



Australian Bridge Teachers' Association

Issue 2 – December 2025

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"Survey says"

A survey was sent to those who attended the webinar, plus 100 others on our database. **38 responses** so far.

- 25 give beginner / improver classes
- Eight also run classes **online**
- Most give 1 to 3 courses per year, though five give 8+ courses

How many weeks in beginner lessons?					
4-5	6	7	8	10	12
2	9	2	11	2	2

The assumption is that those with longer courses taught more, not slower.

- Seven offered **practice sessions during the course** (so on a different day).

That skews the results. 4 lessons + 4 practice sessions is like 8 weeks, though this is **consolidation**, rather than new material.

- 19 involved **mentors** (club players)
- 16 were **paid** for teaching

Which text book , if any?	
Audrey Grant	1
Derrick Browne	2
Ron Klinger	1
Paul Marston	14
Own notes	13
Joan Butts	7

All but one taught 5-card majors, with a few moving towards '2-over-1'.

- Better minor – 21, Short club – 15

How much for a 1NT response to 1M?		
6-9	6-10	6-11
23	6	7

6-11 fits with "strong" 2-over-1 responses. See Paul Marston's presentation in the webinar.

Some added helpful comments at the end of their responses.

[Dec 2025 Teacher Survey](#)

Webinar report

About 50 people attended the webinar in November. We recorded most of it. See <https://tinyurl.com/2kuj4ucy>

President **Paul Marston** started things off with an outline of the reformed ABTA. It's Mission Statement is to promote the teaching and learning of bridge, via the Bulletin, the website (in progress) webinars, plus Seminars at some major national events.

We don't aim to certify teachers but we maintain a membership list.

Secretary **Nick Hughes** noted the ABTA began in 1985, we have \$20k in the bank. We are yet to contact many who began teaching in the last decade. ABF President **Allison Stralow** logged on with encouraging words. The ABF has teaching material available, as do the State Associations.

Joan Butts then spoke about "bridge as a trick-taking game". Joan was **ABF Teaching Coordinator** for a decade.

'All teachers tend to overload on bidding but players need **a lot** of help in taking tricks. Confidence comes from making contracts, even making partscore when they should be in game.

We need to go **very slowly** through the count of winners and losers. There are many techniques to learn. They get mixed up about which one to use.

In the supervised play that follows the course, have sessions that completely focus on a particular play techniques.'

Jeff Fust suggested that hands should be designed so that correct play yields an overtrick, while they'll still make their contract with second best play.

Laura Ginan was next. She lives in Gippsland and is involved with RealDeal Bridge. She is Convener of the SFOB in Canberra in January.

'For adults, many low energy activities compete with bridge, which is a game where people tell you what to do.

We've run one-day "come and try bridge" events with success. They have a booklet to work through at their own rate.

We run **hybrid** lessons with videos and quizzes. They get the social aspect when they take these skills to the club to play.

Playing bridge once a week is **not enough** to reinforce. They can meet up socially, or have someone from the club supervise. Flash cards are useful. BBO **Just Declare** has value. Tech in teaching is particularly helpful for young players. We need more night sessions to get younger people playing.'

Next **Nick Hughes** presented on problems with 1NT.

'It's Important to use the right words with emphasis. "An **opening** bid of 1NT shows a **balanced** hand with 15-17 points. Even so I think "No singleton or void, no more than one doubleton" is unwieldy. Prefer the simple "No singleton".

♠ 54 ♥ KQ74 ♦ A6 ♣ AK1032

I like 1NT for all levels. Avoids a nebulous, unclear rebid. Gets partner to do same arithmetic.'

Paul Marston presented new ideas about teaching beginners.

'I've made many changes over the years, all to make the content simpler and clearer. We moved the 1NT opening to Lesson 5, That comes in Level 2

with overcalls and takeout doubles, so **after** the introductory 4-week course. (There are four levels of four weeks)

In 2020, we changed the 1NT response to 1♥/♠ to 6-11, again to simplify.

- We teach "12 to open, 6 to respond" for **both partnerships**, so overcallers as well.
- Over 1♥/♠, 1NT is 6-11, a new suit response (at the 2-level) is **12+**, which eases opener's rebid.
- Show a major over a minor opening

Concerning cardplay, there are some who teach **cardplay only** in the first weeks (or months!), though that takes away part of the fun – the gambling aspect.'

There was a technical issue with **Ron Klinger's** presentation on bridge cruises. We'll sort that out for next time.

From Lessons to Supervised

Bianca Gold

Teaching bridge doesn't end with the basics of bidding and play. The real challenge – and opportunity – comes when beginners move from lessons into supervised play, where they begin to experience the rhythm and etiquette of duplicate bridge. This transition is crucial for building confidence and ensuring players are truly ready for club sessions.

Weaning Off Bidding Help

One of the biggest hurdles for new players is learning to make decisions without constant guidance. To ease this process, many clubs use **Help Cards**. These can be easily made by tracing a standard "STOP" card, printing, and laminating.

For a first-time supervised player, allow three Help Cards per session. As players gain confidence, reduce this to one or two Help Cards.

This system encourages independence while still offering a safety net, helping players gradually trust their own judgment.

Beyond the Basics

With the removal of Blue Points (supervised points), the focus has shifted. It's no longer enough to teach only bidding mechanics. Players must be prepared for the full duplicate experience:

This means understanding table etiquette and pace of play, managing scoring and movement without holding up the game. Also developing resilience when mistakes happen, since duplicate play demands consistency across many boards.

Duplicate-ready Players

By embedding these practices into supervised sessions, clubs ensure that beginners don't just know how to bid – they know how to play in a duplicate environment. This readiness makes the eventual step into regular club play smoother, more enjoyable, and less intimidating.

The Goal

Supervised play is not just a bridge between lessons and competition – it's a training ground for confidence, etiquette and independence. By using tools like Help Cards and focussing on duplicate readiness, we prepare players to thrive in the club setting and keep them engaged for the long term.

Leading and signalling

Nick Hughes

How much do new players need to know about leading methods?

We start with "lead top of a sequence, otherwise a low card." It's enough for them not to fling out unsupported honours. If they lead low from ♦AQ54, that's okay for now. "Lead some other suit."

They can pick up that the 10 is honour, (as in blackjack) but KT9x seems a stretch, Do we say "Lead top of a sequence of cards, one of which is an honour"? A mouthful.

We **might** say that because that's what experienced players will tell them to do.

Pips are irrelevant for beginners – they are all the same. No top from doubleton, No fourth highest, certainly No MUD.

And of course No Signals.

Intermediate players

Beginners think bridge is a bidding game because teachers focus on that, which is fair enough. Later (mini) lessons need to focus on **cardplay**.

For instance, "Draw trumps until the opponents have no small ones left" has to be reassessed. Here we introduce ruffing in dummy, discarding a loser before playing trumps, and of course the cross-ruff.

One problem I have is the difference between suit leads and leads against notrumps. "Top of a two card sequence against suit contracts but you need a three card sequence (or 2½!) to lead an honour against notrumps."

Don't know about that. Might it lead to players leading the three from ♥QJ3?

Can you justify why ♥JT86 is different from ♥JT76?

I'm happy to see them bang down ace from ♠AK65, king from ♠KQ65 against notrumps.

It's good to take or establish tricks.

Talk of avoiding a blockage and preserving entries is too much for most defenders. There are books for that.

Signals get introduced here.

Top of a doubleton

While this is useful for getting a ruff, it's just as important to stop them leading the three from ♥K3.

It's good for partner to learn to notice whether the ♥6 is followed by the three or the eight. They will need to become pip-aware eventually.

"Low-like, high-hate"

This is simple and quite sound. The "attitude" lead of ♥2 from ♥K82 says "I've got something good here. Lead one back". Don't muddy the waters.

Low-like works well when partner leads an honour. You greet partner's ♥K lead with the two from ♥J72 or ♥A72.

Doubletons are awkward. It's easy to get fixated on "Top of a doubleton":

♥ AK1053 ♥ 92

West leads the ♥A against 4♠. It's tough to get across that this is a "low-like" case, not a "top of a doubleton" case because you are **not leading**. That's confusing, maybe old style "natural" signals have merit. However, the tide has turned. At least 95% of congress player use UDCA.

Speaking of which, any talk about "giving count" will fall on deaf ears.