



Growing the Sport

A way forward

A marketing package for Bridge Clubs in New Zealand

MARKETING PACKAGE FOR CLUBS

GOAL: – to promote the sport of bridge and increase membership by 10% per annum

Please share these documents and information with your club's committee, marketing and teaching co-ordinators.

| Table of contents | | Page |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Advertising Lessons | 2 |
| 2 | Running Beginner Lessons | 2 |
| 3 | New Members' Kit | 4 |
| 4 | Retaining Learners | 5 |
| 5 | Retaining Club Members | 6 |
| 6 | Promoting The Sport Of Bridge | 7 |
| 7 | Increasing Tournament Participation | 7 |
| 8 | Sharing Ideas | 8 |
| 9 | Resources | 8 |

1. Advertising Lessons

The following show some ideas your club could incorporate when advertising your beginners' lessons.

- Advertising in community papers, local Press and radio.
- Brochures and/or posters placed in supermarkets, dentists, doctors' rooms, community notice boards, retirement homes, businesses, and other sports clubs (golf/bowls)
- Notice or article about the lessons in the club newsletter/noticeboard
- Hold lessons as early in the year as possible to give learners time to "settle in"
- Mailbox drop could be effective in smaller communities
- Targeting specific groups – retirees, youth, professional, ethnic, community, sports, women at home
- Contact ex-members to encourage them to return to playing bridge – offer FREE refresher lessons if necessary, or supervised sessions where they can ask for help
- Use bridge branding slogans – "Gym for the body. Bridge for the Brain." Or "Bridge: the best card game in the world"
- In your advertising, target those who play "500"
- Explain the benefits of bridge – health, social, intellectual, etc
- Create platforms for advertising sponsor's products (eg. - in lesson brochures, tournaments and your website) and target sponsors who appeal to bridge players
- Maintain a user-friendly, attractive and exciting website with facilities for adding photos, articles, fun stuff, links
- Apply to pub charities and "pokie" trusts for funds to use in your club
- *See examples of posters, brochures and lesson tickets*

2. Running Beginner Lessons

As we are trying to standardise bridge for beginners in NZ, the lessons you should teach are the beginners' set found on the NZ Bridge website. These include notes for learners, teachers' notes, quizzes with answers and hands to play (with BRI files) Check the Teachers' Manual for teaching tips.

Improver Lessons will be available from 2014

Some clubs charge a fee for lessons – ideas you may include are: free membership with the lesson fee, free lessons or money back if you join the club. Refresher and Improver lessons could be free or include a small charge.

Always allow **FREE** repeat attendance at beginners' lessons

The Teacher:

- The teacher should be able to give clear, concise instruction, and have the personality to make the lessons fun!
- Check the facilities before the lesson starts – board, pens, projector, heating!
- Keep your (the teacher) talking to a minimum –the learners want to have cards in their hands!
- Elicit answers from the class rather than just telling them what the next bid/play is – for example, “Who can tell me what this bid shows about the length of the first bid suit?” or “What strength is shown by a jump rebid in your suit?” “What should we bid next with this hand?”
- Every now & again mention famous hands, anecdotes, blunders YOU have made.
- Always have an extra person so no beginner is without a partner for the night.
- Try getting the players to describe what their partner’s bids mean – this provides a way to revise and discuss bidding. The whole table will get involved!
- Aim to get the class focussing on the three C’s – counting, concentration, confidence! They often need to take a risk and sometimes that will work - they need to know that they will make lots of mistakes but not to worry about them!
- Discuss with your helpers what will be covered that night – give them a hand record and ask them to stick to these notes. Also give them the [Mentor/Helper pack](#)
- Make up posters from the previous weeks’ lessons, famous hands, “the house” and put them on the walls in the teaching room.
- “The house” refers to the 3 strengths of both opener and responder; minimum- ground floor, invitational – first floor, forcing to game – penthouse! (see the [Cheat Sheet](#) – set out so you can back-to-back then cut and laminate)
- Provide them with the cheat sheet in the 2nd or 3rd lesson to give an overview
- Try and mix players up a little -but be careful with this process – players should be encouraged to swap around, especially once they go out to play with their grade.
- Tell the class that breaking a partnership can be difficult but it is not an insult to want to play with someone different!
- Get the class socialising after/during the lesson – biscuits, half price drinks?
- Provide nibbles at the end of the first lesson – encourage them to stay and chat
- Chocolates for correct answers to questions/quiz!
- Email the class after each lesson with a summary/bullet points or helpful hint for the quiz answers, and encouragement to practise on-line. This creates a sense of belonging and the students will tend to email if they can’t attend. Include your helpers and the director in these emails.
- Make yourself available to learners. Offer a quick revision for those who miss a lesson – encourage them to look up the lesson they will miss and/or take home the notes to revise. You may be able to offer a regular catch up session, such as a Sunday afternoon.
- If some learners are struggling with the extent of the lessons, extend them a few weeks with practice nights, or take two weeks for one lesson (eg. Lesson 6, 8)

- Introduce the director (of the grade the learners will join) to the class – they can explain the director’s role, and why they should call the director to restore equity.
- Always thank your helpers and get the club committee to acknowledge them.
- **Don’t worry if they don’t all “get it”** – the majority are there to have fun, and everyone will learn at their own pace! The good ones will pick up and retain what you’ve taught.

The Club:

- Provide a welcoming environment for teaching – good lighting, whiteboard with new marker pens, TV for data show, professional name tags
- Always have a helper to collect the fees/give name tags on the first night
- Helpers must be carefully picked – “friendly and kind” is more important than bridge knowledge!
- Hold a preliminary session - with the teacher, committee’s teacher co-ordinator, director and all the lesson helpers. Discuss practicalities, goals and strategies.
- Helpers should **NOT TEACH OR TELL STUDENTS WHAT TO BID/PLAY** – just reinforce what the teacher has said (give the helpers a set of hand notes with the bidding, to assist the learners) Helpers could ask students to work out what the bidding has shown and suggest some possible bids to make next. Don’t comment on card play except when this has been covered in a lesson. See the [Mentor/Helper pack](#) – give each helper a copy
- If possible run free catch up/practice sessions (eg Sunday afternoon) with volunteer helpers who reinforce the previous week’s lesson – use hands from earlier lessons (each helper has a hand record) If possible, have a helper for each table and after each hand, analyse bidding/play. The hand can be replayed, with players swapping places.
- Graduation night for beginners at the end of lessons, with a professionally done certificate. Provide supper and free drink.
- Introduce the new players to the club session – welcome by the grade convenor
- Always pair up spare players so nobody misses a game (have a couple of floating helpers who can partner the learners)

3. New Members’ Kit

Use the [New Members Kit](#) which YOU CAN EDIT to suit your club situation. Photos can be changed and information added/alterd. Give a copy of this to ALL learners once they have finished the lessons – email or hard copy.

Communicate regularly with your learners. Create group emails for different grades and provide on-going support, with mentors for all new players.

4. Retaining Learners

The most important part of the process STARTS NOW !

Use the following guidelines:

- It is important to have the **RIGHT DIRECTOR** for the beginner grade – someone who creates a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Introduce the director to the class before they join the grade.
- Keep the learners in a **SEPARATE GROUP** for at least 4-8 weeks to build up a bit of speed and confidence. However, try to play them close to the grade players to instil a sense of belonging to the grade.
- Allow beginners to use a cheat sheet for the rest of the year. See the [Cheat Sheet](#) provided, which can be photocopied, put back-to-back and laminated
- Don't worry about playing fewer boards – they need to have **NO TIME PRESSURE** when starting out!
- Have helpers who can assist with bidding/play if asked
- Continue with “supervised sessions” throughout the year on non-grading nights or other suitable nights – have club members/teachers they can ask for help
- Vary your Novice nights – eg. Bar open, supper, play with a helper, draw pairs to mix up new players
- Hold an “Individual” competition to mix up the players and get them comfortable playing with different partners
- Always have a zero tolerance policy of bad behaviour – reinforce this from the beginning! Encourage politeness, friendliness and a sense of **FUN**. See the [Zero Tolerance](#) policy and [Be Considerate](#) poster that should be posted on your club's notice board.
- Once the learners are playing in their grade group, have **MENTORS/BUDDIES** who they can go to for any enquiries (those who went through the previous year's lessons?). The mentors should follow up with a phone call (preferable) or email every week or so, to check their progress/any problems/partners. This is especially important if the learner has missed a couple of nights. Find out why and encourage them back! Choose your mentors carefully.
Communication is vital! See the [Mentor/Helper pack](#)
- Encourage your learners to come and watch a higher grade session
- Free play ticket for very high scores

5. Retaining Club Members

Your club should be a place that is welcoming and friendly, a fun and interesting sporting club that is both competitive and social.

It is the members themselves who make a great bridge club. Try some of the following to create positive experiences for your members:

- Have a **CODE OF CONDUCT** that all members must adhere to – see the attached. **TAKE ACTION** when this is broken. Encourage good behaviour/attitudes.
- Have a social evening every now and again - on other nights as well - one of each partnership brings a plate, or have a “pot luck” dinner at someone’s home?
- Shorter playing sessions? Socialise for around 45mins and then play bridge - reduce the boards to be played.
- Dress up for last night of Premiere Teams event in the club. Adopt a name for the team and come dressed on the last night in the same theme. Best dressed team wins a prize - can do this for a Pairs event as well.
- Run a Christmas Party - all must come dressed using a letter of the alphabet! This can also double as your major Prize Giving event for the year.
- Run the odd raffle, a lotto draw - have a “Swap a Jigsaw” or “Swap a Book” table, Garden offerings, etc.
- Run a charity event each year – a graded tournament with prizes for all grades
- What about holding a Quiz night (on anything but bridge).
- Have an official Club Photographer - take pictures on all the above.
- What about fun bridge nights - that can still count for Ladder points/Cups. For example “Slam Night”, “Goulash Night”, “Medley Night” or “Individual Night”
- Produce a Club Newsletter once a month - does not have to be large.
- Have a day of recognition for your volunteers – give them some reward.
- Free membership for 90+ age group
- Get a large 40” to 50” TV and mount it in the Club. Now run a PowerPoint presentation each week - mention sponsors of the week, congratulations to members who have done well in tournaments, photos, etc.
- If you have electronic scorers, then your results can be displayed on the TV screen almost immediately the session ends.
- Have regular surveys of club members regarding play times, refresher/improver classes or social events - have a suggestion box and acknowledge these ideas
- Hold ongoing IMPROVER LESSONS – these are on the website
- Give out proficiency certificates after a full years play
- Create interaction between grades, other bridge clubs, other sports clubs
- Maintain email groups and **CONTACT REGULARLY**
- Network your top players with emerging talent
- Provide FREE Minibridge Packs for players to take home to introduce friends and family to the game

6. Promoting The Sport Of Bridge

Probably the most important thing your club can do is to get as many of your members to OPT-IN to the NZ Bridge Newsletter and Magazine. There will be a section in the magazine specifically for new players, as well as articles for others.

- Automatically enter your beginners in the opt-in list once they have finished lessons (get their permission, though they can opt-out if they wish) –also register them as “new to the game” by emailing nzbridgemarketing@gmail.com
- You may be able to opt-in all your membership by having a tick box for opting in to the magazine. Get grade convenors to send around a list to get their name and email address, then enter them on the NZBridge website.
- Encourage your members to visit the NZ Bridge Website www.nzbridge.co.nz
- Hold “Open days” – invite members from other sports clubs, general public, etc
- Hold exhibitions at shopping malls with promotional material available
- Have “bridge ambassadors who talk to groups – for example women’s clubs, schools, retired people, community/charity groups.
- Have a “make a friend out of town” campaign- contact another club to organise?
- Use all forms of social media to reach new potential members
- Maintain a local profile with articles in community newspapers, radio (*check out the Westport Bridge Club radio slot on NZB website*)
- Share ideas and resources with bridge clubs in you town/region.

7. Increasing Tournament Participation

- Ask for “How to run a tournament” package from your Regional Committee – see [NZB 09 - Running a Tournament](#)
- Trial shorter tournaments – make them more social. Use the words **FUN** and **SOCIAL** in your advertising.
- Encourage participation in tournaments at all levels – get the beginners to join Junior tournaments
- Provide system cards for beginners that show the learners’ system. See the [Learner and basic System cards](#)
- Hold a learners’ tournament for clubs in your area – one session event with “bring a plate” lunch
- Shoulder-tap your keen players to participate in tournament play – right from when they learn the game and start playing with the grade!
- Use sponsors who will appeal to bridge players. Promote your sponsors at the tournament as well as at your club sessions
- Run holiday bridge sessions so there isn’t a long gap between playing sessions

8. Sharing Ideas

- Check out when the next National Teachers' Weekend or Regional Teachers' Workshop is to be held and send your club's bridge teacher (and committee teaching co-ordinator) – a great way to share teaching tips and lesson formats
- Make sure the appropriate people from your club attend the Regional Marketing Conferences and Directing workshops held in your region.
- Forward any new ideas you have for increasing membership to NZ Bridge – we are always looking for innovative ways to promote the sport of bridge
- [*Share ideas on the NZ Bridge Facebook page*](#)

9. Resources

Other resources to go with this pack

- [**NZB 02 – Mentor-Helper pack**](#)
- [**NZB 03 – New Members Kit**](#)
- [**NZB 04 – Mini Bridge**](#)
- [**NZB 05 – Be Considerate Poster \(A3 size\)**](#)
- [**NZB 05a – Be Considerate Poster \(A4 size\)**](#)
- [**NZB 06 – Cheat Sheet**](#)
- [**NZB 07 – How to avoid slow play**](#)
- [**NZB 08 – Zero Tolerance**](#)
- [**NZB 09 – Running a Tournament**](#)
- [**NZB 10 – Acol System card \(Learners Template\)**](#)
- [**NZB 11 –Acol System card \(Basic Template\)**](#)
- [**NZB 12 – Acol System card \(Advanced Template\)**](#)
- [**NZB 13 – Standard American System card \(Basic Template\)**](#)
- [**NZB 14 –Standard American System card \(Advanced Template\)**](#)
- [**NZB 15 – Advertising Examples**](#)