

Bringing New Players to the Table A Community Responsibility

Bridge is at an exciting crossroad. Yes, ACBL membership is aging, and yes, the stereotype of bridge as “an old person’s game” still lingers. But the truth is: bridge is quietly becoming cool again. Both young adults and older adults with more free time are discovering a game that challenges the mind, builds community, and offers a welcome break from screens. Bridge checks every box. Since the pandemic, bridge clubs across the country have been working hard to rebuild and grow their in-person games. Online platforms make it easy for experienced players to stay home in their slippers, but they can’t replace the energy of a real table, real cards, and real people. Our challenge now is bringing in fresh faces — people who don’t yet know how much they’ll love this game. And let’s be honest: people are busy. Finding someone with free time is tough, and convincing them to spend that free time learning a new game is even more challenging. So, what actually draws people in? What’s the irresistible hook? How does bridge win people over?

♣Bridge is the best card game on the planet.

♣Bridge is endlessly challenging. You can never “finish” learning it.

♣Bridge improves memory, keeps our brains sharp, and keeps curiosity alive.

♣Bridge is competitive and collaborative .

♣Bridge is screen-free social time with a community full of interesting people.

♣Bridge is fun - and yes, the food and snacks help too. Those of us that play already know these things.

These are the reasons why we love the game. So how do we bring new players in? What’s working in Denver: Here in Denver, we’ve made it our mission to open the doors wide for brand-new players with a variety of lessons, games and programs designed specifically for them.

♣Lessons: Denver and surrounding areas are very fortunate to have many excellent bridge teachers in for all levels. There are many opportunities for one-on-one instructions well as group lesson series offered at the local clubs on a regular basis for beginners, intermediate and advanced concepts.

♣FREE teaching and practice games: Clubs are offering new players opportunities to come and play and receive help when needed in a low stress environment at no cost. No partner’s required.

♣Limited games: Clubs have expanded their game schedules to include more limited games designed specifically for new players. Many of these games include short topical lessons and Q&A sessions where players can bring questions or tricky hands to discuss.

♣Team training games: New players are introduced to team play, strategy and scoring.

♣Mentor programs: Newer players can partner with more experienced players to gain guidance, confidence and support. This program is offered through Unit 361.

♣PRO/AM game: Denver hosts one of the largest PRO/AM games in the country each year at the Denver Rocky Mountain Regional. New players get a rare opportunity to play with an experienced player – an unforgettable experience. We’ve learned that there is no real secret, but bringing people in gradually, support them at every step in their bridge journey, and never letting the experience feel overwhelming or intimidating works best. And yes — have food and throw great parties helps too. Community matters.

How YOU Can Help? Growing bridge isn’t just the club’s or the teacher’s job. It’s the responsibility of the entire bridge community. Think of this as the snowball effect: you tell one person, they tell another, and suddenly the room is full of new faces who might never have found us otherwise. It just takes one person to start - and that person can be you. Every bridge player, especially experienced players, can make a meaningful impact to the game. When a new player sits at your table, make them feel welcome. Introduce yourself. Encourage them. Help them feel that we are happy and grateful they are there. Help them to feel like they belong. These small moments of kindness can be the difference between someone trying bridge once... and someone becoming a lifelong player.