



WHAT IF??? WRITE IT DOWN!

When I first started teaching, I could only think about being liked by my students and as a result I kept allowing them to ask questions during the class. I run reasonably sized classes (20- 44) so you can imagine how quickly it could deteriorate. One question which I answered, triggered into another question and so on and so forth. So much so that in the early days I realized a class would end and I would not have covered half of the planned material for. It also became clear to me that these questions were irrelevant and not needed for the students to keep following the lessons. Typically, the question would start...what if?

So, at the start of a series of lessons, I tell them that as they learn more and more about this new language (this is what I call bridge), they will have many questions. They will wonder things like what if they have 8 hearts instead of only 5. What if the opponents say something? What if partner repeats their suit? They will have many “what if” questions over the duration of the course. So, if one of those questions comes to mind during class and starts with “what if....” do not interrupt the class for it. Write it down and come see me at the break or after the class. I will be happy to answer you then. I then add but if you don't know the difference between Spades and Clubs do ask that question!

I don't want them to forget the question (if it is an important one – rarely actually!) so telling them to write it down, calms their mind and allows them to focus on the lesson.

I leave a few index cards on each table with WHAT IF in big bold letters at the top. If they forget and start asking a question that starts with What if... all I have to do is point at the index card. Interestingly enough I don't often see them reappear at the end of the class with those questions! And I am able to go more efficiently through all the material in each lesson without all the interruptions. (I was one of those What if askers! Now I understand how my teacher felt!)

Josee Hammill

Overcalling – Keep in Mind!

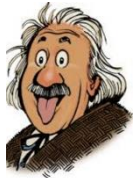
When teaching simple overcalls, there are a few important characteristics of the overcaller's hand that you want your students to remember: the quality of the overcalling suit; the necessary point count or strength of the hand when overcalling at the 1-level and at the 2-level; and the distribution of the hand. You can make these attributes truly memorable by introducing the concepts with cartoon characters for each characteristic.



Beauty: She characterizes the fullness of the 5+ card suit you plan to overcall in. She contains lots of honor cards. There should be at least 1 ½ quick tricks to call the suit beautiful.



Wealth: These are the high card points that help to take tricks. The range for a 1-level overcall is 7-17 HCP; the range for a 2-level overcall is 12 -16 HCP. Being wealthy means you have 12+ HCP.



Wisdom: This characteristic describes the distribution of the hand that goes with the 5+-card suit needed for the overcall. The more unbalanced the hand, the better or “smarter” it is for an overcall. Hands with a 6-card suit are always suitable. 5-4-2-2 is less “wise” but still suitable. 5-3-3-2 is definitely “unwise.”

Your hand must have at least one of these positive qualities to qualify for a 1-level overcall. You must have a minimum of 2 of these qualities for a 2-level overcall.

I print out an enlarged copy of the three cartoons on heavy paper. I spray the back with sticky material so I can throw them up on my white board when I first introduce the characters and when discussing each overcalling hand, to indicate which of the characteristics apply. You can either use these cartoons or find equally eye-catching cartoons on the internet.

David Germaine