

Olney Bridge Club News

Official newsletter of the Olney Maryland Bridge Club

The Bridge Guy Speaks

The spring beginner bridge class is half-way done. We've had about 15 people attend the class. Expect to see some of those folks joining the practice sessions after May 4. I plan to set up a couple of "learner tables" for those and other novices who want more hands-on support.

Please be supportive of our new members when they arrive. Our club is very new and many of the current players have less than 8 months of experience. That number will increase in May. Help them when you can; be patient otherwise. With time we'll build a vibrant community where you'll get all the competition you can hope for.

I'll also be bringing in some more bridge tables. I'll ask for donations in coming weeks to cover the cost for those who show up to practice. I think \$5 apiece should suffice – give what you can. If there are any excess funds, I'll use them to buy more cards later in the year.

I've begun a discussion on various club-related topics with several members. I'd like to expand that discussion. I've added a fifth page to the newsletter to summarize the questions I've asked and the responses I've received. I've also put in an article about growth and funds in the next article. Please read the summary and the article and add your thoughts (chat with members of the club and send email to me).

As always, practice, practice, practice! Our message to the community: bridge is fun and intellectually stimulating – come join us! All ages are welcome!

Beginner Bridge Lessons

Current Class:

Lesson 4: Suit Responses – Apr 20

Lesson 5: Opening NT Bids – Apr 27

Lesson 6 (optional): Defense – May 4

Each class is from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

Ongoing Practice Sessions:

Every Saturday from 2:30 – 4:30 at the Olney library.

Keeping Us Afloat

We are a growing bridge club. Those of you who started out after the first set of beginner bridge lessons last summer will remember practice sessions with 2 or 3 tables. We now regularly sit 6 tables (24 or more people). In coming weeks that will probably increase to 8 or more tables.

That raises two issues (part of the 5th-page addendum to this newsletter):

- 1) What supplies do we need for our increased-size club and how do we pay for them?
- 2) How big should we grow our bridge club?

I believe there are two primary supplies required as we grow:

- Additional bridge tables
- Replacement bridge cards

I am requesting that each player that plays on Saturdays to contribute \$5, depending on your financial circumstances. That

contribution should handle are needs for the coming year.

Each new card table costs between \$40 and \$50 (from Lowes). I think we should aim for as many as 12 total tables (we currently have 6 or 7, but some of those are “on loan”). So, as our club grows, I’ll plan to buy an additional 5 or 6 tables.

Each bridge deck costs about \$3 each. I’ve noticed that some of the decks are already a bit bent. I’ll plan to buy a dozen at the end of 2024, if needed.

As to the size of our club, I think we can fit 12 tables (48 people) in the current library meeting room. Depending on whether I hold another beginner bridge class during the summer (and fall), we’ll hit that number before the end of the year.

So, how big should our club be? I have already heard a number of opinions. Many have suggested keeping the number below 48; others have proposed to grow our club as large as possible. Note: before I started last year, I estimated the total bridge-playing population of the Olney area at around 1500 people. Adding “bridge-interested” players, growing to 150 people (10% of the total) is not impossible.

However, that would overwhelm our current home in the library. In addition, I currently have a library commitment through August 4, 2024. I will attempt to extend that commitment – stay tuned.

The consensus was to maintain at a level below 48 people. So, here are some items to consider for the future:

- 1) If we expand past 48 players on any given Saturday, where would we move?
- 2) Other facilities are available. For example, the Longwood Rec Center has a larger room. However, any

such choice would cost \$\$\$\$. I haven’t done the legwork yet, but the cost could be \$50 - \$130 for a 2-hour session. That would mean a per-player charge of a few dollars each week. Is that doable for most players?

- 3) Alternatively, there may be other facilities (e.g., a church) that may be available and not as expensive (?). I have no inroads in this area, so someone would need to take the lead on exploring this approach.
- 4) Or could the club meet at two facilities? For example, the library and another venue. If so, someone would need to take the lead – I am focused on the one meeting per week at the library.

So, please think about our options and propose others. We’ll continue to explore this in coming newsletters.

Preemptive Bids – I

In the next few newsletters, I will expand upon the use of the preemptive bid. Indeed, I am not teaching the preemptive bid as part of my current beginner bridge class, so this will also be an introduction for anyone unfamiliar with the topic.

In many beginner bridge classes (mine included), we often show sample bidding where only one partnership bids. As you progress in experience, you’ll find that situation to be less frequent than competitive auctions, where both teams bid.

Preemptive bids are used by a team to interfere with the other team’s bidding. In particular, the preemptive bid will be sufficiently high that you assume you’ll not make the contract (and go set). However, you intend that the penalty be less than the potential gain the opponents may reap.

In this series of articles, I'll discuss preemptive bids at the two-, three-, and four-level. You'll pick the level based on a) long suit length; b) vulnerability (yours and the opponents'); and c) your position in the bidding.

In this series of articles, I'll propose a conservative approach to preempting. More experienced bidders may bid more aggressively.

First, here are the basics requirements:

- With a 6-card suit, headed by the KJ or better, and 6 – 11 total points, bid at the two-level in your 6-card suit.
- With a 7-card suit, headed by the KJ or better, and 6 – 11 total points, bid at the three-level in your 7-card suit.
- With a 8-card (or longer) suit, headed by the KJ or better, and 6 – 11 total points, bid at the four-level in your 8-card (or longer) suit.

Many players will preempt with a long suit headed by a QJ. Others will open with fewer points than 6. Use your own judgment.

The following features will influence your decision to preempt:

- 4-card (or longer) major side suit
- Aces and kings in side suits
- Your position in the bidding
- Your and your opponents' vulnerability

Generally, don't preempt with a major (H/S) side suit. Instead, pass and see if your partner can open in that major suit.

Strength outside of your long suit is also a possible reason to not preempt. Instead, wait for your partner to bid – perhaps your hand will help.

Your bidding position affects your preemption choice as well. Of greatest

importance, do not preempt in 4th position (after the first three bidders have passed). Preempting in 1st position (dealer) and in 3rd position (after two passes) is most effective. Preempt in 2nd position (after one pass) more conservatively.

Finally, bid more conservatively when your team is vulnerable (i.e., after you've won a 100-point game). The penalties are larger. Be more aggressive when your team is not vulnerable and the other team is vulnerable.

There are some “rules of thumb” to assist you in planning whether to preempt: the rules of 2 and 3. Translated, this means that you should plan to be set by no more than two tricks if vulnerable (and opponents are not vulnerable). Plan to be set by no more than three tricks in other vulnerability scenarios. Both of these “rules” are based on the comparative values of a) the opponents winning a game vs. b) the penalties if you are set when the opponents have doubled for penalty.

I will continue with the preemption theme in the next newsletter.

Try to Bid (and Play) It

This is a practice hand, where I've simplified the bidding from that hand to show a basic preemptive bidding sequence. Try to bid it before proceeding.

	♠ A Q 10 6 5 4 3		
North Deals	♥ 4		
None Vul	♦ 9 6 3		
	♣ 10 6		
♠ 8 7		<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; color: white;"> N W E S </div>	♠ J 2
♥ A Q 9			♥ K J 10 6 3
♦ Q J 8			♦ A 7 4 2
♣ A Q 4 3 2			♣ K 7
	♠ K 9		
	♥ 8 7 5 2		
	♦ K 10 5		
	♣ J 9 8 5		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	3 ♠	All pass	

North has a weak hand (6 high card points plus 3 length points) with a strong, 7-card trump suit. North preempts with a 3S bid.

East is stuck. They have a minimum opening hand. They could enter the bidding – see “takeout double” – but that would be risky with such a weak hand.

Partner will almost always pass after a preempt (we’ll explore when to bid in the next newsletter).

West is then stuck also. With a top minimum, they’d like to bid – but where? Not NT with no spade stopper. A takeout double would be tricky with minimal heart support.

North loses 5 tricks (1 heart, 2 diamonds, and 2 clubs) to go down one. E/W easily have 11 tricks available if they bid it.

Famous Bridgies

Anshul Bhatt is a 14-year-old resident of Mumbai, India. He has the distinction of being the youngest winner (under-16 division) of the World Youth Transnational Bridge Championship. He played in the 2022 contest in Salsomaggiore, Italy, partnering with Darwin Li from Toronto, Canada. He is also the youngest recipient of the Joan Gerard Award (in 2017), which recognizes those showing “aptitude, fair play, good sportsmanship and a friendly international spirit, rejecting any discrimination.”

Anshul learned bridge at age 6 from his grandparents and began tournament play shortly thereafter. He has been tutored by several expert players, including India’s

Keyzad Anklesaria and Canada’s Eric Kokish. He has won several earlier Indian Under-21 and Under-26 tournaments. He currently attends Dhirubhai Ambani International School in Mumbai. His interests are widespread: fantasy books, Star Wars, the Avengers, cooking, playing board and video games, and writing short stories. He plays squash, cricket, and football (soccer) and cycles with his friends.

Anshul presented a TED talk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFYOj5hbrTI>) in 2021 – worth watching.

Olney Bridge Club

The primary purpose of the Olney MD Bridge Club is to teach and encourage social bridge in the areas including and surrounding Olney, Maryland.

We meet regularly (Saturdays from 2:30 – 4:30) at the Olney library for practice playing sessions.

Please feel free to send email to bridgeinfo@bridge.careytutor.com with any questions, comments, recommendations, or other correspondence for the editor. In particular, if you have a bridge article to include in a future newsletter or a suggestion of a possible topic, any such submission would be much appreciated.

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Club Questions Summary

1. *What kind of club structure?*

Response: Most proposed a laissez faire system (much like today) with the addition of a backup for Carey (to coordinate with the library in his absence). No one was in favor of a more complex setup (Prez, VP, treasurer, etc.).

2. *What is the purpose of the club?*

Response: Most thought the current purpose – beginner classes and playing session – was still good. A few thought that educational mini-sessions, pre-dealt hands with discussion, and “for fun” tournaments would be ok.

3. *Who is Carey’s backup? Which activities would that person continue?*

Response: A couple of people said they would fill in temporarily if needed. The only activities continue would be library coordination (scheduling, weekly report) as needed.

4. *What kind of supplies are required in the next year? How to fund?*

Response: Additional tables and new bridge cards were mentioned. The consensus was to request a small yearly contribution (e.g., \$5 per person attending the practice sessions). Monthly and per-table charges were discounted at this time.

5. *How big should we grow our bridge club?*

Response: There were multiple suggestions, from “stay the same” to “grow to fill the library (48 players)” to “grow as big as we can”. Related to the

last item, some suggested advertising widely to gain exposure. The consensus was to “stand pat for now.”

6. *Where should the club reside?*

Response: Our library meeting room is available through August 4, 2024, at a minimum. I am checking to see if we can extend that. Others have suggested Longwood Rec Center and local churches (TBD). Some of those may require an hourly fee (on the order of \$50 to \$130 each Saturday).

7. *How to set up access to card tables at the playing sessions?*

Response: Several people mentioned setting up “learner tables” for people who would like more hands-on training while playing. A few mentioned purchasing extra tables.

8. *How to structure the beginner classes?*

Response: I updated the class materials to reflect comments from Glen and others. Chris and Glen helped with Lesson 1 – they know the process. I set up the separate Childrens’ Room at the library for the classes. Rather than expand the class to 8 lessons, I truncated the current 6 lessons.

9. *How to structure the mini-classes and pre-dealt hand discussions?*

Response: I plan to hold those mini-classes and pre-dealt hand discussions in the separate Children’s Room as it is available. Several suggested holding these sessions at 2:00 before the regular 2:30 session. I’ll check with the group on that.