer, take your time after the opening lead is made. Review the cards in front of you, and the lead, and plan your play before you play to the first trick.

Being a good dummy

- Ensure that your partner plays from the correct hand and follows suit. Asking, "Having none, partner?" is allowed under the laws of bridge.
- Play the card that is nominated without comment, hesitation or suggestion.

There's a copy of two Bridge Etiquette flyers at the end of this Manual, and we suggest that this is also regularly shared with all club members, not just beginners.

You may also like to share this humorous video highlighting common etiquette breaches and poor sportsmanship with your club.

11. Appendices

Bridge Etiquette flyers (available on www.nzbridge.co.nz under Marketing)

Ethics video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smOG-ungzyk>

Pdf listing the 33 Ethics Breaches in the video

Bridge Etiquette Flyer (option 1)

CLUB CONDUCT

FOR FOSTERING A HAPPY COMMUNITY





DO

- Be warm and friendly, smiling and saying hello
-  Offer congratulations and good sportsmanship
- Volunteer your time at the club
- Offer to play with new players
- Acknowledge good play
- Be kind to your partner
- Be willing to improve and open to feedback from others
- Support teachers by helping with lessons
- Be respectful of the director and the rules of the game and our club



DON'T

- Be rude to others, making derogatory remarks
- Comment on opposition play without being asked
- Gloat about your play
- Be snappy when spoken to
- Cheat or play dishonestly
- Take advantage of misbids/incorrect calls 
- Criticise your partner's play at the table
- Use bridge rules to dictate etiquette in an unpleasant way
- Excessively talk or argue, disrupting play
- Selfishly have lengthy post-mortems, holding up play



IF YOU SPOT IT, STOP IT:

Speak up immediately if you witness this behavior with a friendly comment to the person or raise it with our club recorder or club management.



Bridge Etiquette Flyer (option 2)



Help make Bridge enjoyable for all

- ♠ Be seated ten minutes before play starts
- ♥ Wear your name badge
- ♣ Check that your phone is on silent
- ♦ Greet your opponents before each round
- ♠ Introduce yourself to people you don't know
- ♥ Explain your system clearly and simply, when asked
- ♣ Be understanding of newer players
- ♦ Be kind to your partner
- ♠ Save training tips, and reviews until after the session
- ♥ Acknowledge good play by your opponents
- ♣ Let the Director or Recorder know if you see players behaving badly towards their opponents or partners
- ♦ Thank your opponents at the end of the round
- ♠ Don't gloat over a good result or opponent's error
- ♥ Respect your Director