

# INTRODUCTION



The Role of the Teacher

The Role of the Student

Teaching the *Bidding in the  
21st Century Course*



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21st Century Course*  
Lesson Plans

## INTRODUCTION

The *Bidding in the 21st Century* course is an eight-week introduction to bridge. It's important to remember that in this basic course what we leave out is more important than what we include. A ninth, bonus chapter on the Stayman Convention is included. The teacher can include this material and extend the course one week or have the students read it on their own.

The purpose of an introductory bridge course is to give the students a chance to experience what the game is all about — and to enjoy the experience. During the eight or nine weeks, there will be opportunities to play, talk, observe, discover, draw conclusions, laugh and develop ways of thinking about the game. This is not the time to give students our personal ideas about how to play. It's a time for simplicity.

The “basic” bridge course is almost extinct. We all know stories of students who joined what they thought was an introductory course and dropped out after one or two lessons because the material was over their heads. Teaching manuals state that the most common error teachers make is to impart *too much* information. As bridge teachers, we must recognize this need to keep things simple for our students and follow through.

While we might agree that simplicity is necessary, it takes courage to practice what we preach. Since most of us are active in the real world of bridge, the world of duplicate bridge clubs and duplicate bridge tournaments, it's difficult to remember those days when we were first learning the game. Also, knowing how tough it is for a newcomer to “break into” duplicate, we might think that it's a good idea to begin preparing students for these experiences from the beginning. Therefore, despite our good intentions to keep it simple, we can easily find ourselves tempted to present bridge concepts too difficult for the beginning level player.

Our basic bridge course is in competition with other leisure activities. We have to make our course user-friendly or risk losing our customers to other pursuits. Students must leave the bridge class filled with the excitement of the game, enthused about having made new friends and fascinated with the possibilities of bridge. We must focus on the needs of these people enrolled in our basic courses and remember that they are *bridge students* and not *bridge players*.

### Tools of the Trade

For best results, it is essential that you have the following equipment:

- The *Bidding in the 21st Century* teacher manual (which you have if you are reading this);
- A *Bidding in the 21st Century* student textbook for every student;
- Duplicate boards and cards or a deck of *Bidding in the 21st Century* E-Z Deal cards for each table of students.

Your class will run more smoothly, if you also have table guidecards, name tags and pencils.

## THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Patient, knowledgeable, dedicated — these are words that come to mind when describing a teacher. Aristotle’s definition painted a picture of the teacher and student working together: “The teacher is a midwife at the birth of an idea.” Through the ages, great educational thinkers have offered the same piece of advice that at first seems like a paradox: you can’t teach anyone anything — the students have to teach themselves.

How can this philosophy be translated into a working relationship between teacher and student? Taken to the extreme, it would seem that, as teachers, we should stay home and hope the students pick up the game themselves. However, students do need the teacher — not so much to provide the facts as to provide an environment in which the students can teach themselves.

### Being Right

Let’s look at typical teacher-student interactions. We could view learning as a process in which the student memorizes the right answers as provided by the teacher. Unfortunately, an emphasis on right answers inhibits the open approach to learning that the student needs to become an independent learner. But how can we teach if we don’t feel that, as teachers, we must always provide the right answers?

Suppose we have just finished presenting the rules for opening the bidding, and a student picks up this hand and bids 1♥ :

♠ Q J 10 9 8	We could display an air of patience and calm endurance. We could even learn to
♥ A K Q	build up our tolerance level over a period of time and not show our disappointment,
♦ 8 7	internalizing our annoyance. However, this attitude won’t be good for the students
♣ J 4 2	or the teacher in the long run.

A better approach is to get involved in the learning process. Rather than viewing such an answer as wrong — we taught the lesson but the student didn’t learn anything — we can consider what the student learned in order to choose hearts over diamonds or clubs. The student did realize the value of high cards. That is positive and we should comment on it:

“You are on the right track — high cards are important, but long suits are even more important when deciding where to play the hand, although it’s not easy to see this at first. I’d like you to try opening the bidding with your longest suit and see how this works out for you.”

The student will usually agree with our suggestion. If the student doesn’t seem convinced, we might suggest that the student set up another hand containing three spades and three hearts to go opposite the student’s hand and randomly deal out the other two hands. The student plays the hand with the longer but weaker suit as trump, and then plays with the shorter but stronger suit as trump. The student observes the results and ends up teaching himself, under your guidance.

Sometimes a student will suggest that we're mistaken in what we're teaching. Most classes contain a mixture of absolute beginners and more experienced players. Those who have some knowledge of the game may ask questions that are either too far ahead of the topic or are not relevant. Sometimes the manner in which these questions are asked will seem almost hostile. Suppose we are developing the idea of the takeout double being forcing, and a student interrupts with:

“That’s not right! If my partner makes a takeout double and my right-hand opponent bids, then I can pass. The takeout double is not forcing.”

We might be tempted to feel that we should gently put this student down, but we can turn the interruption around and deal with it in a positive manner. The student already knows something about the game but is still interested enough in learning more to attend our class; that’s good. The point that the student has made is relevant, and you were going to include it later in the lesson. We could comment:

“Thanks for mentioning that. You’re ahead of us, but the point is worth remembering. Let’s put it on the board and we’ll come to it later.”

Here’s another case. After four or five lessons, a student who seemed to be following the lessons well gives a value of 1 high-card point to a king. The student ends up undervaluing a hand and lands in the wrong contract. If our aim is to have the students give right answers, this may be exasperating. After four weeks, one of our better students doesn’t know the value of a king!

This type of lapse is not unusual. Under the tension of assimilating new information, the familiar can be forgotten temporarily. We see this even in the greatest of players. While in the midst of making a difficult play, anyone might overlook a simple play for the moment. In the above example, we remind the student that the king is worth 3 points. There will be a quick agreement and a continuation of the task at hand. No one is to blame. We have passed on the appropriate information; the student is still assimilating it.

The key is to be genuine. When a student asks a question that seems to interrupt the smooth flow of what we have planned, we may feel annoyed. Maybe we feel like giving up when a student forgets a simple, basic fact like the number of points given to a high card. These are common human feelings, but they should make us examine our motives closely. Teaching isn’t a profession for everyone. If we have a passion for and find security in right answers, teaching may not be for us.

## **Setting the Stage for Experimentation**

Suppose we want to introduce students to the idea that, after a 1NT opening bid, responder either passes or bids a five-card or longer suit at the two level with 0 to 7 total points. We could present this as a rule for memorization. If we want to help the student become an independent learner, however, we might try something like this:

“I’d like to present an idea for your consideration. Make up a 1NT opening bid. Turn the hand over and put it face down in front of North. Now construct South’s hand. It has six of the smallest spades you have left, three small hearts, three small diamonds and one small club. Randomly deal the remaining cards out to East and West.”

When asked what they would respond to a 1NT opening bid with South's hand, most students will enthusiastically say that they would pass. You now carry on with:

“Let's experiment. Play the hand in 1NT with North as declarer. Then play it again in a contract of 2♠ with South as declarer. When you finish, we'll talk about what happened.”

It might seem like we've spent a great deal of class time when we could have told the students the rule in a few seconds. However, they can always read the rules later in the text. They have a much better chance of understanding and remembering them if they have experienced the logical bases of the rules. More important, our role as teacher is better used to provide situations where the student can be involved in the learning process.

As teachers, we have to be astute about when to set up experiments. To try to show the students the reasons for opening the bidding in one way rather than another would be difficult. We would have to discuss rebids. Yet we have to move from the known to the unknown. To show why we open the bidding, an unknown, in terms of the rebid, another unknown, would be confusing to the students. Sometimes we have to say:

“I suggest you follow these rules for opening the bidding. When you have more experience with the game, the reasons behind the rules will be easier to understand.”

For the student to be able to teach himself, the teacher has to set up the right conditions. Filling the students with unquestioned information isn't the answer, nor is withdrawing from the learning process. The teacher must skillfully set up experiments that are meaningful to the student. The teacher must develop a sixth sense to know when to move to the next concept.

## The Teacher as an Entertainer

The teacher of a basic bridge course is in the field of entertainment.

Suppose the topic is rebids by responder. The further we move away from the first lesson, the more chance the lessons will become tedious. We might feel the pressure of the volume of information we have to impart in this lesson. How can we make the lesson more entertaining and create a little drama? Before class we could write the following words on a paper: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY. We could then print WHAT on a card and place it in an envelope, Academy Award-style. Enlist the help of a student before the class. Start the class something like this:

“The responder asks two key questions when deciding on a rebid. They both begin with the same word. Many words have vied for the honor. The nominations are: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY (display the paper). And now — the envelope please (the student presents the envelope). The winner is — WHAT! Yes, the responder asks ‘What level?’ and ‘What denomination?’ to help determine a rebid.”

We have set up a light introduction and can continue the lesson showing the award winner at work. For example, we might follow the introduction with a few simple examples:

Opener	Responder
1♥ 1NT	1♠
	♠ Q J 8 7 5 4 ♥ A 7 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A 4 3

WHAT level? Game. Opener has 13 points and you have 15 total points (13 HCP + 2 points for your length in spades)..

WHAT strain? Opener has at least two spades to rebid 1NT. Rebid 4♠.

Suddenly the students are involved and eager to see how WHAT is used.

Here's another example of introducing drama. Suppose we are teaching the lesson on the takeout double and responses. Bring in a page of the newspaper that offers two-for-one sales, put it on the board and proceed:

“We all love a bargain. Look at these two-for-one sales. Bridge players love a bargain, too. As a matter of fact, there is a bargain in the bidding that is a three for one. Here it is!”

Hold up a sign saying “The double — three for one!” Then show the students a hand like the one below and ask which suit they would bid when their right-hand opponent opens 1♠.

♠ 7	This example is unrealistic because the cards are exactly the same, but it's dramatic. What do you bid when three suits are the same? The students want to bid all three of the suits at once, and now we can give them the good news that they can do so with the simple word, double.
♥ A J 9 8	
♦ A J 9 8	
♣ A J 9 8	

Humor is another key to running an entertaining bridge class. Our jokes, as Easley Blackwood said so many times, have to be on ourselves. We can't add to the morale of the class by telling stories about students — even other students. Timing is important. The joke has to be quick and add to the progression of the lesson, not take away from it. If we are aware of what is happening in the classroom, we can tell whether our humor is working. The only way to get better is to practice.

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## Reinforcement

Learning is exciting, but it can be accompanied by uneasiness. The teacher can make the learning process much more enjoyable and effective for the student with positive reinforcement. It used to be fashionable to rely on browbeating to make students learn. Studies have shown that positive reinforcement is much more effective, but this isn't as easy as it sounds. Our choice of words can reinforce positively or negatively. Sometimes in an effort to be supportive, we fall into traps. One common mistake is using a word too often:

Teacher: "What would you open this hand?"

Student: "1NT."

Teacher: "Good. Why did you choose 1NT?"

Student: "The hand is balanced."

Teacher: "Good."

Student: "And it has 17 points."

Teacher: "Good."

In our attempt to be pleasant, our voices can become patronizing. We can make the student feel like we are treating the student as a child. Most of the time we're working with adults, and our manner has to reflect this.

Timing is an important part of giving positive reinforcement. If we were teaching a child to ride a bike, we might tell that child how terrific it is when the child starts to pedal independently. After this skill has been mastered, it would be insulting to give the same reinforcement every time we saw the child ride down the driveway. It requires skill, practice and talent to know when new learning is taking place. Good teachers seem to sense intuitively how to work in partnership with students. This talent, however, is often more the result of hard work and the desire to be a better teacher than from a natural gift.

Positive reinforcement is relative. What works with one student may not work with another. We have to get to know the other person. We need to think about what that person likes and not what we like. This is an art that can be practiced for a lifetime. World-class bridge players say there is so much to the game that, even though they play thousands of hands, they are continually learning. The same can be said for the art of teaching.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when considering reinforcement:

- Avoid using the same words. Develop a nod or a smile and move the lesson along. *Good*, *well-done* and *terrific* are tiresome words if used excessively.
- Talk in an adult voice. The enthusiasm has to be translated in a way appropriate to your audience.
- Develop your timing of positive reinforcement so that it takes place when the student is mastering a new concept.
- Observe the students in order to know what works. Simply remembering their names can be the best reinforcement for some students.

A skillful teacher can show the students how to give themselves positive reinforcement. Bridge students have to be shown how to congratulate themselves when they feel they have done something positive. There is a story about a man who was constantly criticizing himself during his golf game. He took his good shots as a matter of course and felt depressed and angry with his poor shots. He decided to change his attitude. Every time he made a good shot, he told himself, “Well done, Jeff!” He took his poor shots as a matter of course. His game improved immensely.

## **Perfect Isn't Possible**

*Perfect Isn't Possible*, one of the slogans in *The One Minute Teacher* (Johnson and Johnson), is an important notion to consider. The idea is expressed over and over again: nothing is perfect; if something can go wrong, it will go wrong. Remedies for this fact of life are countless: if you are given a lemon, make lemonade; consider the glass half-full, not half-empty.

The most important factor in the success of a basic bridge class is the teacher. We encounter problems: the room is locked and no one seems to have a key; there are no card tables; the material has a typing error; our class is in the science lab and it smells like rotten eggs; our class is in the Grade One classroom and the chairs are very small; we have a very obnoxious student; the student textbooks didn't arrive on time. None of these problems is as great as our attitude toward them.

# **THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT**

If we watch a group of students learning to play bridge, we may notice that many of them sit back from the table and use their lap as a platform on which to shuffle through their notes whenever it is their turn to do something. Others constantly turn to the teacher and almost apologetically say, “I don't know what to do with this hand.” They hang back, almost paralyzed with fear of failure, afraid to bid or play a card until they have the *right* answer. Students are convinced that there is one answer and the teacher has it. The teacher becomes the final authority, often reinforcing this through the correction of the students' mistakes.

## **The Final Authority**

If the teacher is not the final authority, who is? The truth is that there is no final authority. The students must learn to teach themselves using the teacher as a valuable resource. Galileo stated his idea of the role of the student:

“We cannot teach another person anything. We can only help him to discover for himself. And that is what teaching is about — helping others to discover for themselves worthwhile things they might not have otherwise discovered.”

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The students' most important resource is themselves. Other resources are fellow students, the teacher, the text, magazines and the daily newspaper column. We must avoid classes where the students are told not to talk to one another for fear of sharing their ignorance and are told that the only relevant material comes from the teacher and the text. The student must be encouraged to experiment, observe and draw conclusions. The student must be encouraged to have the courage to be wrong and to consider mistakes as part of the learning process.

## The Nature of Learning

What happens when a student is learning? Carlos Castaneda in *The Teachings of Don Juan* has an interesting view of learning:

“He slowly begins to learn — bit by bit at first, then in big chunks. And his thoughts soon clash. What he learns is never what he pictured, or imagined, and so he begins to be afraid. Learning is never what one expects. Every step of learning is a new task, and the fear the man is experiencing begins to mount mercilessly, unyielding. His purpose has become a battlefield.”

The learner is vulnerable, and the teacher can create an environment that gives the student the freedom and the desire to learn.

## Student Involvement

How do we get the student involved in the learning process? Consider the first lesson. At the very beginning, the students are experimenting. One player shuffles the cards and deals them. The students sort their hands into suits and are ready to take tricks.

They will be full of questions: “What should I lead? What card do I play after the lead is made, a small card or a big one?” This isn't the time to answer those questions. Remind the student that the purpose of the first exercise is to learn to follow suit, to learn to discard if one can't follow suit, to determine who won the trick and to determine who leads after the first trick. When the deal is over, give the students a chance to increase their powers of observation by asking a few questions: “Did anyone have a low card that took a trick? How did this happen? Did anyone have a high card that didn't win a trick? Why was this?”

You have set the stage for a change in the role of the student. The classroom has become a laboratory, and the student is experimenting, observing and drawing conclusions. The teacher is a catalyst, synthesizing the conclusions into key points: tricks are won both by high cards and by low cards in long suits.

Here is an exercise to introduce the concept of bidding. Students describe their hand to their partner without using numbers or names of specific cards.

The conversation might be the following:

North: "I like hearts."

South: "I don't like hearts but I have a lot of spades."

North: "I don't like spades but I have diamonds."

South: "I like diamonds better than hearts but I really like spades."

North: "Could we settle on diamonds?"

After each partnership has agreed on the trump suit, they predict the number of tricks they will take with that suit as trump. The partnership predicting the higher number of tricks plays the contract and names the trump suit. After the deal is played, the players show each other their cards (they have played them out duplicate-style) and see if they picked the best combined suit. Typical comments are: "When you said you really liked spades, I thought you had more." "How many cards do I have to have in a suit to say I like it?"

Students are communicating with each other. They are becoming comfortable listening to answers and opinions not just from the teacher but from each other. They are becoming tolerant and curious. They are making friends and talking to one another, which is the reason many of them came in the first place. The teacher is working with them, and they are using what they know and what they have discovered for themselves.

## **Attitude**

It is important that the students develop an appropriate attitude toward learning the game. I have seen people who are intelligent, confident and competent in their daily profession start to shake when confronted with 13 cards. The teacher doesn't help their confidence with well-meaning remarks such as: "You don't want to lead that card. Let me show you how you could make the contract."

The whole learning process depends on making the student comfortable, and comfort doesn't come from memorizing rules. Comfort comes from an attitude of willingness to experiment and observe, an attitude that accepts uncertainty, an attitude that doesn't fear making mistakes. When working with beginners, we must encourage them at every opportunity, listen to everything they have to say and learn with them.

The attitude we want beginning players to have toward the game is best summed up by some comments made by the late Don Oakie, a top-ranking player and a former president of the ACBL:

"I think we should consider what potential pupils really want. I think they are similar to me when I was just a youngster and somebody gave us some tennis racquets and a couple of balls. The racquets had strings that were loose and the balls didn't have much bounce. But we could hardly wait to get down to the high school and bat those balls back and forth. We had a wonderful time doing it. We didn't know anything about the game, or form, or what it takes to be a good player. All we knew was that we had a racquet in our hand and a net, and we could bat the balls back and forth, and it was a lot of fun.

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“When people want to take up a new recreation, they want to have fun. They want to be doing something, and it’s not necessary that they do it with skill or good form. All that is necessary for them to enjoy themselves is for them to play the game. The fun is in the doing.”

## **TEACHING THE *BIDDING IN THE* 21ST CENTURY COURSE**

Volumes have been written about the game of bridge. We are teaching a basic course, lasting 16 hours (eight two-hour lessons) or 18 hours (nine two-hour lessons). All we can hope to do is introduce general concepts with as few exceptions as possible. We don’t have to learn the infield fly rule when starting to play baseball or how to put topspin on the ball when learning to play tennis. Yet we find it difficult to avoid giving beginning bridge players so many rules and exceptions that they quickly become frustrated.

### **Time, a Scarce Commodity**

People seldom have enough time to do everything they want to do, so simplicity becomes very important. People want quick results and the resulting boost to morale. This can be achieved by concentrating our efforts on the 20% of activities that generate 80% of the results.

How can we adopt this principle in teaching bridge? By reducing the complexity of bidding and play to the minimum necessary to achieve reasonable results most of the time. Of course, taking a game as theoretically complex as bridge and reducing it to a few simple elements isn’t easy. Simplicity means that whenever we have a choice, we choose the method that presents the fewest exceptions.

The lessons are two hours long. Generally the first hour focuses on the bidding theory while the second hour puts it into practice through the play. We should always plan to stop after two hours — this is about the maximum length of time that most people can concentrate before starting to feel overwhelmed by the material. Students who want to continue to play are certainly free to do so. But for those who have had enough, we must provide a finishing point to the session, reviewing what has been covered and leaving them eager to return for the next lesson.

If we haven’t covered all of the material in the lesson, we mustn’t panic. It isn’t the quantity of the material but the quality that is important. We shouldn’t try to rush things through. Instead, we make compromises — skipping over the finer details, leaving exercises for homework, telling the students they can read more details in the text. However, we do want to cover the fundamentals in each lesson and we should review our timing so we can do better next time. Which section took too long? What might be the reasons for this?

Following the first lesson, which consists mainly of play exercises, the lessons start to fall into a regular pattern:

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Introduction to the bidding concepts.....	10 minutes
Exercises on the bidding concepts .....	45 minutes
Break.....	5 minutes
Introduction to the play concepts .....	10 minutes
Play of pre-dealt deals.....	45 minutes
Review.....	5 minutes

While we don't want the schedule to be too rigorous, by planning the segments ahead of time, we can see if we are falling behind at a particular point. It's especially important to leave sufficient time for the play portion.

How can we keep to these times? The introduction to the bidding concepts is an overview. This isn't the time for us to present orally all of the material. The student can read about the details in the text. The general concept to be introduced and the method for introducing it are outlined in each of the lesson plans.

Divide the 45 minutes allotted to the exercises on the bidding concepts so there is time for every exercise. If there are five exercises, then take about nine minutes per exercise; if there are seven exercises, take a little less than seven minutes per exercise.

The introduction to the play concepts is also an overview. The concept and method for introducing it are outlined in the lesson plan.

Other than in the first lesson, there are four pre-dealt deals as the last four exercises of each lesson. The focus is on putting the bidding theory into practice and, on most deals, incorporating the play concept that has just been explained. The discussion on the bidding should take only a couple of minutes. If we are running behind, we could tell the students exactly how the bidding should go.

There is usually only one new play concept per deal, so the discussion should take only three or four minutes before the deal is actually played. Point the defenders and the declarer in the right direction and then let them go at it.

We can control the amount of time we use when presenting a lesson concept. What do we do if there are a few tables of students who take a long time to finish an exercise? Consider the situation. After five minutes of the first play exercise in lesson one, only six tricks have been played at one table. The other tables are waiting for the next exercise. We might say:

“If you haven't finished the exercise, turn the rest of your cards over. You can take part in the discussion. Did anyone have a low card that took a trick? How did this happen? Did anyone have a high card that didn't take a trick? Tell me about it.”

Include the table that didn't finish in the discussion following the exercise. Watch for them to offer a contribution so they don't feel left out.

We can't afford to hold up the rest of the class to wait for a slow table — some students would literally take half an hour on a simple exercise. Slow tables will pick up the pace when they see that the class goes on. We are trying to please the majority of our students while keeping an eye on those who are either too quick or too slow. We want to make our students comfortable without letting a small group take over the class.

## Keep It Simple

Let's consider hand valuation. When students start off by playing a few hands whist-style to get a feel for the cards, they have no difficulty recognizing that tricks are won not only by high cards but also by low cards in long suits. They can see that, to value the hand, there are two components — a value for high cards and a value for length.

This method has several advantages compared to counting points for short suits.

- First, the student can readily understand where both components of the valuation come from. It's difficult to understand why short suits are valuable — they may be a liability in notrump.
- Second, there is no ambiguity with honors in short suits. Is a singleton king worth 5 points (3 points for the high card and 2 for length), 4 points (subtract 1 point for the singleton honor), 3 points (choose the higher of the high-card point value and the short-suit value), or 2 points (choose the lower of the high-card point value and the short-suit value)?

Another example is the many exceptions we could mention with the opening bid of 1NT. We could open 1NT with a five-card minor suit, but not with a five-card major suit. We could open with a balanced hand as long as there is no worthless doubleton. We could open with 16 points, but 15 if there is a five-card suit. In a basic course, we want to limit the need for exceptions as much as possible. Open 1NT with a balanced hand and 15 to 17 high card points. This brings the parameters for notrump into the mainstream for notrump bidding. Even though we want to keep things simple, we recognize we have a responsibility to provide modern bridge theory to our students. The wish to keep things simple may at times have to give way in order to keep things accurate.

## Connecting Information

Simplicity comes with as few exceptions as possible. It also comes from connecting information and emphasizing general concepts. Too many unconnected rules and facts create confusion. For example, when the student knows that each player has a role and that the opener is the describer and the responder is the captain, it simplifies the bidding. When we emphasize the general idea that the captain asks “What Level?” and “What Strain?” to decide on the response to an opening bid of 1NT, it becomes much easier than memorizing a chart of all possible responses.

## Mnemonic Aids

We can simplify the material by using mnemonic aids. For example, we can help the student understand the bidding messages through the use of the traffic light. As with a normal traffic light, red stands for stop (signoff), yellow stands for proceed with caution (invitational), and green stands for go (forcing). If we assign a color to each bid, the students will soon get the message.

The irony is that keeping the material simple is difficult for a teacher. Nevertheless, it's the only way to keep the students in a basic course coming to class. It's worth our time and effort.

The most exciting display of a hand, for the basic student, is the actual cards. It doesn't take long to have the students construct a hand in the middle of the table, dummy-style. This works much better for the basic student than writing the hand on a chalkboard.

## The Material

The material provided to the student for each lesson is divided into two sections, the student text and the student activity workshop.

The student text is not meant to be read during the lesson. It's for reference when the lesson is over. We, however, should be familiar with the material beforehand. The lesson plans outline the concepts to be covered in each lesson. If we are uncertain about any points, we can read the appropriate topic and examples in the text. For most lessons, the student text is divided into four parts:

- Bidding Theory:** The bidding theory that the students need for a basic course. There are few exceptions, and the material is kept as simple as possible.
- Guidelines for Play:** A basic idea on play that is highlighted in the pre-dealt deals that are played in the workshop.
- Summary:** A quick reference to the points covered in the lesson. This is a good place to direct the students if they have forgotten a concept.
- The Finer Points:** This part expands on some of the bidding concepts and answers some of the questions that the more experienced students will raise.

The student workshop contains the exercises that are discussed in the class. The lesson plan explains how the teacher introduces and conducts them. The teacher, by guiding the student through the workshop material, gives the student a chance to be involved in the learning process. The first few exercises develop the bidding, and the last few exercises develop the play. To save time, there are some bidding exercises where the teacher can refer the students to the text to help complete the exercise instead of calling out the cards for multiple hands

## The Play of the Hand

There are three kinds of deals we can give our students — pre-dealt, semi-pre-dealt and randomly dealt.

Pre-dealt deals are the most effective and are used in the *Bidding in the 21st Century* course because one point at a time can be introduced. There are two pre-dealt deals in the first lesson and four in each lesson after that. Usually there won't be time in class for semi-pre-dealt and randomly dealt deals. However, there is a place for these deals if time permits.

Here is an example of how to make up a semi-pre-dealt deal to use if the class is moving along quickly in Lesson 3 (Responses to 1NT Opening Bids).

Have the students make up a hand that would open the bidding 1NT. After having them randomly deal the other three hands, have the students bid. They can either play after the auction or just look at all four hands to determine if a reasonable contract was reached.

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This provides us with some control. All students will open 1NT and their partners will choose an appropriate response, which is the theme of the lesson.

On the randomly dealt deals, the students shuffle and deal the cards. We have to be careful how we use these deals. Our lesson can be unfolding delicately and then a randomly dealt deal can leave our students with a feeling of frustration rather than confidence as they are about to leave.

Watching students play semi-pre-dealt deals and randomly dealt deals puts us to the test. We'll see finesses not taken, suits blocked, winners being discarded. We'll see leads away from an ace in trump contracts. We might feel that we can't let this happen! Nevertheless, we have to give the students a chance to get the experience they need to be ready to understand how to improve their play. There are far too many points to address in these deals to even start. We might try making general comments:

“That's interesting. We'll be talking about how to solve the problem you encountered in one of our upcoming lessons. I liked the way you started by playing the trump suit first. You had the right idea.”

## **E-Z Deal Cards**

The E-Z Deal Cards complete the connection between the teacher manual and the student text. Each of the ACBL beginning bridge texts has a set of E-Z Deal Cards.

The cards are coded to allow the deals in the Group Activities section for each of the eight lessons of the *Bidding in the 21st Century* course to be dealt at the table by the students. There are two exercises with “play” deals in Lesson 1 and four “play” deals in each of the remaining eight lessons. With one deck of E-Z Deal Cards per table and a brief explanation by the teacher, the deals can be produced as they are needed. There will no longer be a need to carry heavy duplicate boards to class or to pre-duplicate the “play” deals. (Note: Some teachers do find it helpful to pre-duplicate the two deals used in the first lesson and to teach the students how to deal the E-Z cards in Lesson 2.)

The easiest way to teach the students to use the E-Z Deal Cards is to have the four players at the table each take a portion of the cards. Tell them which deal you want them to produce. (The lesson numbers run down the side of each card and the deal numbers are across the top.) Have the students distribute the cards in front of themselves, placing the cards in piles corresponding to N-E-W-S. NEWS is easy to remember. The students then give all of the cards in the “N” piles to North, the “E” piles to East, etc. Some teachers have found it helpful to get a super enlargement of a card (try Kinko's or CopyMax) to show the class while explaining how to read the coding.

## **THE *BIDDING IN THE 21ST CENTURY* COURSE LESSON PLANS**

Lesson 1 differs from the others in that the students start right off playing and there is virtually no introduction. The lesson plans for this lesson are covered in more detail because this is the lesson that will set the tone for the rest of the course. As the lessons progress, they fall into a regular pattern to which both the teacher and the students will become accustomed.

### **Structure of the Lesson Plans**

Each lesson plan is divided into the following sections:

#### ***General Concepts:***

This is for us to review before the start of each lesson. The main idea of the lesson is stated briefly under the headings of bidding and play of the hand. The specific details of each lesson are covered in the student text, to which we can refer if any of the concepts are unclear.

#### ***General Introduction:***

In the first 10 minutes of the class, prior to the first exercise, the teacher presents an overview of the main ideas to be covered. This can be considered a warm-up. It sets the stage for the rest of the lesson. It's teacher-directed. The class works as a unit rather than in groups.

#### ***Exercises on Bidding:***

The first group of exercises in the workshop material covers the bidding theory to be discussed. About 45 minutes is spent doing the exercises. In the lesson plan, each exercise is broken into four parts:

Introduction

Instructions

Follow-up

Conclusion

Each exercise is done in five to 10 minutes. The *Introduction* is usually a sentence or two by the teacher. Sometimes the teacher has the students construct a sample hand on the table and uses it to demonstrate the point being made.

The *Instructions* are then given by the teacher, and the students work in their groups (usually each table). The best discussions seem to occur when one of the participants in each group is made the chairperson. Students can take turns. North could start with this role followed by East, South and West. The chairperson can report the findings of the group to the class, or the group can pick a separate spokesperson for the group. Sometimes the teacher can take the group through the exercise, asking the questions posed and getting the answers from the students. This moves the class along if time is becoming a factor.

In the lesson plans, the instructions under *Follow-up* are often “Discuss the exercise.” Have each group take a turn reporting to the whole class. Have different groups start, because sometimes the answer will be given and all of the other groups agree, so there is no need to hear from each group.

The difference between the follow-up and the *Conclusion* is that the teacher uses the conclusion to pull all of the information together and make sure the significant points have been made and understood.

A saying about teaching goes: “Tell the students what you are going to tell them, and then tell them what you have told them.” In the introduction of the exercise, we describe the theme of the exercise. In the instructions, the students are told what they are to do. The follow-up gives the students a chance to tell the class the conclusions they have reached. During the conclusion, the information is synthesized, usually by the teacher.

### **Exercises on Play:**

The lesson plans for the exercises on the play are divided into two sections:

1. General theme of the four hands
2. Notes on each hand

The first 10 minutes of the play section present the theme that the play of the hand will follow.

The lesson plan suggests how the theme can be presented.

The actual pre-dealt deals are handled in the following manner:

1. Students take the hands out of the board and turn them face up on the table, sorted into suits, dummy-style (*i.e.*, so that it looks as though there is a dummy in front of each player).
2. The teacher leads a discussion based on the questions outlined in the bidding section in the workshop material for the particular deal. The students don't use their texts for this section of the lesson. All of their attention is focused on the actual hands. The bidding shouldn't be dealt with in too much depth, since the emphasis is on the play. The students will go through the bidding again when they actually play. However, the students must reach the appropriate contract — otherwise the point of the deal may get lost. If time is running short, the teacher can tell the students, by way of review, exactly how the auction should go.
3. The questions on the play found in the workshop material guide the students to see how the theme of the lesson is developed. The teacher need not go through the play trick by trick, since the students will play the deal shortly. However, the teacher should ensure that the appropriate opening lead will be made and that declarer will be thinking along the right general line.
4. The students are now told to pick up the hands, bid and play. We should avoid making any comments during the bidding and play, giving the students full opportunity to make mistakes. However, we should observe the key actions so we can bring up appropriate points at the end. (The students often are unable to remember exactly what happened during the play.)

5. Right from the start, the students are taught to play duplicate-style (keeping their cards in front of them). As groups finish playing, have them reconstruct the hands dummy-style on the table. Then they can discuss the deal further while other tables are finishing up. If the deal has gone well at all tables, we can move on to the next deal as soon as the last table finishes. If the deal hasn't gone smoothly, we can discuss it as time permits before moving on. This may be necessary initially but, as the students' confidence and experience grow, they can handle most of the postmortems themselves.

It may seem that this is not challenging enough for the students. After all, they look at the hand first, discuss it and only then pick it up and play it. However, beginning students rarely remember the hand, even after it has just been discussed. The main advantage of discussing the theme ahead of time is that all four players at the table become involved. Most of the deals are designed so that the student doesn't make the contract without following the suggested line of play. The defenders are able to watch and see if the declarer follows the plan. We also want to build up the students' confidence when playing, and giving them every chance for success is the best way to do this.

If we think our class is finding this method too easy, we can try discussing all four hands at once and even have the students play them in a different order after the discussion.

For homework each student can look at and answer all of the questions in the workshop material on the pre-dealt deals. This gives the students another opportunity to get value out of each deal even when they aren't declarer.

The deals are arranged so that the declarer is North — then East, South and West. Each player gets a chance to be the declarer.

### ***Adjusting the Material:***

These lesson plans have been used successfully by thousands of teachers since the mid-eighties. The material provides the course framework for teachers to build upon. From this framework, the teacher can add bidding treatments that are common in their geographic area. In addition, some teachers may want to be more thorough in certain areas and make the course 10 weeks in length (or longer). Basically, the course framework can and should be adapted to meet the needs of teachers and their students.