

Tips for Making Bridge Come Alive and be Fun for 4th and 5th Graders

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My classes are fun for me and my students. I have developed a lot of ideas that I use to motivate them. Here are some for you to try in your classroom.

Bridge Aerobics

I start each class with what I call Bridge Aerobics – the class answers in unison with enthusiasm to various questions like – Major Suits? Number of cards in the deck? Highest suit? Lowest suit? HCPs, for Ace, King, etc.

Include questions such as how many words is “a lot”? (a common error in students’ writing), How do you spell bridge?, penalty?, How many miles is it across the US?, Which president played bridge (Eisenhower)?, Whose grandmother played bridge (Obama),” etc.

Bridge is a Game of Mistakes

I use this idea I got from Audrey. I explain that bridge is a game of mistakes, and that I have put three pennies in my right pocket. I move one to the other pocket for each mistake I make. (I called a boy a girl one time.) I remind the students that I will not call on them unless they raise their hands because I want them to look at me and not worry about being called on.

Study Time

We use the Bidding text provided by the ACBL. I use highlighters for students to mark the important parts of the lesson in the book. I ask the students to give me ten minutes three times a week to study the highlighted parts. The next week they use a different colored highlighter.

Introducing the Bidding

To introduce opening bidding I say the following, with the class answering in unison:

How many points do you need to start the bidding? 12

Say, 5543.

I didn’t hear you. What did you say? 5543

Louder please.

That’s too loud, softer please. 5543

Would you like to know why you said 5543?

Well, you said you need 12 HCP to start the bidding. Now we have to know what to bid.

If you have 5 spades, you bid one spade.

If you have 5 hearts, and you don’t have 5 spades, you bid one heart.

If you don’t have 5 spades or 5 hearts, but you do have 4 diamonds, you bid one diamond?

If you don’t have 5 spades, 5 hearts, or 4 diamonds, what do you bid? One club.

If you get lucky and have 15 to 18 HCPs and no singleton, what do you bid? One notrump.

I use chants, rap songs etc. to help students remember.

Movement Cards

Students like using movement cards because they get a new partner each week. I use an individual movement for 20 players. After the basics, we play two hands each week. Each table is playing the same hand at the same time like 3-2 out of the Club Series. Students are given a number and keep it throughout the 16 classes. When they enter the room, they pick up their movement card and sit where assigned after being told which round we are playing. We play one board, and then everyone moves for the next round getting a new partner. I give each table a new board with all tables playing the same board. I matchpoint the boards, and I announce the students who are ahead in the race for the trophy the next week. Each week they can earn points. I keep a running total based on boards we play and team activities such as ballgame etc.

Bidding Song

I use the "Bidding Song." We discuss each stanza and any word like charades. I do a charade and explain that it is a fun game with book titles, etc. I ask for a leader and the student leads the class in the song. We all sing together, then the boys sing one stanza, the girls sing another, the classroom teacher sings one, etc.

To the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Bid, bid, bid your hand,
But alas, alas,
If you have fewer than 12 points,
I guess you'll have to pass.

Bid, bid, bid your cards,
With a balanced hand.
If you have 15 to 18,
One notrump's your stand.

Bid, bid, bid your hand,
You don't need charades,
But you'll need a five card suit,
To start with hearts or spades.

Bid, bid, bid your cards,
Don't sit around and stew,
Open your longer minor suit
With nothing else to do.

Fly Swatter Game

The class is divided into four teams. Each team is given a different colored fly swatter. A chart is hung with vocabulary words and terms used in bridge. I ask a question such as how many points do you need to open the bidding or how many tricks must you take if you bid three hearts or why do we play bridge (for fun)? One person from each team goes up and taps the answer with his fly swatter. First team gets 4 points, second tap gets three etc.

Ball Game

- * The class is divided into two teams with each team in a line with about eight feet in between.
- * A beach ball has the sections marked with the following words: Who, What, When, How and Free.
- * One student tosses (we discuss the difference between throw and toss) to a member of the other team. If his right thumb lands on What, or When, etc. he gets a question such as Who is the declarer? Or When is the bidding over? How many HCP do you need to open one notrump? If the right thumb lands on Free, the student doesn't have to answer a question.
- * The team gets two points if the student answers the question correctly; if the answer is wrong and a member of that team can answer the question, the team gets one point. If that team doesn't know the answer, the other team can answer and win a point.

Van Gogh and Other Card Faces

I use an overhead projector with Van Gogh's picture to talk about his life and art. Then we play with cards of his self portrait and Sunflower painting. I do not use many ditto sheets. Students get enough of those in class. I put the ditto sheets in plastic covers and use them over and over as needed.

I have a card collection, and I take a couple of decks to each class. We talk about what is North, South, East, and West of our country. I show the class card faces with the Canadian flag, Holland, England, ancient cards, Holiday cards, etc.

I explain to them that cards come in all sizes like people. I have 5 X 7 inch cards, 1 X 2 inch cards, round, square, and rectangular cards.

Class Manners

I do not allow any high fives, etc. I require the students to sit up straight. If they need help, they raise their hands and say, "Director, please." If they don't say "please," I don't answer.

Bridge Bingo Exercise

At each table the students draw a card for the dealer. Highest card is the dealer. If two aces, the ace of the higher suit wins. Each student puts his cards on the table dummy-style facing him. I shuffle a deck and call the cards. If the student has the card I call, he turns it over in the middle of the table. When a student gets rid of all of his cards, he calls out

“BRIDGE” and wins a deck of cards to take home. Directors gave me used decks of cards, and party bridge players give me their used decks to use for this entertainment.

Students are taught that the reason we do this is not to give a deck of cards but to **increase hand-eye coordination**. They discard their cards slowly at first, but after a few classes, all of them can do it as fast as I can call them. Each class ends with Bridge Bingo.

Class Closure

Class ends with closure when the students tell me what they learned that day. I remind them of other things that they learned, and then ask if they will be here next week. Of course they will because they are in school, but they like having a choice. Students rarely are absent on the day I come to teach bridge.