



Continuing Professional Development Day (4) for Teachers

Declarer Play

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November 2017

Introduction

Welcome to the fourth ABF Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Day for Teachers. Completion of this day will give you 10 points towards accreditation.

After completing a Teacher Training Programme (TPP), the ABF provides further support for bridge teachers by offering days such as these, which concentrate on the “what”, as well as the “how”, to teach.

The first CPD Day covers Modern Competitive Bidding, the second offers ideas for teaching Defence courses for your intermediate (and advanced) students, the third covers the Two over one Game Force system and this one, a fourth new as at September 2017, focuses on Declarer Play techniques.

Teaching (anything) is made easier if you use the best materials and methods. These are recommended on my website, the ABF website, and in the workbook. Your students will better understand the concepts you’re trying to get across if the hands are well thought out.

For ACBL teachers manuals, go to the ACBL website, and check out the Play of the Hand manual.

For a recommended bridge curriculum to follow, and text books, go to joanbuttsbridge.com, and then Learn Online, and/or Books.

You don’t have to be the greatest player to be a great teacher. Remember there are two, quite separate words: Teaching and Bridge!

I hope today gives you the confidence and ideas to teach these courses.

Contact me on teaching@abf.com.au

Good luck

Joan Butts (ABF National Teaching Coordinator)

STEAM: The Teachers' Checklist for Success

The goal of the STEAM checklist is to keep focused on aspects of teaching that make sure our players are satisfied customers – pleased they have decided to invest in bridge lessons. The letters are not in order of importance; the word could have been TEAMS or anything else. STEAM seemed like the best choice.

Safety

It's critical to keep the participants comfortable. There are several important techniques to accomplish this:

- At the beginning of each class let them know that, unless they volunteer, they won't be asked a question
- Allow for different opinions and avoid the "right answer." For example, some players already know and prefer to play a 16–18 1NT range. Bridge Basics introduces the more popular 15–17 point range. The responses are the same, so respect the students' opinions and move the class along.
- Keep Away from the Table. A play-focused approach gives the participants a chance to experience the play of the hand. Don't watch them while they're playing, or come over to suggest a bid. This tends to make other players at the table uncomfortable.
- Give Clear Instructions. Take the time to become skilled at giving students the best instructions for constructing hands on the table so that they won't feel they aren't doing the right thing.
- Avoid interfering with the learning process by praising a student for work well done. It's one of the illusions of teaching that this enhances the desire to learn. Alfa Kohn's book, *PUNISHED BY REWARDS*, is an excellent resource if you still aren't convinced.

Timing

It's important to respect time.

- Start on time, have a short break after about an hour, and finish on time. It's that straightforward.
- Give the participants 7½ minutes to bid and then play as many cards as they can in a deal ... keep the class moving.
- End on time; it's just as important as starting on time. Giving extra value doesn't apply when we go beyond the advertised time.
- Balance the class with time for the students to listen, talk about concepts, read information, and play deals.

Energy

Energy is important. Keep the atmosphere upbeat.

- Provide an opportunity for the students to talk to each other. In the first lesson, there is an icon placed in several spots to give the general idea. After that, the teacher has to be aware to regularly ask the students to talk among themselves.
- Play at least four deals in every two-hour lesson; avoid too much attention to bidding in isolation.
- Use a microphone.

Attitude

Play the odds for customer service. Small, seemingly unimportant habits can make a difference.

- Most classes prefer the teacher to be professionally dressed.
- Avoid questionable jokes and remarks.
- Be prepared. No matter how many times we have given the lesson, review the plans before the class.
- Have the material ready.
- Do your best, even though conditions will change from moment to moment.
- Continue to learn.
- Be aware of how the class is being received by the students: does your attendance increase, stay the same, or decrease – and why.

Material

Use the best bridge material and teaching philosophy available

- Offer several methods for learning. Some students prefer to read and will read ahead and reread material presented in the lesson; others use the textbook sporadically.
- Some are note-takers, writing down reactions and the material presented by the lecturer, even though the information is in the text. They write in the text, underline key points, record notes in the margin. Others don't have notebooks and would never write in a text. Some students have highly developed listening skills; others find it difficult to hear.
- Some find talking a powerful tool for absorbing information; others don't like to share thoughts with others.

For all lessons, follow these educational concepts

- (1) **Student Involvement.** Let your students be involved in all steps of the learning process. Don't lecture to them, and expect their interest to be maintained. Let them discover the fundamental concepts themselves through active class participation.
- (2) **Spiral Approach.** Introduce basic concepts one at a time, and revisit them later. It's not necessary to cover everything that could happen the first time an idea is introduced. This is a spiral approach to the curriculum.
- (3) **Simple Approach.** Don't try to cover everything that could happen for fear that a simple idea is uninteresting to the students. The opposite is true: when students grasp a concept, however small, they feel a measure of success, and their confidence grows. They enjoy the learning experience.

Tips for Teaching Declarer Play

In General

Each lesson should last two hours, no more, as that's enough to expect of anyone's concentration. You should "tell the students what you are going to tell them, and then tell them what you have told them ". Start by talking about the general concepts to be covered in each chapter, and quite early in the lesson (maybe 10 minutes into it), have the students set up the first of the play hands at the back of the chapter via the Deal Records

When discussing play points and the techniques used to develop extra tricks, it's much more effective to use only one suit to demonstrate the point. So ask the students to turn all the other cards over and use only one suit.

Show them how it could be played the wrong way, and then the right way, changing the cards each time.

Giving directions clearly for this will help. Take plenty of time for this.

Also, when declarer first sees dummy, let all the players discuss together the plan and counting winners, by asking declarer to put their hand face up on the table. They will not remember the cards, and it takes the pressure away from declarer.

The exercises at the end of the chapters of Play Bridge 2: A Workbook for Help with Play" may be covered during the lesson if time permits, but that's up to the teacher. I usually ask the students to do the exercises at home, and have the class concentrate on the play of the hands during the lesson.

Winners and the Plan

During the play, don't go over to a table to "help" with which card to play, as it may be less helpful than you think. Let them play it out themselves, and then ask that the four hands be placed face up (as four dummy hands) to discuss the outcome. Go over each card played very carefully, making sure that the class is keeping up with you. It doesn't matter how slowly you do this. Have them turn each trick over as it is played, and go right through thirteen tricks this way. This is called the Card by Card method and is a proven success.

Play Point. Promotion

There is a checklist, starting with this chapter's play point, promotion. Mention that the defenders are trying to promote their cards into winners in the same way as declarer is when they lead the top of a sequence. Also it's necessary to lose the lead in order to promote middle cards into winners.

Hard Bits

With promotion, they are reticent to give up the lead, and will want to take all their winners first. In the same vein, telling the defenders not to take their aces immediately but to develop tricks and have the aces as entries later will be foreign to them.

Play Point. Length

The second of the play points in the checklist, make sure they can see on the table the way suits divide. Use only one suit, and have the class put out the cards, with firstly seven of a suit between two hands, and see how many tricks can be made with a 3-3 distribution, then a 4-2 distribution, etc. Next look at having eight cards of the suit etc. Also have them make up a

hand with AKQx opposite xxxx, and next AKxx oppostie xxxx, and finally Axxx opposite xxxx to see how many times you need to lose the lead to make the extra trick throught length.

Hard Bits

Re the play point of length, the will not be keen to lose tricks early in order to win long suit tricks later. It seems wrong to lose a trick at all.

Play Point. The Finesse

Show the students how a finesse works by having them set up cards of just one suit, and say, xxxx opposite AQJxx. Point out the correct technique, i.e. that you need to lead up to one particular hand, and also not to expect the finesse to work more than half the time. The finesse is by far the hardest play technique to master, but it fits in here because it is the third of the No Trump **and** Suit techniques. The next two techniques to be covered in Ch 5 and 6 apply only to suit contracts.

Play Point: The finesse is by far the hardest technique to master. It is necessary to show how it's executed very carefully, starting with the most basic form of the finesse, xx opposite Kx, and building up from there.

Play Point: Using the Trump Suit

Counting winners is much easier than counting losers, and it's essential to count both in suit contracts. Just because you see three losers does not automatically produce ten winners, without more planning. The real value of shortages should be shown by having a dummy with, say four trumps and three cards of another suit, then two cards of that suit, then one card, then no cards.

Show them what trumps are used for: setting up a side suit, cross trumping, and for entries from one hand to the other.

Point out that you don't always draw trumps first.

Play Point: Discarding Losers

Point out that a different number of cards in the two hands is needed to make this technique work, and having the top, or almost top cards too. Show them that this technique may often be necessary to execute before drawing trumps, if they are missing the top trumps, and this will allow the opponents in to take their winners.

Considering the Order Of Play

This is the most important step before declarer plays to their first trick.

Whether or not to draw trumps first, or not, considering where entries are or how they may be developed, and whether to duck a trick to break the defenders' communications, and to avoid the dangerous opponent gaining the lead are all to be covered.

Once the basic play techniques have been dealt with, courses/lessons on End Plays, Safety Plays, Using the Trump Suit, Playing in No Trumps, Focusing on Entries may be undertaken with more advanced hands used.

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September 2017