

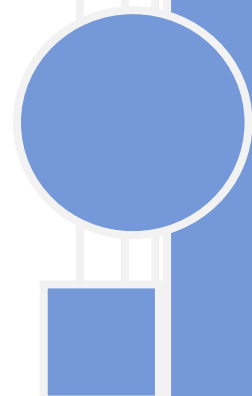


Australian Bridge Federation Inc  
[www.abf.com](http://www.abf.com)

# NEW MEMBER'S INFORMATION KIT

*Bridge - the world's most popular mind sport*

Whether you play bridge locally, online or at tournaments, the Australian Bridge Federation makes bridge more fun and rewarding. As a member, you'll have access to classes taught by skilled teachers at clubs, on line and at our major tournaments. As you continue to learn and excel, we'll help you to track your climb up the rankings via our masterpoints system - the ultimate reward for the serious bridge player! Have fun and happy 'bridging'!



# WELCOME TO THE ABF

On behalf of the Australian Bridge Federation (ABF) I would like to personally welcome you as a valued member of our organisation.

This New Member's Information Kit is intended to make it as easy as possible for you to understand your sport.

I would encourage you to regularly visit the ABF home page at [www.abf.com.au](http://www.abf.com.au) so as to keep up to date on what is happening, to view membership benefits and to access general information about your sport. The ABF Newsletter, which is published on-line bi-monthly, can be viewed at <http://www.abf.com.au/newsletter/>. This is also distributed to our clubs for the benefit of our members.

Your affiliation fee will allow the ABF to provide you and the rest of the Australian bridge community with strong and effective representation and leadership.

Once again, welcome to the ABF. I hope you continue to enjoy your sport for a long time to come and that I will see you soon at one of our Regional or National competitions.

**KEITH McDONALD**  
**PRESIDENT**  
**AUSTRALIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION INC**



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## 1. ABOUT BRIDGE

### 1.1 A brief history

The origin of playing cards was in China, where paper was invented, and dates back to around the year 1120. Originally, cards were used for fortune telling and gambling.

Bridge traces its origins to the British game of whist (*a call for silence*), first played in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The game was popular by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until 1742 that the first book devoted to whist appeared.

In 1886, a pamphlet was published in England on Russian whist or *biritch*, which may or may not be the origin of 'bridge'. Alternatively, it may be named for the *Galata Bridge* in Istanbul, which British soldiers crossed during the *Crimean War* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to reach a coffeehouse where they played cards.

Whilst whist may seem crude in comparison to today's bridge game, its popularity spread to other parts of the world, most notable the Middle East. In Turkey, it is believed that whist evolved into one of the first forms of bridge in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The calls 'double' and 'redouble' were added to double and even quadruple any betting stakes, and the concept of a declarer opposite an exposed dummy also emerged at this time.

By the turn of the century, the game evolved into *plafond* ('*ceiling*') in France and auction bridge elsewhere in the world. *Plafond* was an offshoot that required each partnership to state the number of tricks they were going to take, while auction bridge introduced the element of bidding to determine which suit, if any, would be trumps.

The game that we know today was derived from auction bridge and *plafond*.

Bridge replaced whist as England's most popular card game and was first played in London at the Portland Club in 1894. The rules gradually changed and, in 1904, the game had developed into auction bridge.

In 1925 the game that we know today was invented by American Harold S Vanderbilt, who had some invaluable idle time on a steamship cruise. Vanderbilt's brainchild incorporated a number of new features, most notably a sophisticated scoring table and varying modes of vulnerability.

## 1.2 Today's bridge

The world's most challenging mental sport, bridge is a game of skill, communication and infinite possibilities. It's part science, part math, part logic, part reason and embodies cooperation, problem-solving and has even been linked to higher test scores among children. It is an easy game to learn, a hard game to master and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy it.

Millions of people worldwide play at home, in clubs or on-line. Many advance to tournament or 'duplicate' bridge to enjoy its social and competitive aspects.

Bridge is a partnership game using a standard deck of 52 cards dealt equally among four players. These players are positioned at North, South, East or West. The players bid in a coded language or system (*eg Standard American, Acol, Precision etc*) to describe their hands to their partners and then play to make their contract. Generally, one suit is determined as "trumps," leading to the expression, "Play your trump card." Duplicate contract bridge, in which each competitor or team plays identical hands under similar conditions, is the main form of competitive bridge.

The medical profession is only now coming to realize that, as people are tending to live longer, remaining mentally fit may be as important as maintaining levels of physical fitness. More and more often chess, bridge, backgammon and crossword puzzles are being cited as excellent activities for keeping the brain exercised and stalling the onset of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

Bridge provides an excellent mechanism to improve a player's:

- ✓ logical thinking skills
- ✓ mathematical ability
- ✓ memory
- ✓ teamwork
- ✓ social skills
- ✓ concentration
- ✓ critical thinking ability
- ✓ communication skills
- ✓ problem-solving ability; and
- ✓ inferential reasoning.

Well known bridge devotees include Winston Churchill, Dwight Eisenhower, Mahatma Ghandi, Deng Xiao Ping, Agatha Christie, Oprah Winfrey, Woody Allen, Omar Sharif, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and Martina Navratilova.

Bridge is one of the few games played today by people of all ages and nationalities.

## **2. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

### **2.1 World Bridge Federation**

The World Bridge Federation (WBF) was formed in August 1958 by delegates from Europe, the USA and South America. It is incorporated under the laws of Switzerland as a 'non-profit' organization: its headquarters

being at *Maison du Sport International*, in Lausanne. A new set of by-laws was adopted in August 2000.

The WBF has shown strong and steady growth and its membership now comprises 130 National Bridge Organisations (NBOs) with about 700,000 affiliated members who participate actively in competitive bridge events - locally, nationally and internationally. Most of the NBOs belong to one of the eight geographical zones, each of which has its own zonal organization.

These eight zones are:

1. Europe
2. North America
3. South America
4. Asia
5. Central America
6. Pacific Asia
7. South Pacific; and
8. Africa.

Australia is in Zone 7, the South Pacific. These eight zones are then broken down into member countries, and Zone 7 is made up as follows:

1. Australia
2. French Polynesia
3. New Caledonia; and
4. New Zealand.

Each National Bridge Organisation agrees to fulfill certain requirements, such as opening its ranks to all its citizens and residents and upholding a standard of ethics acceptable to the WBF.

The WBF has a Congress to which each NBO is entitled to send one delegate. The Congress meets every second year, at Team Olympiads and at World Championships.

The WBF is administered by an Executive Council which is assisted by the various committees and consultants it appoints.

Activities of the World Bridge Federation include to:

- promote, foster and promulgate the game of bridge throughout the world
- provide the central organisation for coordinating necessary revisions to the laws
- conduct Championships on a worldwide basis
- circulate its own official medium, World Bridge News, which keeps officials and press throughout the world informed of WBF activities
- promote a Master Points scheme for recognizing achievement in World and Zonal contests; and
- maintain the necessary central records.

## **2.2 Australian Bridge Federation**

The first organized bridge associations were formed in NSW and Victoria in the early 1930s. During that time a number of other States also formed associations. To coordinate the sport nationally, the States formed The Australian Bridge Council. This organization changed its name to the Australian Bridge Federation (ABF) in the 1960s.

The purpose of the ABF is to:

- promote the game of bridge in Australia and Internationally
- provide the services required by our 34,328 members at approximately 340 affiliated clubs around Australia (not including our 255 registered youth players)
- represent Australia in the World Bridge Federation
- facilitate the enjoyment of bridge
- make sufficient profit to remain financially viable
- meet the competing needs of our stakeholders that include:
  - ✓ constituent State associations
  - ✓ members



- ✓ affiliated bridge clubs
- ✓ directors and the Australian Bridge Directors' Association
- ✓ teachers
- ✓ conveners
- ✓ sub contractors (eg the Masterpoints centre)
- ✓ suppliers
- ✓ journalists and commentators
- ✓ the bridge playing population including the 'entrepreneurial' clubs and members; and
- ✓ the international bridge community (WBF, Zones and individual member countries).

The annual ABF affiliation fee, which is normally collected as part of your club membership fee, enables us to:

- develop the policies and procedures for managing bridge in Australia
- run major events during the year including the Summer Festival of Bridge in Canberra, the Grand National Open Teams (GNOT), the Grand National Pairs (GNP) and many others
- ensure some events provide 'qualifying points' which allow players to qualify for a playoff event in April that determines which teams shall represent Australia at international world championships
- send teams to compete in world championship events like the Bermuda Bowl and the Venice Cup, which are held throughout the world
- represent Australia at meetings of Zone 7 and Zone 6 of the WBF, which consists of countries like New Zealand, French Polynesia, Cook Islands, Fiji and New Caledonia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Macau, the Pilippines, Singapore and Thailand; and
- provide a free bi-monthly ABF Newsletter to inform members about the latest in the bridge world, interesting hands, events and information from our valued sponsors.

## 2.3 State/Territory Associations

Each Australian State and Territory has a body whose responsibilities include :

- representing their State/Territory interests within the ABF
- promoting and fostering interest in bridge in their region
- developing and advertising an event calendar for their region - *in partnership with their clubs*
- supporting affiliated clubs (*including maintaining and displaying a club directory on their web home page*)
- supporting and encouraging establishment of new clubs
- education and training for players and directors
- administration of State and selection events
- providing results for Regional events; and
- providing member information.

Membership in our Regions, as at January 2012, is as follows:

State and Territory bodies	Approx no of members
NSW Bridge Association	13,856
Queensland Bridge Association	7,599
Victorian Bridge Association	5,104
Bridge Association of Western Australia	4,280
South Australian Bridge Federation	1,679
Bridge Federation of the ACT	835
Tasmanian Bridge Association	796
Northern Territory Bridge Association	179
<b>National Total:</b>	<b>34,328</b>

In addition to this the ABF has 255 registered youth players, bringing the total to 34,583.

## 2.4 Local bridge clubs

There are currently approximately 350 ABF affiliated bridge clubs in Australia. Whilst some of these clubs are privately owned and operated, the majority are managed and run by volunteers.

Each of these clubs conducts a number of sessions of bridge each week and information about club locations and session times can be found on your Club or State/Territory web site.

These clubs rely on active club members to contribute to the smooth functioning of their club, as well as making use of the facilities. We encourage you to volunteer your talents and skills to make your club a better place for every member. Please don't sit back and let everyone else do the work. Everyone else is a busy person too. Feel encouraged to join in! Help! Contribute!

## 3. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

When you make a decision to learn bridge, be prepared to enter a fascinating world full of all sorts of people, of all ages, with different card playing experiences, and from all walks of life. Bridge is the great leveller - it crosses all boundaries - and when you start beginner's lessons, you will sometimes feel out of your depth. Don't worry - this is normal. Whenever we learn something new, the brain travels along pathways it hasn't been to before, and there is often some anxiety until the learning becomes familiar.

You will really need some lessons, and these are available at bridge clubs, sometimes at other social clubs such as golf clubs, and on the internet. Do some research to find the best teachers and lessons. It will make your new learning a whole lot easier if bridge is explained clearly to you. Using the best materials will help too. If you'd like to know about the best books and teachers, contact the ABF National Teaching Coordinator.

Between four and eight beginner's lessons should get you started. You will feel quite tired at the end of each lesson, because you're expending a lot of mental energy. Don't expect too much of yourself at first, and play as many

bridge hands as you can between lessons. There is NO substitute for actually playing, and in class you should be taken over each hand after you've played it, with the teacher discussing the way it could be played.

Phew..... finally you finish your beginner's course.....what now? We don't tell you that a bridge course is not actually just 6 lessons, but really you've started on a path for a lifetime that will give you pleasure provided you keep at it. NOW is the time to put all your hard learned facts together and practice. Most clubs offer Help with Play or supervised sessions, where you are able to play hands and ask for help when needed. You will probably stay in these for a few months, and really you should play more than once a week. DON'T let experienced players confuse you if they start telling you too much. You only need what you've learned in beginner's lessons at this stage, and you need to consolidate it.

Slowly but surely the fog will lift, and although sometimes you don't feel you're getting anywhere, you really are. Bridge is a big journey, to be taken in small steps. There will be people at the bridge club to help you along the way, but you and your bridge partner can work together a lot too. Understanding your partner at the bridge table (your best friend during the game) is the key to success.

There are many resources available to help you improve - in bridge club libraries and on the internet, as well as Improvers and Intermediate lessons offered at most clubs. Some people will become addicted to the game and want to play every day, and take as many lessons as possible. Others will be happy to play socially with friends after dinner, and leave it at that.

As you develop and become more confident at the bridge table, you'll need the best system to help you win. There are recommended "conventions" to play for all levels of player, and these have posted on the ABF web site, in the Teachers Section. But here's a warning: don't take extra theory on board until you and your partner feel ready. There's a lot you can do to improve your card play and defence as well as adding to you system. Sometimes people are so worn out at the end of the bidding of a hand (after

using too many complicated conventions), that they don't have enough energy for the card play, when they must make their contract, or defeat the other side's .

The internet is growing as a place to access any information you need about bridge - there are lessons via videos, from beginner's to really advanced, and any amount of literature about bidding and play, as well as sites to play live against people from all over the world. Practicing on the internet is a good way to reinforce learning from lessons.

Just do it - you'll never regret your decision to learn and play bridge. You'll always be learning.

Check out the new ABF web site for:

Resources Available: Lessons, videos, books, teachers

Bridge Clubs: Locations, and lesson times.

## 4. ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE

Bridge enjoys immense popularity partly because of the high standards of ethics and etiquette which are observed by the players who are expected to conduct themselves in a highly civilised manner. Unfortunately, violations of proper etiquette do occur, either through ignorance or inadvertence.

The ABF is committed to providing its members with a pleasant, harmonious environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Most of our affiliated clubs have developed their own *code of conduct* and expect compliance from their members.

Bridge is an extremely ethical game. All good players strive to ensure that their bridge ethics are impeccable and no more serious charge, other than outright cheating, can be made than to accuse a player of bad ethics. Unlike poker in which all sorts of mannerisms, misleading statements and bluff tactics are part and parcel of the game, bridge is played with a 'pokerface'! Beginners are, of course, excused for their lapses and in social games nobody minds very much, but in serious competition your bridge demeanour must be beyond reproach.

Experienced players should go out of their way to make novice players feel at ease, so that they see bridge as a pleasant recreation, not a battleground.

#### 4.1 What does all this mean for you?

- If you encounter improper behaviour at the table, you should alert the session/competition director so that appropriate action can be taken.
- A player is not allowed to touch a card held by another player. Even when the game is over, it is illegal to touch the cards of another player.
- After the play of a hand is over, do not take an opponent's cards and look at them without asking permission.
- During the session, conserve your energies to do battle at the next table. It is extremely poor taste (and a breach of etiquette) to abuse or criticise either your partner or an opponent.
- As a kibitzer (*onlooker*) try to watch only one hand and above all, make no facial expressions during a hand. Do not comment or talk during or between hands. If the players want the benefit of your views, they will ask for them.
- When you are dummy, it is poor form to look at either opponent's hand or at declarer's. If you do, you lose your rights as dummy. Do not stand behind declarer to see how you would play. In tournament bridge, do not discuss the previous hand with your partner if another hand is still to be played.
- Never let a harsh word pass your lips and you will be a sought-after rather than a shunned partner. Prefer to say too little than too much. If partner has bid or played the hand like an idiot, say '*bad luck*' and leave it at that. Do not harp on past errors.
- Never try to teach anyone at the table.

- Conversations at the table during a game are generally unwelcome. Post-mortems after each hand, if limited, can be useful as long as they are constructive. The best way to develop your game with your partner is to keep a hand record and go over 'problems' with your partner after the session. This is not only a good thing in that it prevents 'blaming partner' at the table (*and thus potentially humiliating them publicly*), but it improves your communications in bidding.
- When attending any club session ensure that you arrive at least 15 - 20 minutes before start of play. This will enable the director to determine the most appropriate 'movement' based on the number of players at the session. Late arrivals, if allowed to stay, will cause a delay in the start of play.
- Similarly, strive to arrive in plenty of time for competitions and major events. This is a basic and extremely necessary courtesy for the smooth running of our events.

#### **4.2 Your appeal rights**

The rules of bridge are outlined in 'Laws of Duplicate Bridge - 2007'. The Director at each session controls the game and is responsible for administering the rules as and when required. This includes player behaviour.

As a player, if you feel that something has happened at your table and you are not sure what to do, please call the Director who will look at what has happened and make a decision for you. Infractions or errors made at a bridge table cannot be corrected by the players themselves. Call the Director!

### **5. YOUR BRIDGE 'RANKING'**

In many sports individuals and teams are given rankings, generally by the sport's governing body. Golfers are ranked using a handicap system, snooker players are ranked using the Snooker world rankings and each member country of the Olympic Games is ranked based upon gold, silver and bronze medal counts.

Like other sports bridge has a ranking system to provide an indicator of an individual's level of skill and achievement. In most countries around the world, Masterpoints are used but the scheme is different in each country. Our Masterpoints system provides ABF members with a 'ranking' from Graduate Master (*2 masterpoints*) to Diamond Grand Master (*15,000 masterpoints*).

Whilst ranking systems can be flawed the ABF's Masterpoints system provides the best available indicator for an individual's level of play. The system is designed to encourage continuous enquiry, understanding and expertise to make our members aware that they are part of a learning community - *bridge is after all exercise for the brain.*

Masterpoints come in three colours.

1. Club session wins will gain **green** masterpoints (*how many depends on the size of the field*).
2. Placing in competitions and congresses run by your club and other clubs will gain **red** masterpoints. (*Each club is allocated a certain number of red point sessions per year.*)
3. Major congresses and club events such as the GNOT or GNP will attract **gold** points.

Information about the number of masterpoints you will need to work your way up the rankings, together with the colour/s required, is provided on the back of your ABF Registration Card and the "ABF Rankings Certificates".

Currently, only a small proportion of regular club players compete in bridge congresses, which is where you start to accrue red and gold points. This is a shame because these events provide members with a huge opportunity to build on their ranking whilst at the same time deriving a lot of enjoyment from their sport.



Congress bridge is different (*and many would say better*) than normal club bridge because:

- ✓ attendees are drawn from all over and the field tends to be made up of stronger players. This is good for stronger players, but it's also excellent for improving players.
- ✓ if you're avoiding congresses for fear of being '*beaten up*' by stronger players, don't worry. Almost all congresses are run on the 'Swiss draw' principle, which means that except for the first round, you only meet opponents who are doing as well as you are. Less experienced players will, in the main, meet players of a similar standard though if you do particularly well, you will be tested with your next draw but of course if you're doing badly, you should end up with an easier draw!
- ✓ many congresses are run as teams events. This means that two pairs enter together as a team of four (*they don't need to have played as a team before, but are usually of a similar standard*). For each match (*usually 8 boards*), your team is drawn to play another team. The team mates of the pair you are playing are at the other table playing your team mates, but your team mates sit in the opposite direction to you, so that they hold the cards that your opponents at your table hold. Scoring is done solely on how your table result compares to their table result - what happens at all the other tables is irrelevant. This is a very different method of scoring from what is used at regular Club sessions, and many people believe this makes for much more enjoyable bridge. But don't worry if you don't understand how to score this way - the Bridgemates (hand-held scoring aids) and scoring program work everything out for you.
- ✓ pairs congresses are either Matchpoint or Butler scored. Matchpoint scoring is the method used at club sessions, but Butler is more like teams scoring, and many people find this an enjoyable alternative to club sessions.

- ✓ Masterpoints awarded at congresses are either red or gold, and are awarded at a higher rate than normal green point club sessions. The way points are commonly awarded at congresses means that it's unusual for any player to walk away empty-handed, so your Master rank promotion gets just a little bit closer with every congress you play in.
- ✓ they are run by non-playing, qualified directors who will have the time to ensure issues at the table are properly dealt with, and that justice is done. This is not always possible at club sessions when playing directors need to get back to their table.
- ✓ the field is usually divided into categories for prize purposes so that lesser players aren't competing with the strong players for minor prizes.
- ✓ in the same way that Congresses are different from normal club sessions, major gold point congresses are different again. These are very professionally run events, and draw top players from Australia and overseas. It is quite something to sit in a room with sometimes over a thousand other players all focusing on the play of their hands - you could hear a pin drop!
- ✓ it provides lots of social interaction with members from other clubs and is fun! Congresses may also provide you with an opportunity to travel to new places and make new friends.

If, as a new player, you are still a bit uncertain about all this, dip your toe in the water at one of the Novice or Graded events. These are held in your club, Regionally and Nationally. Many new players find this more enjoyable than open events but it doesn't take long to want to move on.

To find out about upcoming novice or graded congresses, look up your State or Territory home page under 'events'. Alternatively, view the 'events' page on the ABF web site for information.

If you would like to try competing in a congress but feel a bit apprehensive about the process, approach an experienced player in your club (*who is attending the relevant congress*) and ask if they would 'mentor' you through the process once you arrive.

Once you have a taste of competitive bridge playing, you will quickly gain confidence in the competition processes and move quickly through your ABF rankings.

Approximately 70% of ABF members have between 0 - 100 masterpoints (*25% have between 0-5 masterpoints*). Novice players are representative of the vast majority of our members and we strongly encourage you to participate in competitions to gain full enjoyment and benefits from your sport.

If you want more information you will find all you are looking for, including an on-line and downloadable Masterpoint Manual on the Masterpoint Centre web site: [www.abfmasterpoints.com.au](http://www.abfmasterpoints.com.au) .