

HANDBOOK FOR THE MENTORING PROGRAM CHAIR



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A NOTE TO OUR MENTORING PROGRAM CHAIR

Congratulations! You have been selected by your unit to implement a very important program for your unit. This Handbook is designed to help you develop the guidelines for your unit's Bridge Mentoring Program and to show you how to implement those guidelines.

The goals of a Bridge Mentoring Program are the following:

- To help aspiring bridge players become members of the local bridge family.
- To help the Mentee improve his/her bridge skills.

The Mentoring Chair's specific responsibilities include the following:

- Appoint a Mentoring Program Committee.
- Sell the program to club managers/owners.
For best results you should be working with all of your local clubs so that the mentoring program benefits your entire unit.
- Register all participating clubs via an agreement sheet.
- Maintain a file of all registration forms for Mentors and Mentees.
- Verify that all partnerships comply with the program's guidelines.
- Assist clubs as needed to create partnerships, find more Mentors, etc.
The basic responsibility of partnerships belongs to each individual club.
- Organize telephone committees.
It's important to try to maintain a balance between Mentor and Mentee registrants.
The key to a successful mentoring program is to involve as many players in the process as possible.
- For subsidized programs, validate a "reimbursement form" from the club and forward the form for payment to the unit treasurer.
- Update the program as necessary with approval of the unit board.
Even the most inventive and successful program may decline after a year or two unless the program is infused with new ideas and innovations.

On the next page of the Handbook, there is a list of the benefits of a Bridge Mentoring Program, along with the responsibilities of the Mentor and Mentee. You may want to post or pass out this page with the sign-up sheet as notice of the expectations of the participants.

If your unit is just establishing a Bridge Mentoring Program, this information will guide you through the steps necessary to get started. If your unit has a basic program in place, there is a lot you can do, with the unit's assistance, to improve the program and spark new participation in the program.

The Education Department will be happy to assist you in developing your Bridge Mentoring Program. Please contact the Education Department at (901) 332-5586, ext. 1262 or by e-mail at Julie.Greenberg@acbl.org.

THE MAGIC OF A BRIDGE MENTORING PROGRAM

Benefits of a Bridge Mentoring Program

- Increased social interaction between players of all levels.
- Mentored players are more likely to stay with the game.
- Increased table count at the club level.
- Opportunity to host a new event at local tournaments.
- Opportunity for the unit to work with the local clubs.
- Opportunity for all players to give back to the game.
- Reduces the frustration that comes with learning and playing the game.

Responsibilities of the Mentee

- Respect your Mentor's time.
Your Mentor will allot sufficient time before the game to fill out a convention card. After the game, your Mentor will discuss difficult hands and other problems that occurred during the game.
- Learn from the information provided by your Mentor.
Do not be overly sensitive to constructive criticism.
- Show respect for your Mentor's efforts.
Your behavior and follow-through are how you express respect for your Mentor. Since all human relationships involve some form of conflict, it is possible that you and your Mentor may have basic personality differences. In this case, the club manager will be happy to assign you another Mentor.
- Become a Mentor yourself.
This may be a requirement of your program.

Responsibilities of the Mentor

- Give your time unselfishly.
Please allow sufficient time in making out a convention card prior to your first game. It is recommended that you start with simple agreements and proceed toward more complex systems as the partnership matures. You should spend a reasonable amount of time discussing the problems that came up during the game. Analyze some of the hands as a learning tool.
- Be willing to share your knowledge and experience.
- Make a commitment to play a certain number of times per month.
It is recommended that the commitment be to play with your Mentee at least twice a month. This may be a requirement of your program.

Guidelines for Implementation a Bridge Mentoring Program

The key to a successful mentoring program is to involve as many players in the process as possible. The first step to organizing a Bridge Mentoring Program is to establish guidelines that will allow the program to achieve the specific goals of your unit. There are a number of ways to implement a mentoring program. You may establish a program for a single event, for games that are scheduled periodically or through mentoring partnerships that play as desired in any events scheduled at the local or tournament level. The options are up to you.

Here are some ideas to consider as you design your program.

- Launch your program at a venue such as a Pro-Am game or unit game.
- Get your unit involved in the program.

The program can operate at the club level or through the entire unit. Since one of the benefits of a Bridge Mentoring Program is increased table count, a unit's board of directors may find this program to be a great way to support the local clubs. For example, you may ask the unit board to pay the Mentor's entry while the Mentee pays his/her entry.
- Determine how many levels of mentoring should be encouraged.

It is suggested that you have a requirement that to be a Mentee you must be a Mentor in the program. For example, the 49er would Mentor the 0-5 player, the 99er would Mentor the 49er, the 199er would Mentor the 99er and so on. This matching technique avoids the problem of too few Mentors. You should establish the minimum number of masterpoints required that separate the Mentor and Mentee, such as 100 points.
- Recommend a minimum number of times the partnership should try to play during the month (e.g., require the pair to play at least twice a month).
- Provide recognition for the Mentor and Mentee at the end of the program.
- Require participating partnerships to be approved by the Mentoring Chair or Committee.
- Require membership to the club and/or ACBL for participation in the Bridge Mentoring Program.
- Provide special games throughout the program which include stratification by expertise. For example, the stratification can be:
 - A = Two Life Masters
 - B = One Life Master and one Non-Life Master
 - C = Two Non-Life Masters under 200, 100 or 50 masterpoints.

The Laws of Mentoring

The *Laws of Mentoring* have been defined by Floyd Wickman and Terri Sjodin in their book, *Mentoring*. These laws provide guidance in dealing with the ups and downs that are commonly experienced in any mentoring relationship. The *Laws of Mentoring* are listed here to provide a clear insight into all aspects of mentoring.

- **THE LAW OF POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT.**
Create a positive environment where potential and motivation are released and options discussed.
- **THE LAW OF DEVELOPING CHARACTER.**
Nurture a positive character by helping to develop not just talent, but a wealth of mental and ethical traits.
- **THE LAW OF INDEPENDENCE.**
Promote autonomy; make the protégé independent, not dependent on you.
- **THE LAW OF LIMITED RESPONSIBILITY.**
Be responsible to them, not for them.
- **THE LAW OF SHARED MISTAKES.**
Share your failures as well as your successes.
- **THE LAW OF INSPECTION.**
Monitor, review and discuss potential actions. Do not just expect performance without inspection.
- **THE LAW OF SMALL SUCCESSES.**
Use a stepping-stone process to build on accomplishments and achieve great success.
- **THE LAW OF DIRECTION.**
It is important to teach by giving options as well as direction.
- **THE LAW OF RISK.**
A Mentor should be aware that a Mentee's failure could reflect back on him. A Mentee should realize that a Mentor's advice will not always work.
- **THE LAW OF COMMUNICATION.**
The Mentor and Mentee must balance listening with delivering information.
- **THE LAW OF FUN.**
Make mentoring a wonderful experience – laugh, smile and enjoy the process!

SAMPLE PROGRAMS:

HOUSTON: Unit 174 called their mentor program, “Adopt a Novice Program.” It is a single-level program (Life Masters mentoring Non-Life Masters) which will show you all of the pieces of the puzzle the unit found necessary to initiate their program. (See www.acbl.org, Resources for Units and Districts for a complete printout of the program.)

LOS ANGELES: The Barrington Bridge Club in Los Angeles put together an interesting program. It was also single-level (Life Masters mentoring under 100 mp players), but they used handicapping to make the game as fair as possible. (See www.acbl.org, Resources for Units and Districts for a complete printout of the program.)

CINCINNATI: Below you will find a short dialog that explains how Unit 124 started their mentoring program and their “Expert Tip Sheet” on the next page. More information to absorb as you create your program...

- Interested players, who are members, sign up to be Mentors.
- Letters are sent to players outside of the club to invite them to participate.
- The Mentor Committee does the pairing. (Players with 200 to 300 points can elect to be either a Mentor or a Mentee).
- Every participant receives a letter of welcome with the name of his/her Mentor or Mentee and the details of the program.
- Mentors also receive a copy of the “Mentor Guidelines” and the “Expert Tip Sheet.”
- Mentees receive the “Expert Tip Sheet.”
- The program runs for five months.
- Partnerships are encouraged to play together two or three times a month culminating with a potluck dinner (the Mentees bring the food) and a bridge game.

The unit told us that this program reminded some of the old-timers what it was like to be a beginner, and that the games at the local club have become much more pleasant. The Mentors have really enjoyed the program; the Mentees have been made to feel both comfortable and welcome. In addition, the club has added many new members due to the success of this program.

Nancy Sachs created the “Expert Tip Sheet” which can be found on the next page. This sheet outlines the basic guidelines that are sent to everyone who participates in the program.

EXPERT TIP SHEET

1. Treat your partner like royalty. Praise partner. It increases confidence. A confident, happy partner always plays better. Be understanding; we all make mistakes. When you make yours, you will want reassurance, not criticism.
2. Unnecessary conversation is distracting (to you, too – think about what is happening at the table). It is irritating to see your partner looking around the room, bored with the game, and talking about other things.
3. Unpleasant behavior of any kind has no place at the bridge table. Dirty looks, criticism, etc., make everyone feel uncomfortable.
4. Bridge is a partnership game; leave your ego out of it. No one enjoys playing with a “hand hog.”
5. Complaining about “bad cards” is useless. Everyone has them at times; it evens out. Sore losers and complainers are not invited back.
6. Do not give lessons at the table. If you should be asked, keep the answers short. Postmortems should be held after the session, not after each board.
7. As dummy, do not put your trumps on the table until the opening lead has been made. To do so gives the defense a real advantage; it tells the opening leader whether or not to lead a trump.
8. When you become the dummy, do not ask your partner “to pass his hand across the table” for you to see. It may make partner nervous, delays the game, and also forfeits your dummy rights.
9. If you are declaring a hopeless contract, look confident. Maybe your opponents will make a mistake. Never give up!
10. Pay attention, watch, listen and learn. When you are dummy (as well as when you play), practice counting how many cards have been played in every suit. Start with the trump suit or a long suit in notrump. “Read” your opponents; do they usually underbid? Overbid? Play slowly when they have a certain kind of problem? Knowing your opponents can be a great advantage.
11. Although it is okay to “read” your opponents, it is not okay to read your partner’s hesitations or listen for voice inflections. (This is not allowed by the bridge laws.) Bidding and playing “in tempo” without “telling hesitation” will make you an ethical and, therefore, popular player.
12. When you are dummy, you are still in the game. It is dummy’s responsibility to make sure that partner follows suit. If partner shows out, you may ask, “No hearts, partner?” Be sure partner plays the cards from the correct hand. Dummy may point out, “You are in the dummy, partner,” if declarer attempts to lead from his hand when the lead is in dummy. Dummy’s conversation during the play of the hand is limited to those two comments.

ON THE INTERNET AT www.acbl.org

The all new ACBL web site is more user-friendly and loaded with a lot of new information. The Education Department has posted hundreds of pages of information – much of which you will find helpful in your position as a Bridge Mentoring Program Chair for your unit.

You will want to download the Mentoring Program Brochures to pass out at your local clubs and tournaments.

You will also find the Unit 174 Adopt a Novice Program booklet and guidelines as well as the Barrington Bridge Club program materials online. (See www.acbl.org, Resources for Units and Districts.) Take a look at this material for ideas you may want to consider when creating your own Bridge Mentoring Program.

Take a trip to the ACBL web site and enjoy! If you don't find something you are looking for, let us know. We are interested in building the site to suit you.

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