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**WE LOVE  
THE MAJORS!**

**TEACHER'S  
MANUAL**

AN HONORS eBook FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

# **We Love the Majors!**

## ***Teacher Manual***

*Mary Ann Dufresne and Marion Ellingsen*

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# Introduction

Teaching bridge is a tough job! Thanks for doing it. We think that *We Love the Majors* will get you and your students off to a good start.

This Teacher Manual consists of six lesson plans for a basic six-week beginner course. If you are an experienced teacher you know that students can't master the basics in six weeks, eight weeks or even ten or twelve weeks. It's going to take a year or two of hard work, frequent play and lots of help from teachers and fellow players. But unfortunately, a six-week course is about all beginners can absorb before coming hopelessly confused. It's a tough game and you'll have to present it in bite-size, digestible chunks. After six weeks, they need a rest and a chance to play and reinforce their lessons before moving on.

The six lessons we recommend for the beginner course correspond to the first seven chapters of the student text. They cover the guidelines for bidding and play when there is no interference from the opponents.

We follow that with a period of assisted play--one to two months--then a second four-week course--corresponding to the last three chapters of the student book. A second Teacher Manual for these four lessons will be coming soon.

We'll get started with some advice for teachers. Based on our own experience, we've learned a lot about what seems to work for the beginning student. If you'd like to share your own experience with us, please let us know at [whimsey@atlantic.net](mailto:whimsey@atlantic.net).

# Advice for Teachers

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## *Make Each Lesson Plan Your Own*

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Our Lesson Plans are virtual scripts but we wouldn't recommend that you use them in that way. Reading to students from a prepared text is guaranteed to induce boredom, inattention and even sleep. Rather, we suggest you highlight the key ideas you plan to cover and use the text as a set of talking points. Use your own words and intersperse prepared material with examples and ideas of your own.

You may also wish to modify the actual content of certain lessons. For example, we frankly try to groom students to play duplicate-style bridge. Accordingly, we introduce bidding boxes and duplicate score cards fairly early in the course. If you are teaching social bridge players, you will obviously make different choices.

As another example, we've chosen to include Stayman and Jacoby transfers. Our reasoning is that we don't like to teach anything that we will have to "unlearn" later. Whatever we teach, it will be difficult and challenging for students. They will spend time and effort to learn it. We'd rather see that effort expended on guidelines that will serve them well as they advance in bridge. We think everyone should learn Stayman but, if your students are primarily interested in social bridge, you might decide against Jacoby transfers.

It's perfectly appropriate to modify the course materials to suit your specific students and their level of interest and experience. If so, we suggest that you provide student handouts summarizing the guidelines to be substituted for the information in the text.

# Advice for Teachers

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## *Use As Many Different Teaching Techniques As Possible*

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Students learn in many ways. Our Lesson Plans accommodate as many of those needs as possible.

***Most students need to see information to remember it.*** Accordingly, our lessons are very visual. In addition to the student reading:

- We recommend a flip chart to highlight and summarize the most important information as we go. Suggested flip chart pages are included in the Lesson Plans, in the text boxes to the right of the talking points.
- We also recommend posters to summarize information to be repeated and reinforced throughout the course. The best example is our poster on classifying hands as Minimum, Invitational or Strong. Suggested poster content is also included in the Lesson Plans.

Our posters are hand-written with marker pens on foam board or poster board. Displaying them is often logistically challenging because our “classroom” is a corner of the local bridge club with limited wall space. Often posters are propped up on tables and counter tops. We think the effort is worth it because we constantly refer to them throughout the lessons.

***Some students need to hear information to remember it.*** Accordingly, even when you are using lots of visual assists, don’t forget to say the information aloud. And repetition is just fine.

***Everyone profits from examples.*** Intersperse lecture information with as many examples as possible.

***The very best bridge examples involve cards on the table.*** Almost all the key ideas presented in our course are illustrated with sample hands on the table. However you may choose to modify the Lesson Plans, substitute alternative samples of your own. Real life examples are much more useful than anything else students may see, hear or read.

There is no question that assembling sample hands consumes valuable time during the lessons. To speed up the process:

- We suggest you place a deck of cards at each table. Tell students to give one student all the spades, another all the hearts, etc. Assemble a sample hand by calling out the cards to be placed on the table for each suit. When you’re done with that example, tell students to return all the spades to one student, all the



## Advice For Teachers

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hearts to another, etc. Things will move slowly during the first lesson but will move quickly once students learn the routine.

- Our Lesson Plans use “switch-out” examples. From a given example currently on the table, quickly assemble a second example by simply switching out a few cards. For example, you can quickly transform a Minimum hand into an Invitational hand with a switch-out--adding an honor card and taking away a small spot card.

***Everyone profits from practice.*** Every lesson includes Practice Hands for students to play and provides homework that includes another four hands for students to study.

Assembling Practice Hands is another time-consumer. To expedite, we’ve provided Hand Records--contained in the Appendix to this Manual. Before each lesson, place Hand Records for that day face down at each table. When it’s time to play a hand, tell students to turn over the Hand Record. Again, let one student hold all the spades, another all the hearts, etc. Each player will pull the cards he needs for his own hand from the suit he is holding. He then passes the suit he is holding to the player on his right and receives another suit from the player on his left. Rotating the various suits around the table, each player pulls his own cards for that particular hand. Expect chaos at the first lesson but, as the lessons progress, students will assemble hands quickly.

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### ***Keep It Active***

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The typical bridge student hasn’t been to school in a long time. Sustained attention and concentration no longer come naturally. Even sitting still for two hours may be a challenge for some. We use various tricks to keep wandering minds attentive and focused.

- Active student participation in assembling Practice Hands and examples.
- Interspersing lecture-type material with play of the hand. They learn a little, play a little, learn a little more, play a little more.
- Our Lesson Plans are peppered with questions and answers (Q & A). Pose a question to students and wait for a response. Most questions are ones students will be able to answer based on what they have learned so far. A few are more challenging, requiring that they extrapolate from what they have learned. In any

# Advice for Teachers

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case, questions are not rhetorical. Their purpose is to keep students alert and thinking even when you are doing most of the talking.

- Provide a break at the mid-point.

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## *Keep It Fun*

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Students came to learn a new game and to have fun. The teacher's job is make sure they get what they came for. We wish there were a formula for that but no such luck. Gradually, students come to see that the game is complex. They'll have to put more into it than they were expecting. Some will enjoy the challenge, others will become discouraged. You'll have to help them through the rough patches.

- Stay focused on successes--not problems and mistakes. Keep reminding them how far they've come.
- Remind them that nobody masters bridge in a basic course. It's a big book; nobody learns it all the first time through. Learn enough to play and have fun; worry about the rest another year.
- Tell them about your own mistakes--the ones that, hopefully, you can laugh at.
- Keep assuring them that, the more they play, the more they'll learn.

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## *Create a Welcoming Environment*

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Few students arrive at the first lesson in a state of comfort and confidence. They wonder what they've gotten into. They wonder whether they'll like the teacher, whether they'll like the other students, whether they'll like the game. Maybe they know that bridge is challenging and think they won't be smart enough to learn it.

Do as much as you possibly can to allay anxieties--especially for the first lesson. At minimum:

# Advice For Teachers

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- Be at the door to welcome students as they arrive.
- If a student arrives alone, try to find time to introduce him to someone who has already arrived.
- Direct them to a name tag table.
- Provide simple refreshments. These needn't be elaborate--just something to demonstrate that you've taken pains to make them welcome. We find that fruit and cheese work fine at any time of day.
- Make your "classroom" as orderly and attractive as possible. We teach at the local bridge club. Clutter tends to accumulate. Refreshment areas tend to get messy. Before each lesson, we do a quick cleanup.

In general, treat students as welcome guests.

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## *Prepare, Prepare, Prepare*

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### Before the Course Begins

- As students enroll, ask for their phone numbers, email addresses and areas of residence. You will use this information to prepare a Class List to be shared with all students. You will encourage them to use the information to set up partnerships and arrange practice sessions. Don't forget to ask students if they object to sharing this personal information with other students.
- Prepare a course schedule, with subjects to be covered at each lesson.
- Prepare student name tags.

### For Each Lesson

**Visuals:** Prepare the flip chart and posters in advance.

**Classroom Set Up:** The following should be the standard set-up procedure.

- Position the easel and posters.
- Set up a name tag table and refreshment area.
- Place Hand Records (face down) and a deck of cards at each table.

# Advice for Teachers

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**Time Management:** Our Lesson Plans suggest the time to be allowed for each segment of the lesson. With some groups, things will go as planned. With other groups, they won't. The early lessons are particularly problematic when working with a group of students who have no experience at all.

We recommend that you decide in advance what you will omit if time presses. Our hands-down preference is to omit the most difficult material. The more difficult the concepts, the less return you get for your time investment. Try not to omit the Practice Hands. Students need that experience and they prefer playing to listening.

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## *Encourage Students to Play Outside the Class*

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Most students find it difficult to transition from the classroom to actual play. They don't feel ready. They're afraid they'll embarrass themselves by making mistakes. They always think others are better prepared than they are. Some are so reluctant to begin actual play that they drift away once the lessons are over.

We find that the longer students defer the transition, the more difficult it becomes. We do everything we possibly can to get them playing outside class almost immediately--right after the third lesson. We orchestrate the outside play by providing Hand Records that are appropriate for their limited learning so far. The idea is to give them a taste of success, allow them to have fun--that's what they came for!--and realize that the other students are struggling, too.

Here are the two methods we've used with success. You'll find that the more students play, the more relaxed they become and the more likely they are to continue with the game.

### **Assisted Play**

Our local club offers a once-weekly tutorial game for players with fewer than 20 master points. The Director--one of your authors--uses the Hand Records from both the student text and this manual, to prepare boards for them. The game is very informal, the other players are their peers, and the Director is available to assist them with both the bidding and the play.

If you're fortunate enough to have a Newcomer game at your club, work with the Director to bring the students into the game. Since he is also committed to making bridge comfortable for beginners, we're fairly sure he'll be willing to help.

# Advice For Teachers

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## **A Sanctioned Newcomer Game**

Arrange for your local club to schedule a sanctioned Newcomer game--for players with 0-20 master points, possibly even for 0-5 or 0-10.. Although tutoring of students during the bidding or play isn't allowed at these sanctioned games, they assure a comfortable field of players for students to play with and against.

## **Student Practice Sessions**

We didn't always have special games to offer our students. The next best strategy is to encourage students to get together and play at home. The Class List you provided makes it easy for students to be in touch with each other. You, of course, will provide the Hand Records. Although their play won't be supervised, they will learn a lot from the experience of actual play. Encourage students to play the Practice Hands, then discuss what they might have done to get a better result.

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## ***Set Reasonable Expectations***

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All bridge teachers want students to love the game and to absorb the information like sponges. Unfortunately, it rarely works out that way. A few students will quit the game after the initial course of lessons; all will be tired; most will be confused to varying extents. As teachers we have to learn that all that is normal. The quality of our lessons has something to do with it--but not everything. It's a challenging game and simply isn't for everyone.

Just as we encourage students to celebrate successes, we have to do that, too. Year after year, class after class, you're introducing more people to this great adventure called bridge. Keep doing it and, one day, you'll look around your local club and see all the faces you first encountered in your classroom. What could be more satisfying than that?

# Lesson Plan One

## Bridge Basics

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### *Objectives*

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Introduce students to:

- Basic vocabulary--trick, bid, book, auction, contract, opener, responder, declarer, dummy.
- How to count points.
- Minimum needed to open or to respond.
- How to select an opening bid.
- The three possible bids for a Minimum responder.

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### *Preparation*

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Recommended posters: *Classification of Hands, Suit Hierarchy, Bidding Priorities.*

Set up the room in the standard way as described in Chapter One.

For the first lesson, place the following additional materials at each student position:

- A student text book.
- A folder containing the class schedule, a list of students and their contact information, and any handouts you may be using to supplement the text.
- Three cards face down--pre-set cards you will use early in the lesson to demonstrate the idea of a trick and how tricks are won. The cards for each position are:
  - West: ♦K3, ♠5
  - North: ♦84, ♠8
  - East: ♦AT7
  - South: ♦6, ♠2, ♥9

# Lesson Plan One

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## *Introduction of Teacher and Students--5 Minutes*

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- Take a couple of minutes to introduce yourself briefly. This might be something about your personal life or something about your bridge history and why you love the game.
- Tell the students to take a few minutes to introduce themselves to the other students at their table. Some will be nervous or reluctant to share personal information with strangers. Suggest something like this: “Tell them a little something about yourself. One thing we’d all like to know is why you came to take bridge lessons.” Students will always manage to find a little something to say.

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## *Introduction to the Course--5 Minutes*

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This is how the course will run:

- There will be six lessons of about 2 hours each. There will be a five to ten minute break at the approximate mid-point. There is a class schedule in your folder.
- We’re going to be informal.
  - Ask questions at any time.
  - Help yourself to coffee and snacks whenever you like.
- You’re welcome to take notes but you don’t need to. Everything we discuss in class is included in your book.

You’ll also find a class list in your folder. Get together and play bridge. The more you play, the more you’ll learn.

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## *Bridge Basics--10 Minutes*

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**Partnership:** Look at the player across the table from you. He is your partner. You and he are going to work cooperatively to beat the other pair. Your partner is the only one on your side so the cardinal rule of bridge is: Treasure your partner and treat him well.

# Lesson Plan One

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**Deal:** A hand of bridge starts with a deal. There are 52 cards--no jokers. When you play at home, you cut for the deal and high card wins. For later hands, the deal rotates clockwise.

The dealer starts by giving a card to the person on his left and--proceeding clockwise--passes out all the cards one at a time. Everyone has a hand of 13 cards.

During the classes, we won't do it that way because I want to be sure you're all playing the same hands.

**Tricks:** The object of the game is to win tricks. The more tricks you win, the better your score will be. But what's a trick?

## Exercise 1: Winning Tricks:

Pick up the three cards at your place on the table. I want West to place the ♦3 on the table in front of him. Notice that North/South/East/West positions are marked on the table card. We're going to see how tricks are won.

West has led a diamond. Proceeding clockwise, everyone must follow suit if he can. If you have a diamond, you must play a diamond. If everyone has a diamond, the highest card will win the trick. The deuce is lowest; the ace is highest. Tell the students to play to the trick in turn and try to win it. East wins the trick with his ♦A.

When your pair wins a trick, turn your card face down in front of you--pointing toward partner. If your pair lost the trick, place your card face down in front of you pointing to the side.

We're going to demonstrate a second way to win a trick. For most bridge hands, some particular suit will be designated as trump. For this hand, let's say that spades is the trump suit. If you can't follow suit, you can win a trick by playing a trump card.

East won the trick so he gets to lead to the next trick. Tell East to place his lead on the table--the ♦T or ♦7.

Tell students to play to the trick and let's see what happens. South has no diamonds, so he wins the trick by playing the ♠2. We call this *ruffing* or trumping. Notice that it doesn't need to be a high trump. Any old trump card is more powerful than the highest diamond.

Now we're going to demonstrate a third way to win a trick. If one player ruffs a trick by playing a trump, another player may win the trick by playing a higher trump. South won the last trick so he will lead to the next trick. South: Place your last card on the table--the ♥9. Tell each



## TEACHING BRIDGE IS NOT SO HARD!

Do you want to be a bridge teacher, but you're not sure where to start? This comprehensive and easy-to-follow teacher's manual was designed by the authors of *We Love the Majors*, Mary Ann Dufresne and Marion Ellingsen, to compliment their reader-friendly beginner's book. The teacher's guide contains six complete, detailed lesson plans, including hand diagrams, that teachers can easily customize to suit their students' levels of interest and experience. This guide puts all the information you need to share your love of bridge right at your fingertips!



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