

# INTRODUCTION



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## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

*Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century* is a course covering conventions and treatments that players are likely to encounter in competitive bridge games. The eight chapters in this book focus on topics usually covered on the front half of the SAYC (Standard American Yellow Card) convention card — openings and responses at the one level and two level. *More Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century*, the next book in the ACBL Bridge Series, focuses on topics usually found on the back half of the SAYC convention card — competitive and defensive actions. There is some crossover. Opening preemptive bids are covered in the first book on conventions, although they are located on the back half of the SAYC convention card. The two-over-one forcing approach is left to the end of the second course, since it is outside the “standard” ACBL conventions.

The material sticks fairly closely to the conventions and treatments in the ACBL’s Standard American Yellow Card System — SAYC — which is a starting point for many partnerships, including those on the internet. By the end of the course, the students should feel comfortable playing in competitive events in which SAYC is used.

It should be noted that the distinction between “conventions” and “treatments” is vague. Whether weak two-bids is a convention or a treatment isn’t clear. This course covers both aspects. It may seem to some students that there are not a lot of “conventions” being covered. Make them aware that it’s just as important to have strong partnership agreements (*i.e.*, how to handle a reverse). The material focuses more on the quality of the partnership agreements than on the quantity of agreements.

The course material consists of three parts:

- Student Textbook
- Teacher Manual
- Sample Deals

The student textbooks have all of the material covered in the two courses on conventions and some additional topics. They are meant as reference books for the students so that they don’t need to take notes during the class — although it might be a participant’s learning style to write notes. The material is divided into eight chapters each. Material outside the scope of the course (additional conventions/treatments) can be found in the Appendix of the student text. There are sample exercises at the end of each chapter. The exercises are there for the students to complete at home when reviewing the material. You may want to have the students complete some exercises during the class, however, if they need additional practice, or you may set up study groups.

The teacher manuals have material to help the teacher successfully conduct the two lesson series. There is specific information for each lesson, with an overview of the topics to be covered at the beginning and suggestions on tailoring the material to the experience level of the class. The manuals include step-by-step examples of how to present each topic. Although this is written exactly as the teacher might speak to the class, it is intended as a guideline to make sure that the concepts are introduced and presented in an appropriate order. The teacher can adapt the material so that it is suitable for the needs of those in a particular class.

There are four sample deals at the end of each lesson. They are constructed as a review of some of the concepts introduced in the lesson and to provide some new ideas on play and defense. The deals are of varying complexity so the teacher may adjust the discussion to the level of the class.

## Students

Although the material is primarily designed for students who have come up through the ACBL Bridge Series and are starting to play competitive bridge, it should appeal to players from various backgrounds. There may be experienced duplicate players who want to become more familiar with certain conventions or social players who would like an introduction to some of the conventions used in competitive bridge.

The players should be familiar with the basics of the game — bidding, play and defense. It isn't necessary, however, for the students to have come from a duplicate bridge background. The material does not require any familiarity with duplicate procedures such as Alerts.

Regular duplicate players and students who have played in Newcomer games will be familiar with convention cards, Alerts, bidding boxes and so forth. Social players are unlikely to be familiar with these aspects of the game. The background of the students may affect which material you include.

For discussions of the sample deals, use the concept of making a plan for the play and counting winners and losers. If students aren't accustomed to this, you may need to include some discussion of these concepts, or refer the students to the second book in the series, *Play of the Hand in the 21st Century (Diamond Series)*.

## Teaching Principles

The lessons are designed to incorporate basic educational concepts. It's part of the teacher's role to see that these principles are followed.

- **Maximum student involvement.** The students should be involved in every step of the learning process. They take an active role with the teacher as a guide.
- **Spiral approach to the curriculum.** Basic concepts are introduced one at a time as needed and the same concepts are reintroduced at a later stage in the course and expanded upon.
- **A simple approach.** When the students can grasp a concept, however small, they feel a measure of success and achievement, and their confidence grows. They start to enjoy the learning experience and are then ready for more.

## Lesson Format

The course on conventions consists of two books of eight chapters each. The material in each chapter works for a lesson approximately two hours in length. There are two parts to each lesson:

- Introduction of the various conventions and treatments being covered.
- Four practice deals.

Spend approximately one hour introducing the bidding concepts and one hour on the play.

The lessons are meant to be given in a seminar style, with as much discussion as possible among the students themselves. None of the ideas introduced is the last word on the subject. There are many possible variations, and the key is to be flexible and open-minded.

At the start of the lesson, each table will need a deck of cards sorted into suits and a guide card. During the first part of the lesson, the students construct hands on the table. This allows them to focus on each hand under discussion and to manipulate the cards so that they "own" the hand. This technique may require a little practice at first, but the students should quickly get accustomed to it. Make sure

that the students keep the cards neatly on the table, so that only the hand under discussion is visible. Hands are placed dummy style in front of each player, with high cards at the edge of the table.

Make sure that all of the students associate with the hand in question, although it is placed in front of a specific player. Generally, the hands are placed in the North or South position. This is just for consistency and convenience. You might want to make up signs for “Opener” and “Responder,” so that the students can place them above the respective hands.

During the lesson, you may skip various examples or lose track of where you are in the material. The complete deals are shown at every point in the manual, so you can quickly have the students gather up all the cards and construct the appropriate hand(s) from scratch. You should occasionally read out the full hand to make sure everyone has it correctly laid out. With the constant changes to the deal, it's easy for a table to get out of sync, especially when there are two hands displayed.

While the students are playing, avoid giving mini lessons on bidding, play or defense. Let the students bid and play as they see fit. It's important to stay away from the tables. Don't watch or allow “helpers” to kibitz. During the discussion following the deals, you can go through the recommended auction and the suggested play and defense in the recommended contract.

Go through the same process on each deal. Have the students bid and play the deals and then turn all four hands up dummy style in front of each player. If some tables finish early, let them quietly discuss the deal while the others are still playing. Don't let the play go on too long. Depending on the experience level, give the students about seven minutes to play the deal. At the end of the allotted time, have everyone, even those who aren't finished, put the deal face up on the table so that the discussion can begin. If the students didn't finish, tell them they will get more out of the lesson by turning the cards face up and participating in the discussion.

Keep the discussion on track. Left to their own devices, the students may reach some unusual contracts and find some unusual plays and defenses. Focus on the suggested auction and the recommended contract. Tailor the discussion to the level of the class. Skip over the more complex variations with a basic group, but spend more time on them with an experienced group. In each lesson, there are one or two deals which should provide a lively discussion for more experienced players.

## **Summary**

This lesson series should leave your students with a desire to continue their involvement in the game. They should feel that conventions are an interesting aspect of the game that opens up new avenues to explore, even if their personal choice is not to use all of them.