

52 Weeks of Ideas and Tips

by Lynn Berg

August 2-8 Dog Days of August. While you keep cool, develop an e-mail list for a weekly mailing to former students and anyone who has inquired about classes. Advertise October/November classes. (Throw losers, keep winners.)

August 9-15 Develop a snail-mail list for a monthly postcard mailing. (Summer reading: that famous old bridge book, "Five Weeks to Winning Bridge.")

August 16-22 Ramadan. Keep Cool with Bridge – demonstration at the local mall. Enlist several of your students to play. Be ready with business cards, brochures, class schedules through the end of the year. (A card should be played the same day it is dealt.)

August 23-29 Keep Cool with Bridge – demonstration at the local library. Invite grandparents to bring grandchildren if you are interested in young pupils. (Bridge Evolution: 17th/18th century Whist, 19th century Bridge Whist, 1904 Auction Bridge, 1925 Contract Bridge.)

August 30-September 5 Announce your November/December classes. Special rate for early sign-up. (Famous cartoon caption: Now show me the hand you had when you were bidding.)

September 6-12 Labor Day 9/6. Grandparents Day 9/12. Back to School. Plan a school lesson series for January. Contact the ACBL Education Dept. for information, lesson packets and remuneration. (A great bridge classic: All Through the Pack.)

September 13-19 Rosh Hashanah 9/19. Plan a demonstration for locals in conjunction with an upcoming regional. Contact the tournament chair, your ACBL Education Liaison. (The Stayman Convention was invented by Hall of Fame member, George Rapee, but publicized by Hall of Fame member, Sam Stayman.)

September 20-26 Harvest time. Plan a workshop on Major Suit Bidding. Make it three hours with brunch in the morning, snacks if later in the day. (First woman Life Master: Sally Young in 1939. One of the greatest players of all time.)

September 27-October 3 World Series Time. Yom Kippur 9/28. Investigate teaching online. 8 week classes must start now to be finished by Thanksgiving. (Eight ever, Nine never.)

October 4-10 Plan a workshop on Play of the Hand. (Use Larry Cohen's material on opening 1NT with a five-card major.) There is no 'right' answer... well-known teachers such as Zeke Jabbour and Bernie Chazen prefer to open the major. Marty Bergen and Roberta Salob will tell you to open notrump. (The Bridge Hall of Fame is located at ACBL Headquarters.)

October 11-17 Columbus Day. Plan a workshop on Opening Light: Third Seat, Fourth seat, Rule of 20, etc. (The 4-3-2-1 honor count was developed by Milton Work and popularized by Charles Goren.)

October 18-24 Contact the Speaker Chairmen from local civic groups. Offer to speak and provide a demonstration. (Second hand low.)

October 25-31 Halloween. Scare up some business by offering "Bridge to You," private lessons to foursomes, tailored to their specific wants. (Plafond was the French game which preceded Contract Bridge at the turn of the 20th Century.)

November 1-7 Election Day. Advertise January/ February classes. If you are repeating a class, make sure anyone who has already taken it knows that there is a special deal for repeaters – maybe 40% of the usual charge. (Third hand high.)

November 8-14 Veterans Day 11/11. Talk to a local travel agent about a cruise group for next summer. Plan special lessons and activities. Make sure the agent knows the specific requirements for a bridge program. Get enough participants and you not only have a free trip, but also actual profit! (Return your partner's lead.)

November 15-21 Things quiet down as the holidays approach. Offer lesson specials as a great present from one bridge player to another. (Bridge can be played anywhere there are four players and a deck of cards.)

November 22-28 Thanksgiving and the Fall NABC. Offer a special to players who pre-pay for your next two consecutive classes. (Acol, the British bidding system, is named for Acol Street in London.)

November 29-December 5 Announce February/ March classes. Talk to the Events Manager at a country club about promoting off-season use, especially of the dining facilities – "Lesson, Lunch and Leisure Bridge." (Save winners, discard losers.)

December 6-12 Chanukah starts on 12/12. Announce March/ April classes. Remind students that a good last-minute Xmas gift for a friend is one of your upcoming workshops. (Omar Sharif was as well-known in the bridge world as in the movie world.)

December 13-19 Chanukah ends on 12/19. Wish everyone on your student list a happy holiday and relax!

December 20-26 Christmas. Don't send anything this week, either. Hectic holiday time.

December 27-January 2 New Years Day. Bowl Games. Compile appropriate "Resolutions for Bridge Players." (Arlette Schutte, a TAP trainer and popular bridge teacher, told her students to stand in front of the mirror every evening and practice saying "pass.")

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January 3-9 Start sending Larry Cohen's "Favorite 52 Deals" as a promotion for an advanced play class in March/April. Be sure to give proper credit to your source. (The word "trump" comes from the French for "triumph.")

January 10-16 If there is a store which sells expensive playing cards in your area, talk to them about a demonstration with a special display of cards, tallies, etc. This would also make an attractive window display and ad. (Eight ever, nine never.)

January 17-23 M.L. King Day 1/18. Contact the local ABA chapter to see if they need a teacher. If they have teachers, do they know about ABTA? (Old Whist Saying: Many a man is walking barefoot on the streets of London because he forgot to draw trump.)

January 24-30 Organize an all-day bridge "camp" for your students in the winter doldrums. Offer snacks, ice-breaker puzzles, silly prizes. (The suits are named in alphabetical order from low to high.)

January 31-February 6 Ground Hog Day 2/2. Advertise April/May classes. (George Rosenkranz, who invented the first commercially successful birth-control pill, also invented bridge conventions.)

February 7-13 Super Bowl in Miami 2/7. Contact Parks and Recreation about a summer bridge program for kids. Announce May/June classes. (Easley Blackwood invented the popular convention used to ask for aces.)

February 14-20 Valentine's Day 2/14. President's Day 2/15. Mardi Gras 2/16. Contact the local YMCA about offering summer bridge classes. (The Bath Coup, holding up with AJx when the King has been led, goes back to 18th Century England.)

February 21-27 Plan a fall get-away, a Land Cruise, with bridge students. Contact a resort in the “leaf peeper” regions and offer a lesson package. (Bridge Encyclopedia: The earliest playing cards were used in China in the 10th Century.)

February 28-March 6 Advertise May/June classes. Contact the Gifted Program for Middle Schoolers to offer a program next fall. (The most balanced hand has the pattern 4-3-3-3.)

March 7-13 March Madness. Is the local PTA trying to raise money for a cause? Put on a benefit lesson or lesson series – you get publicity and a great feeling. (While opening five-card majors is popular in North America, four-card majors prevail in much of the world.)

March 14-20 Ides of March 3/15. St. Patrick’s Day 3/17. First day of Spring 3/20. Who else teaches bridge in your area? Are you trying to fill the same niches? Have a teachers meeting to create congeniality and help each other find clients. Promote ABTA. (Two generations of Jacobys have invented conventions: Oswald, the Jacoby Transfer; his son, Jim, the Jacoby 2NT.)

March 21-27 Don’t ignore the local bridge club. Maybe they need a teacher? Or another teacher? (False carding is deliberately playing a card intended to conceal your holding. For instance, with AKQ, you win the A.)

March 28-April 3 April Fools Day 4/1. April Showers. Advertise June/July classes, perhaps a summer camp program, with classes every day for a week. (Fourth from the highest in your longest and strongest.)

April 4-10 Easter Sunday 4/4. Baseball season starts. Workshop on slam bidding. Remember the advertising principle: create a need and then fill it. (The honors are variously also called court cards and coat cards. Edith McMullin, the creator of Easybridge!, calls them “cards with clothes on.”)

April 11-17 Try team-teaching with another area teacher. You’ll be able to combine your class lists. (Cover an honor with an honor.)

April 18-24 Earth Day 4/22. Plan to attend the ABTA’s annual summer convention. It’s not too early to make reservations. *Points Schmoints*, a popular book by Marty Bergen can be a springboard for a workshop on distributional hands. (Take time to read the book.)

April 25-May 1 May Day. Advertise July/August classes. Play a bridge/spa day with a local spa. Sign up participants for a full day of bridge and pampering.

(Bridge is a partnership game. If you don't feel your partner is working with you, get another partner.)

May 2-8 Cinco de Mayo 5/5. Offer a Senior discount. (In French, the dummy is known as "mort," dead.)

May 9-15 Mothers Day 5/9. Offer a refresher to anyone who took a course more than two years ago and has not been back. Make it a three-lesson series for an attractive price. (In Chicago scoring, there are no legs. The vulnerability is none, dealer, dealer, both.)

May 16-22 Are there Senior Olympic Events in your area? Bridge is included. Offer to coach a team. (A business double is for penalties; you don't want partner to bid.)

May 23-29 Graduation. Make a list of everyone who has "graduated" from your classes this past school year. Invite them all to a playing party; offer to make partnerships or use an Individual movement. (Honors are only claimed in party bridge. What's fun is when you get to claim honors in the opponent's suit.)

May 30-June 5 Memorial Day 5/31. Time to push registration for any classes starting in August. This is a good week for a two or three session workshop held on consecutive mornings or afternoons. (By sitting North at duplicate or by keeping score in social bridge, you can become very familiar with scoring.)

June 6-12 Weddings everywhere. Send a survey to anyone who has taken a class. Which class(es)? How satisfactory? What would they like to see repeated? Offered new? Set a closing date for the survey and promise to report the findings. (Return partner's opening lead.)

June 13-19 Flag Day 6/14. Tidy up your database. Do you know which classes were taken by which students? If you are spreadsheet savvy, this information is best viewed that way. Look for pupils who haven't taken a class in a while and offer them a special deal. (Biritch is an old Russian card game which may have given the name to our modern pastime.)

June 20-26 Father's Day 6/20. Plan fall workshops. Try for one every month or six weeks. If you usually teach social players, think of a topic also of interest to competitive players to increase your appeal. (Not sure if you should raise 1NT to 2NT? See if you have at least eight cards with the denomination of 8 or higher.)

June 27-July 3 Take a vacation for the next two weeks. Just e-mail a tip without any promotion. (Lead trump when they are playing in the third or fourth suit bid.)

July 4-10 Independence Day. (Use the "Rule of 15" if unsure about opening in fourth chair. Count your high card points and the number of spades in the hand. The two numbers should add to 15 or more.)

July 11-17 Send out the results of your survey and advertise your August/September classes based on the information you gathered. (The Portland Club in London is the oldest bridge club. It began in 1815 as a Whist club.)

July 18-24 Special offer: a FREE workshop on the rules of bridge. Spend a little money on snacks and handouts and use this opportunity to promote all of your upcoming classes. Have texts and schedules on display. Offer calendars with the significant dates marked. (A revoke is not established until the revoking side has played to the next trick.)

July 25-31 Look back on a year of promotion and planning. Have your numbers improved? Read over the Applebasket winners (www.abtathome.com) from last year for inspiration and tips. (Your partner is the most important person at the table and should be cherished.)