

## Mentor-Mentee Games at NW Tucson Bridge Club

*The NW Tucson Bridge Club Mentor-Mentee games are designed to provide helpful guidance to newer players in a low-stress atmosphere. Mentored players benefit greatly by participating and are more likely to stay with the game as they are coached by their mentors. The club is grateful to the mentors who willingly come month after month to make this game the success that it is. Here are some tips and ideas that may improve the experience at the game for both the mentee and the mentor.*

### Mentor Tips

- **Mentor role:** Emphasize encouragement over critique, tailoring your advice to your mentee's skill level and goals. Be sure to model respectful table behavior and etiquette in your conversation and your play.
- **Initial contact and meeting:** Ideally, find out the conventions your mentee plays by email or telephone in advance of the first game. Then meet for at least 30 minutes beforehand to review conventions as well as to learn about your mentee's goals and bridge background.

### Giving feedback

- **Eliciting questions** before giving a critique is a good strategy to make sure the message is welcome and remembered.
- **Timing:** Avoid giving feedback after every board, which can overwhelm a mentee, and instead offer comments between rounds - as you would in a regular partnership.
- **Prioritize teaching points:** There isn't time between boards to give all the advice you'd like to offer, and doing so would likely lead to information overload. Learners are most likely to remember and benefit from just 1-2 ideas at a time. Comments may focus on bidding, play of the hand, and defense.
- **Remember positive reinforcement:** Try to begin your remarks with something done well. Students can learn a great deal by being told what strategies to continue! A positive comment increases confidence, and confident partners play better.
- **Be specific:** When focusing on areas for improvement, be clear about what could be done differently. For example, "That was a bad lead" or "Never lead an unprotected ace" would not be as helpful as describing what leads might have been more effective (and ideally, why).
- **Be understanding:** We all make mistakes. When mentees are aware of their mistakes, reassurance is likely to be more helpful than criticism.
- **Followup:** If your mentee would like to review the boards in greater detail, be willing to stay for an extra 15 minutes after the game or to talk by phone at a later date.

### Mentee Tips

- **Mentee role:** Be gracious and respectful of mentors, who are donating their time. Be clear with your mentor about your goals. Have questions ready and try to incorporate suggestions where possible.

- **Initial contact and meeting:** Once you have been assigned a mentor, make the initial contact. Be prepared to share the conventions you use with your mentor and be available for a meeting at least 30 minutes before the first game.

### **Responding to feedback**

- **Accept constructive comments without defensiveness:** Ask for clarity if needed, or press for additional examples if you are confused, but do not argue. (Learning to be less sensitive is great practice for playing in more challenging games or tournaments!)
- **Bring a notebook:** Jot down ideas learned between sessions so that you can go over these at a later date or continue the conversation after the game.
- When asking questions, be specific. Keep a hand record so that you can ask about specific boards after the game.
- **Followup:** If you'd like to review the boards after the game, be respectful of your mentor's time, prioritizing your questions and being organized for the meeting.