



Sunshine Coast Bridge Club

HANDBOOK FOR NEW PLAYERS

This booklet is intended as a guide for new players. Commentary on the laws and other aspects is meant as a guide only and may not be complete. If in doubt, check with a director.

Phone: 07 5444 7574

Web: www.suncoastbridge.com.au

Email: info@suncoastbridge.com.au

Welcome to the Sunshine Coast Bridge Club and to the world of bridge.

You will already have discovered that bridge can be a challenging game. But it can also be enjoyable, no matter what level you play at.

Things can seem a bit daunting when you first start playing in club sessions. The purpose of this booklet is to introduce newer players to the process in order to make the transition from lessons to sessions an easy one. It is divided into two parts – Part A will be of interest to brand new players, and Part B will have more relevance after you've played for a while.

PART A

FOR NEW PLAYERS

Club Sessions

We run regular bridge sessions every day except Sundays. We also run several congresses where bridge is played at a more serious level and where members of other clubs come and play.

Our regular session times are:

Supervised play (see below) - Wednesday 9.00am (except when beginners' lessons are being run - March to June when we play Wednesday afternoons).

Sessions for less experienced players - Tuesday 9.00am and Friday 9.00am

More experienced players – Monday 12.30pm, Tuesday 1.30pm, Thursday 12.30pm, Saturday 12.30pm

Please be seated at least 15 minutes before the starting time to allow the director to set up the movement.

Wednesday morning is our Supervised and Beginners session, and most times there are two separate sections. Players in one section play without assistance amongst others of a similar standard, while players in the other

section can ask the tutor for assistance with specific bidding and card play.

Members generally progress from Wednesday sessions to the Friday and Tuesday sessions as they gain confidence. The afternoon sessions are where stronger players play, but less experienced players who are keen to improve also attend these sessions.

With the exception of Wednesday's supervised play, you turn up to regular sessions with a partner. However the Club has appointed Partner Organisers who players can phone in advance if they want to play on a particular day but don't have a partner.

These partner organisers are:

- Morning sessions – Marcia Carpenter 5479 0307
- Afternoon sessions – Barbara Walsh 5477 0042

Masterpoints

Masterpoints are awarded in all club sessions to all players who finish in the top half of any session. Points awarded appear on the results list and on the web site.

As you play more, and win more, your total number of masterpoints will increase.

Player masterpoints are managed at a national level by the ABF Masterpoint Centre in Sydney (web site is abfmasterpoints.com.au) who tracks the masterpoints of the 35,000+ currently active members of affiliated bridge clubs throughout Australia.

There's a series of "master ranks" that players attain, starting with Nil Master for brand new players and culminating in Diamond Grand Master once a player earns 15,000 masterpoints. Certificates are issued every time a player reaches a new rank, and the details of your awards are available on the ABF Masterpoints Centre web site.

Masterpoints in Australia come in three colours: green, red and gold. Most normal club sessions attract green points but selected club sessions throughout the year are red

point sessions. Congresses attract red or gold masterpoints. The reason for the different colours is that once you get past the lower master ranks, each promotion needs a certain number of total points but that total needs to include a certain number of red and gold points, and these (especially gold) are generally obtained only at stronger events.

Scoring

There are different ways of scoring bridge sessions and events. The method used in club sessions and many congresses is “matchpoint scoring”.

Under matchpoint scoring, your result is simply ranked against all other tables, and matchpoints are awarded from best to worst. Two matchpoints are available per result, and the worst result gets 0 matchpoints and the best result gets $(n \times 2) - 2$ where n is the number of results on the board. Equal results get equal matchpoints.

So for 10 tables, the best score earns 18 matchpoints (10 times 2 minus 2), and the second earns 16 matchpoints. This applies no matter how far ahead that top score was. The opponents score the converse, so that the opponents of the pair with the top board receive 0 and the opponents of the pair with the second best score receive 2 matchpoints.

Mentor Panel

The Club has appointed a number of experienced players to a Mentor Panel. These players are available to assist members with any bidding problems they may encounter. They can be approached at any club session or they can be contacted by phone or email as listed.

These mentors are able to assist players who play Standard American:

- Joan McPheat jmcpheat@powerup.com.au
- Wendy O'Brien 5491 2604 wendy_ob@hotmail.com
- Bev Stacey 5408 5435
- Jo Drake 5479 3736 pjduck@bigpond.com
- Adrienne Kelly 0418 832 601 revoke29@me.com
- Peter Busch 0438 336 632 peter@altosoft.com.au

Library

The club has an extensive library of bridge books located at the end of the room near the office. Members can borrow books by recording their name on the card.

If you're uncertain of which books would be suitable for your level, speak with your session director or one of the club mentors.

Directors

All bridge sessions are under the control of a director. Directors at club sessions usually also play in the session, but for congresses there is always a non-playing director, and for major events there will be a team of directors.

Directors at club sessions are responsible for setting up and managing the movement, and for handling any problems that come up at the table.

Unlike what happens with football referees, players must call the director when an infraction happens at the table. This is not to be perceived as “dobbing in” – players who don’t call a director after an infraction has been committed are themselves committing an infraction under the laws.

Typical infractions include things like bidding or playing out of turn, accidentally exposing a card, failing to follow suit and making an insufficient bid.

When an infraction occurs and the director is called, they will come to the table and have the problem explained, and they will then advise the players how to fix the situation in accordance with the laws of bridge. Players

must not make their own rulings at the table even if they know what the law is.

It is important to understand that the laws of bridge do not seek to punish. The remedy under the law is to restore equity and that is why the laws refer to “rectifications”, not “penalties”.

Remember to respect the director. You must not argue with the director when they give their ruling (players always have the right of appeal and if they chose to appeal a ruling the case will be heard by an independent appeals committee).

Remember also that in club sessions, the director is an unpaid volunteer, and like you, will be there to enjoy their game of bridge. Encountering difficulties or unpleasantness at a table hampers their enjoyment of the game, as well as yours and your opponents.

When calling the director, just raise your hand and call “Director please”, and leave your hand up until the director acknowledges. Players sometime forget to say “please”, but it is appreciated and shows appropriate respect.

Club Recorder

The Club has strict guidelines about unacceptable behaviour. We do not tolerate bullying or abusive behaviour, and there is a set of guideless that we follow should this occur.

The first point of contact for anyone who feels they have been aggrieved is the Club Recorder. The Recorder will act as a mediator if there is ever a dispute that cannot be handled by the session director. Issues include rudeness, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour.

The Club Recorder is Judith Slade, phone (07) 5452 7981, or email judithslade@spin.net.au.

System cards

You need to have a system card that your opponents can refer to during the bidding and play. This describes your system and ensures that your opponents know as much about your system and agreements as your partner does. They are also entitled to ask about the meaning of a bid at their turn to call or play.

If you need assistance in filling out a system card, speak to a director.

PART B

FOR NEWER PLAYERS WITH MORE EXPERIENCE

Special Club Events for Newer Players

There are special events run by the club that are designed for newer players.

Pro Am – this event is run twice a year and consists of partnerships made up of a “Pro” and an “Am”. The Pros are experienced players and the Ams are newer players with fewer than 30 masterpoints. Players can enter as a pair or can let the organiser match them with a suitable partner. The Pro will always play the Am’s system.

Teams of 3 – teams events are normally played with a team of 4 players, but in a Teams-of-3 event, teams consist of 3 less experienced players plus a more experienced captain who also acts as a mentor. This event is held once a year on a Friday. Each player must partner the captain at some point. Players can choose their own captain and enter as a complete team, or can enter as a threesome and let the organiser choose a captain.

Restricted Pairs Championship – this is a club championship for players with fewer than 150

masterpoints. It is run over three Tuesdays in October every year, and winners' names appear on the honour board.

Congresses

Most bridge clubs in Australia run congresses throughout the year. These are one or two day bridge competitions that involve players from our club and neighbouring clubs. The quality of bridge is usually stronger than club sessions, and they are run by a non-playing director. The nature of the event means that progressive scoring is done throughout the day. These events are popular with players at all levels, and a sandwich lunch is usually included.

Red masterpoints are awarded at these events, and the rate of earning is greater than normal club sessions. It is unusual for any players not to earn some masterpoints at a congress.

There are also national congresses where gold points are issued. These run for up to 2 weeks and every state in Australia runs 2 or 3 gold point events. They are enjoyed by players of all standards because there are events specifically for less experienced players as well as events that attract the best players in Australia and overseas. The most popular gold point event in Australia is the Gold Coast Congress which runs for a week in late February

every year and attracts 2,000 players from all over Australia as well as international players. For the new players, there are events catering specifically for Rookies, who have less than 5 masterpoints.

Congresses can be open, or they can be graded or restricted. Open means anyone can play but graded or restricted congress are a good place for newer players to start – graded means players only compete with players in their grade, and restricted means that all players in the event must be under a certain masterpoint level.

The Laws of Bridge

Some infractions and how the director will rule are:

- Insufficient bid – your left hand opponent can accept an insufficient bid. If they don't accept it, in many cases the director will allow the bid to be corrected to a sufficient bid in the same suit, and bidding can continue without restrictions. However, sometimes the correcting bid will restrict your partner's ability to bid on. Remember, it is never in your interest to make a correcting bid before the director arrives as this may restrict your options.
- Card led from the wrong hand – your opponent can accept it without restriction but if they don't, the correct hand must play and there may be lead restrictions or requirements for you or your partner then or at a later stage.
- Revoke (failing to follow suit) – if discovered quickly enough, it can be corrected, but otherwise the hand must be played out and there will most likely be a transfer of tricks at the end.

- Unintended bids – if you write down a bid that you never intended to make, the director can sometimes allow a change, so it's worth calling them. They will only allow you to correct a truly unintended bid, not one that you want to change because of a change of mind or suddenly remembering your system.
- When you are Dummy, you must not take part in the play at all. Only play a card when directed to by declarer (even if the card to play appears obvious), don't be the first to call attention to an infraction, and don't make any comments to Declarer that might be construed as assisting them to play the hand.
- Declarer or either defender may make a claim or concession at any point throughout the play of the hand by stating they will win a certain number of the remaining tricks, and while this is desirable when the final result is obvious, it is important that you be sure of your facts before doing so because the director needs to settle any doubtful points in favour of the other side. If you do claim, make sure you state your line of play.

Where players have a choice under any law, they should make the decision that is most favourable to them. It is therefore important to listen carefully when the director advises you of your choices.

Alerting and Announcing

Certain bids need to be alerted by the bidder's partner. These are bids that the opponents might expect will have a different meaning. Typical alertable bids are transfers but you should alert any bid that doesn't promise at least 3 cards in that suit.

There are exceptions though – don't alert bids over 3NT unless it is an artificial opening bid, and do not alert doubles, redoubles or cue bids (a cue bid is when you bid the opponent's suit) no matter what the meaning.

The correct way to alert is to say "alert" and circle the bid. Don't explain the meaning unless asked by an opponent.

The Announcing regulations on the other hand mean that you announce the meaning of your partner's 1C and 1NT opening bids. After partner opens 1C, just state the minimum number of clubs in that hand (or "strong" if playing a strong club system), and after they open 1NT, just state the HCP range.

Be a Good Sport

The article below is produced by the Australian Bridge Federation.

We all play bridge because we love it. Help make the game fun for everyone by observing the few simple proprieties that make bridge fair and enjoyable.

PLAY TOUGH BUT FAIR

- Play tough, be competitive, but be a good sport. Be pleasant to the opponents (and your partner).
- Welcome new opponents to your table. Don't conduct lengthy post-mortems.
- Don't stare at opponents, their cards or where in their hand they play a card from.
- If you think an experienced opponent may have done something inappropriate, speak privately to the official recorder.
- Slow players - make the effort to catch up; it's not fair to use more than your share of the clock and finishing late disrupts the schedule. Claim if it is clear.

MAKE BEGINNERS WELCOME

- New players are the future of the game we love.
- Make a special effort to explain your bidding fully to less experienced players and remember they may not know the methods and conventions you are using.
- When claiming, state your line clearly and explain it if required. Less experienced players may not see it as quickly as you.
- If opponents don't yet know the bridge code of behaviour, explain (politely) – even better, refer them to this code.

TELL OPPONENTS WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SYSTEM

- Your opponents are entitled to know as much about your system and style as your partner does...the only secret in bridge is what cards you hold.
- Provide two fully completed system cards
- Make every effort through alerts and explanations to tell your opponents what they need to know about your system.

NO TRICKERY, NO TIP-OFFS

- You must not try to help your partner or fool your opponents by anything but the bids you make and cards you play ... bridge is NOT poker.
- Don't tip partner off – and ignore partner's tips. Ethical players will try to avoid revealing mannerisms, and make a point of ignoring any information they accidentally get from partner's hesitations or mannerisms.
- Don't deceive the opponents by hesitations or mannerisms. If you accidentally hesitate without a problem, apologise: “sorry, I didn't have any reason to hesitate. I was asleep!”

CORRECT MIS-EXPLANATIONS AS SOON AS YOU CAN

- If partner accidentally misinforms the opponents, you can't give a correction during the bidding (because you mustn't tell partner the correct explanation).
- If your side becomes declarer, you must give the correct explanation before the opponents make their opening lead.
- If your side ends up defending, apologise and give the correct explanation at the end of the hand. Call the

director if opponents may have been damaged – that's why the Director is there!

HESITATIONS

- You are allowed to think! But, if you do take a long time over something, it shows you had other choices. Your partner must not use that information to influence what they do later.
- If partner hesitates, you can still pass, double or bid whatever you want (but without – even subconsciously – using the knowledge that partner apparently had other options).