



Australian Bridge Teachers' Association

Issue 1 – August 2025

ozbridgeteachers@gmail.com

President: Paul Marston

Vice President: Bianca Gold

Secretary & Editor: Nick Hughes

We're back!

The ABTA is now back in business, and I am delighted about that. I would like to say a big thank you to our Secretary, Nick Hughes, who has been the driving force behind making it happen.

The goal of our association is to help teachers to grow the bridge population. This covers the recruiting process as well as the lessons themselves and the after-lesson care. We provide a forum where teachers can share their experiences and provide information for the benefit of their colleagues.

We would invite everyone who is interested in teaching bridge to join our organization. Membership is free until the end of **next** year. After that, it will be \$20 per year.

Our first Zoom meeting is scheduled for **Sunday 9th November**. Please contact us if you have a story to tell - we will schedule the presenters.

As a guideline, it would be about 10 minutes for a presentation and 5 minutes for questions.

Paul Marston

Membership

The ABTA went into voluntary hibernation in 2013. There are no current members. For the time being we will simply send out newsletters every few months

plus other info to people on our email list. There will be an online AGM early next year when the issues membership / executive / councillors can be addressed. Note that we have plenty of money in the bank.

Seminars

We aim for one or two online seminars each year (via Zoom or similar) which anyone can attend.

Face-to-face seminars are likely to be regionally based, run in conjunction with State Associations.

There are about 15 ABF events each year. Conveners like to get value for money so bridge usually runs from 10am to about 5.30 each day. After that people go out or home for dinner.

Conveners of some events find time for **Celebrity Speakers**. For instance, at this year's Gold Coast there were six 40-minute presentations, either before play at 9am or during the lunch break.

Likewise in Melbourne. Speakers at 9.30, bridge at 10.30. We could apply for a slot.

At Coffs Harbour there is a free morning between the Pairs & Teams.

The other slot is the night before events start. People often arrive the day before play starts, so could attend a seminar that evening or even afternoon.

My lesson plan for beginners

Nick Hughes

I teach beginner classes at Easts Leagues Club in Bondi Junction.

Easts BC is basically a daytime club with sessions Monday to Wednesday, 1pm to 4pm, 12 to 16 tables each day. There is another group that has a Monday night duplicate.

Tables are set up for us on Monday mornings, then folded after the Wednesday game.

We run two daytime 6-week beginner courses each year, February and August.

We put fliers at the club, local libraries and community centres. Our 200 members and previous students refer friends and relatives.

We take details as they ring or fill out a form to book. A week out, we email and text them. (We use Clicksend for sms)

We also email the previous class offering a free repeat. (Once only!) Classes are typically 4 to 5 tables.

I run classes in a room next to the room where the supervised duplicate is played. It's good for them to see people playing and having a good time.

The ideal is for students to come twice a week, once for theory and again to play eight practice hands.

We can't arrange that so I throw in two practice sessions during the course.

I compact the six chapters of the textbook (I use either Paul Marston's or Derrick Browne's) into four weeks and add two practice sessions

\$60 (Seniors) for the six weeks includes the textbook plus membership for a year.

wk 1 How the game works, plus Opening bid & response

wk 2 Bidding game, 5-3-1 points

wk 3 **Practice** (Wk 2 is heavy)

wk 4 1NT response & NT play
2-over-1 responses

wk 5 1NT opening
overcalls and doubles

wk 6 **Practice**, then a pizza party

The Leagues club has large projector screens. I use a laptop and **Powerpoint**, with a clicker. No more than 15 minutes at the start of each lesson, intermittently between boards. Here's a (Dropbox) link to the file I use for week two. In Acrobat, clicking on the link below should take you there.

<https://tinyurl.com/ywdvrtwf>

then **File - download**. There's no need to sign in or join Dropbox.

This assumes your club runs a reasonably modern Windows laptop with Microsoft Powerpoint installed. After that, you will need to install some special **bridge fonts** to display the suit symbols. They are in this folder:

<https://tinyurl.com/3ezasjyw>

You can download the lot as a zip file or do each font separately

After you **install** them (right click), you can also use them in Word documents for quizzes and your own mini-lessons.

{ => ♣ } => ♦ [=> ♥] => ♠

They are monochrome. The Layout font is used to display hands neatly. (T = 10)

Cards are pre-dealt on an Autodealer. Like most, I have cards on the table early on in each lesson.

I introduce HCP on Hand 2 in Lesson 1, partly because a third of the class will know about them.

Of course there are always a few that have never played cards.

In the auction, everyone gets to see the hand of the player with the opening bid. That hand and responder's can stay face up during the auction, then the cards are picked up as they work out who declares and who leads.

I get them to play duplicate-style from the start, which is not so easy.

After play is over, I **hate** having 52 cards face up, though some teachers swear by it.

We don't replay hands. Later in the course I might put hands on screen. I've keyed these, including the play. They live in BBO's **handviewer**, so I need to be online via the club's wifi.

Here are the hands from Lesson Three:

<https://tinyurl.com/4wwnhdjb>

(Click on a contract, then [next])

Hand One is a good one. Only dummy and declarer are visible as I click through the (correct) play and maybe make some comments, such as

♣ Q8

♣ K J 4

"Which club should South lead now?"

Go Full screen (F11). You need to (duplicate) your screen on the TV.

You may think that your players won't cope with the tech but they need to relate to the way hands are presented in the textbook. "I can only understand with the cards in my hand" doesn't cut it.

Likewise with quizzes on screen. They won't do any "homework" so do some quizzes between boards.

I don't like three to a table, though I can be the fourth at one such. With 10 people, I would have two tables of five, rather than 4-3-3. Seriously. The fifth can watch, then swap with declarer after the first play hand. This also mixes the partnerships.

I do the whole book, so overcalls, doubles and finesses. I'm particularly keen that players see a **finesse** working, that they experience the **instant hit**. "Don't get cold feet!"

I believe(?) many teachers don't get that far, adding mini-lessons in the supervised sessions that follow.

After the course, they play at some stationary tables near the main supervised group. I give them 8 training hands.

Cardplay

Another teaching style is to focus on cardplay early on, as in **Minibridge**. This has merit – bidding takes a back seat..

On the other hand, I don't like the idea of teaching pseudo-bridge, then replacing it with the real thing.

What is a **balanced hand**?

Just "**no singleton or void**" is enough for me. So 1NT is fine on

♠ 86 ♥ AQ86 ♦ AQ932 ♣ A6

even with the red suits swapped. Is that too radical?

Top of a sequence means leading king from ♣KQ54, even against notrumps.

Is that the right way to go?

Resources

We have a number of online resources, though the web page is not quite ready.

Here are some links to some material that we have online. Hopefully others will add material that members can access.

PowerPoint

I (Nick) use Powerpoint for short talks before supervised sessions. Here is one you can click through in 10 minutes.

<https://tinyurl.com/4ruhby2c>

Again you would need to install the special fonts or do some major editing.

Training hands

As well as the four hands that go with each lesson, needed are training hands that can be used in between lessons and in the weeks after the course.

I've taken some of Derrick's hands and added commentary plus a 6-line traveler. Send an email if you want the deal files that go with them.

<https://tinyurl.com/ya6xcawk>

The idea (the dream) is for the players to run through the hands themselves and read the commentary as they score them up. So self-supervising.

Scoring

Unlike many teachers, I spend some time on scoring.

I don't want them to progress to a supervised session with bridgemates and blithely [accept] every score.

I give them this simplified and laminated instant scorer to work off.

<https://tinyurl.com/4w89a568>

Does not include scores for making doubled contracts.

NSW & Victoria

State Associations are starting to step into the space largely **vacated** by the ABF and the ABTA.

BridgeNSW and BridgeVictoria have been active, sharing resources.

<https://bridgensw.com.au/>

Click on [Play & Learn], which is aimed more at students.

Under Lessons - Beginner Material, there are student and teacher notes for an 8-week course, plus deal files and slides. They are derived from **New Zealand and Scottish sites**, an indictment on what has been available locally.

The lesson order is unusual, focussing on cardplay early on. 1-level openings are in Lesson 4.

Most Australian teachers use books by Australian writers, rather than notes.

There is more material under [Club Resources - for Teachers].

BNSW also has a **WhatsApp** group for teachers in NSW.

South of the border

<https://bridgevictoria.au/>

Similar information to NSW, plus there is a list of **Accredited Teachers**, some with an email address.

The ABF also has a list of Accredited Teachers, mostly those who took the TAP (Teacher Accreditation Program) with Joan Butts in the past 10 years.

Accreditation has basically been handed back to the states. Bridge Victoria has an application form.

Do you think the ABTA should get into the Accreditation business? Or maybe just have a simple exam for joiners?