



CPD Day 6: Help With Play

Delivering structured Help With Play sessions

After beginners lessons are completed, it is essential to retain the class by offering relaxed Help With Play sessions at least once a week. No new bidding material is to be introduced, and the students should be able to cement their enjoyment of bridge by playing. Help With Play should mean Help With **PLAY**, so there should be almost no emphasis on bidding.

A format for successful Help With Play sessions

It is suggested you start each Help With Play session by introducing a topic to the group. This should take up 15 to 20 minutes at the beginning of a two to two and a half-hour session. You should cover just one topic each week.

Have the students use the deal records to make up the hand that will be played and discussed in the lesson part of the session. Let the attendees experience the hand themselves by bidding and playing it. Don't rush them. Allow any tables who finish early to turn the hand up and discuss it. Watch the time carefully, and when the allocated time is up, ask everyone to turn up the hand and then go through it with the group, card by card.

Then distribute a lesson handout, which should include notes on the topic, an analysis of the hand played, and an etiquette tip. Spend five minutes to discuss the tip, as proper bridge etiquette is an important subject for new players to understand.

For the remainder of the session let attendees play a set of boards. You should have 15 hands ready as this is the minimum number for masterpoints purposes. However, it is not important to finish 15 hands.

They will move around the room in duplicate style, but with about nine minutes to complete each hand. Players may ask for help, but do not stand behind them to tell them what to do. The best thing you can do is try to discover what the player thinks about the bid or play. Approaching their question this way increases their involvement in the learning process.

You should let the group discuss anything they want to at the table. You are aiming to create a safe and enjoyable space where they can learn. The supervisor is the general helper, and members of the group will learn when they are ready if you have created a safe environment.

Be careful about offering too much help to the same people. Other members of the group will resent this, especially when the printed results reflect the constant assistance. It is best to assist the group as a whole, not highlight individuals. This may be difficult, as some people constantly ask for assistance.

Goals of structured Help With Play

- Offer a structure so bridge beginners can confidently improve and stay engaged.
- Reinforce topics already covered in their beginners lessons. Focus on declarer play and defence, rather than bidding.
- Resist introducing new material that can overwhelm new players. Any topic that cannot be adequately covered in 15 minutes should be saved for full-length lessons.
- Give students something to take home so they can revise and practise the concepts covered in the Help With Play session.

Adapting the STEAM principles to structured Help With Play

S = Safety

Give the Teachers Guarantee at the beginning. Avoid praising individuals during class time, and keep the group as a whole as much as possible. Avoid going to stand behind students regularly to tell them what to play or bid. When they call you over with a problem (this is hard to avoid), ascertain what they think is a possible answer. Don't tell them what to do without hearing their opinion first.

T = Timing

The practice hand should be played at the start of the session, immediately after the teacher has introduced the topic for that day's Help With Play. Hand out the deal records and ask the students to make up the hand. Be precise with the time and give them to two minutes to bid on the hand. Check that everyone is on the same contract, then give them about seven minutes to play the hand. Ask each table to turn the four hands up dummy style once they are done. If they finish the hand earlier, let them discuss it at their table.

Go through the points to be made and the hand, card by card. Then distribute the handout for the session and briefly discuss the tips. Once this is done, set up the duplicate hands for the remainder of the session.

E = Energy

Anything the students do which is active in the class is good. Going through the practice hand card by card keeps energy levels high. Encouraging discussion of the topic and the etiquette tip after playing the hand is also a plus.

A = Attitude

Know the material for the day, have everything well prepared, give instructions carefully and clearly about how to make the hand up. Being properly prepared shows the group you have their best interests at heart.

M = Materials and Method

In Help With Play sessions, the student-centred method of learning encourages a relaxed atmosphere. The fact they are sitting in fours and can chat about the hand, looking at their partner, makes them keen to be involved in a discussion. The more engaged your group is, the better.

Having a handout for Help With Play sessions is a new idea. Your students will appreciate the structured plan for their improvement and the fact they can take home something to read and refer to will increase the pace of learning. You should also encourage the group to practise as much as possible.

Notes
