

Teaching bridge in schools



French Bridge Federation

20 quai Carnot – 92210 Saint-Cloud
www.ffbridge.asso.fr – ☎ +33 1 55 57 38 00

BRIDGE AT SCHOOL

The project « Educational Experimental Bridge » started in 1989 and was meant to introduce teaching bridge in schools; it met a huge success and caused the French Bridge Federation to set up a permanent structure: School Bridge.

The « Société Générale » at present supports

« The Bridge Contenders »

within the framework of its action aimed at “Young people”.

BRIDGE DEVELOPS SPECIFIC QUALITIES

1. LOGIC

Bridge contains a big variety of logical sectors, the discovery of which comes from observation, analysis of facts and imagination. The deduction leads to a succession of logical decision-makings.

2. COMMUNICATION

Bridge imposes a coded communication between partners, not only in the bidding but also in the card play.

This communication between partners, based on full respect for partner, generates qualities such as: attention, memorization and, above all, confidence. Thus we can see the very important effects for the training of the pupils.

3. SOCIALIZATION

Bridge is a team game which imposes for the young people an excellent social mixing and associations of partners of different intellectual qualities and characters.

Also, a bridge player is a person who owes respect to partner as well as to opponents.

4. DECISION

Bridge is a game which requires taking adjusted risks.

These four qualities collected in a unique way in bridge are the ones we wish every responsible person to have.

This is the reason why our Federation decided to work out a specific pedagogy for teaching bridge in schools.

BRIDGE IS A CARD GAME WHICH FACILITATES SOCIAL BLOSSOMING



CONVIVIALITY :
to get integrated into a group
To accept the common law

RESPECT OTHERS, LISTEN TO THEM :
Decide on a contract with one's partner
Accept the errors

TEAM SPIRIT:
essential to win

IT SHARPENS INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES

REFLECTION AND CONCENTRATION :
planning the play



MEMORIZING:
to remember the information



MENTAL ARITHMETIC:
to evaluate one's side's strength

STRATEGY AND ANTICIPATION:
to foresee an evolutionary plan of play



SCHOOL BRIDGE IN FRANCE



FRENCH BRIDGE FEDERATION

104.300 members
1.208 clubs
29 regional committees

3.500 registered
tournament directors
2.900 registered teachers

of
which

6.137 school members
560 clubs in schools

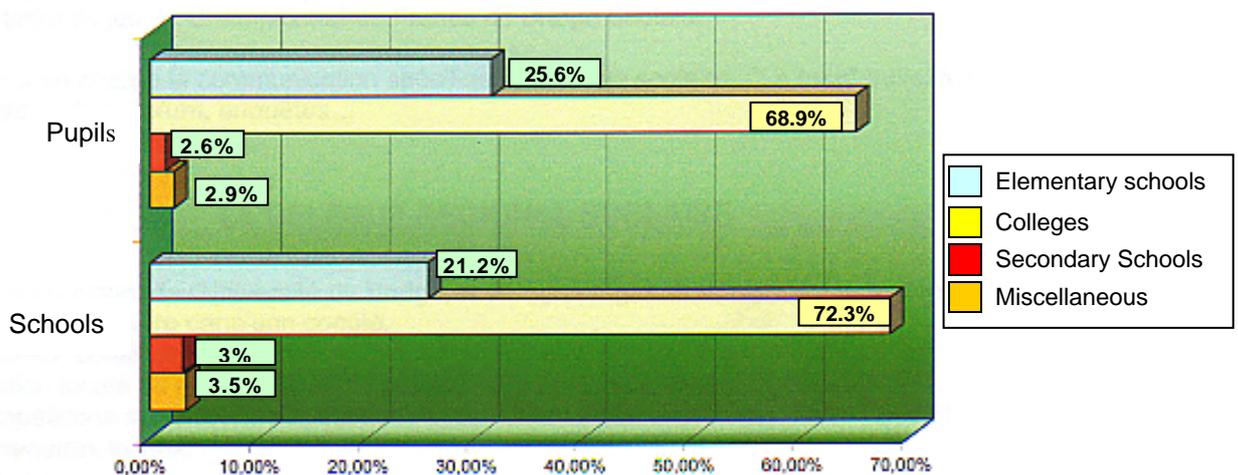
29 regional school delegates

959 voluntary initiators

SCHOOLS HAVING A BRIDGE ACTIVITY

560 establishments propose bridge as an extracurricular activity. The majority of the pupils are 11 to 13 years old, but we notice a constant increase of the number of elementary schools, as well as a quantitative evolution of the practice of bridge by 14-16 year-old pupils and even in secondary schools.

Breakdown by kind of schools



The section "miscellaneous" is related to school bridge clubs, in youth centres or school sections in bridge clubs.

The study of this graph shows:

- that the average number of pupils is more important in primary schools than in other schools, because the initiators intervene more often with whole classes, during regular lessons,
- that schools, especially 11-13 year old pupils, represent two thirds of the total number,
- that the number of pupils who begin or continue at the college is still low. We had better integrate these young people in "juniors" clubs.

THE ORGANIZATION OF TEACHING IN SCHOOLS



THE BRIDGE UNIVERSITY

The “Bridge University” is a department of the French Bridge Federation in charge of the teaching of bridge in all its forms.

It determines, with the National Teaching Commission, the programs and prepares the corresponding documents, whether it is towards the club schools or the pupils.

It manages all the School Bridge: the initiators training program, the material needed to play, the French Championship of School Bridge.

It is in charge of the specific communication for School Bridge: “the Link” news bulletin, forum, inquiries...

THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DELEGATE

As a correspondent of the Bridge University, the regional school delegate is the mainspring of School Bridge in his regional committee.

As an experienced initiator, he is in charge of the managing and training of the initiators, the local management of the material and the school budget of the regional committee, the organization of the school competitions, the relations with the headmasters, the media and local partners.

THE INITIATOR

Approximately 1.000 initiators voluntarily perform the animation of the school clubs. Registered members of the French Bridge Federation, they followed a technical and teachers’ training and were given a federal approval. Among them, 40% are State Educational staff.

They generally give a one hour lesson per week within the establishment and as far as possible in teams of two or three initiators. An initiator has an average of 8-9 pupils.

Since September 2007, bridge can be integrated in the system of “educational accompaniment” set up in all the schools and colleges of France.

A BRIDGE LESSON

Or

HOW DO WE TEACH BRIDGE AT SCHOOL?

Before seeing the contents of a school bridge lesson, let us first see under which material conditions it is held.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. THE PREMISES

Most of the time the lesson will take place in the Community Room, sometimes in a classroom, the tables being gathered.



2. SCHEDULES

In a great majority of cases, the bridge activity functions during the meridian pause, usually between 12:40 and 13:50.

Some establishments where School Bridge has been established for a long time admitted that it was a subject like the others; as such, it is held during school time in parallel with other activities. This is obviously the ideal way to work.

Moreover, since 2007, “the Educational Accompaniment” can make it possible to give bridge lessons after the last lesson of the day.

3. THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

When a bridge activity is proposed to the pupils, it starts most of the time like this: a small group gathers at the meeting point; the initiator has the double advantage of being a “new person” and to bring a play activity; the pupils note that he or she has a “sympathetic” appearance and that bridge looks easy...

The following lesson records a strong increase in participants: the publicity was made for the buddies...

The third meeting still sees a few newcomers and you wonder with anguish how you will be able to manage all these people...

Thereafter (fortunately?) there will be a slow and a rather continuous “degreasing”: it is obvious that some will lack perseverance and discover that by that time they are better in the playground... The initiators must neither feel guilty for this disaffection of the pupils nor question the quality of their teaching : they must not forget that they are dealing with children, to whom they proposed to play bridge : it is quite normal that one day they discover they do not feel like playing any more...

In practice, after six or seven meetings you will find yourself with a stabilized group which should be ideally of at least two tables and a maximum of four tables: it is very difficult to deal effectively with more pupils simultaneously. On the other hand less than eight pupils is likely to be demotivating because it is necessary to take account of the inevitable absences (disease, imminent interrogation, work not finished, a class on travel, etc).

4. FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF THE LESSONS

You should never propose more than one lesson per week: it is a minimum to guarantee a more or less normal progression, and a maximum as well. "Inventing" a second weekly session with the pretext that the pupils themselves asked for it would be the surest means of annoying the direction of the establishment and the parents.

It will also be considered that each lesson cannot exceed sixty minutes, first of all because beyond one hour the pupils' attention would clearly weaken and would be replaced by an agitation called uproar, and especially because they will be requested by the other activities inherent in the place.

Finally you should avoid to get "stressed" if it is noted that the pupils progress very slowly because the lessons are not long enough: you must remember that there is no such thing as a program which should be necessarily assimilated during the school year: let them acquire the mechanisms of the 'minibridge' at their own rhythm; the pupils of the other schools will know no more and no less than yours to dispute the School Bridge Championships.

THE COURSE OF A LESSON

A lesson of School Bridge of at most one hour includes three moments:

1. KNOWLEDGE CONTROL

10 minutes at most. This is an important moment of the lesson : while asking voluntarily trivial questions, the initiator will make sure that the pupils assimilated and, if possible, memorized, what was learnt during the previous lesson : he will ask questions requiring an immediate answer, in the form of a game (it is not an interrogation).

2. THE LESSON OF THE DAY

It includes two phases:

2.1. The theoretical part

No more than five minutes, which we will be careful not to exceed: you will easily feel the impatience of the pupils who want to play; besides, the commented board will often be used as the theoretical part.

2.2. The practical part: the example boards

A deck of cards with arrows: the play and comments must last **15 minutes**.

3. THE FREE EXPRESSION

There are approximately 30 minutes left, which will consist in having the children play complementary boards. The initiator must check at each table that the contract played is the good one in quality (no trumps or trumps) and in quantity (with the correct level: the Decision Table must have been respected). At the end, he will have to make a comment: he will give advice rather than criticize. This comment will of course concern all four players.

One will avoid literally taking time cuttings which are presented here in an ideal form; in any case, as we already said, it is extremely rare that the initiator has one 60 minutes hour; it is up to him to manage the time which is assigned to him by always favouring the free expression. If the lesson of the day was not well understood (which will for example be the case for the passage to the trump play in a class of young children who never played trump games before – ‘belote’, ‘tarots’), never mind : he will go over the same lesson next time : have them play is a priority impossible to circumvent.

BRIDGE AT SCHOOL: A SPORT LIKE ALL THE OTHERS



If the children favour in School Bridge a primarily ludic activity, they do not scorn its “competitive sport” aspect.

From the first days of the training, the initiator makes his pupils aware of the fact that they will be able to play in competitions and to obtain a ranking.

For the competitions, School Bridge is divided in three categories:

First year of bridge:

Discovery – Initiation: the contracts are strictly defined according to the Decision Table

Second year of bridge:

Discovery – Improvement: competitive bidding, useless levels, penalty doubles, sacrifice bids.

Third year of bridge:

Basic bridge: simplified bidding.

COMPETITIONS ONLY FOR SCHOOLS

Local and regional competitions

In the cities where several establishments have a bridge activity, and insofar as the transport of the pupils is not a problem, the initiators organize minibridge meetings to give their pupils an idea of a bridge competition, and also to develop them with respect to their comrades who have other sports activities. Thus, the regional committee of ‘Val de Seine’ organizes, for example, about ten tournaments a year, each one gathering approximately 100 pupils.

The French Championship of School Bridge

All the School Bridge members are invited to take part in the French Championship of School Bridge.



The regional eliminating heats:

The children are grouped according to their level and their age. They dispute a tournament of approximately two hours with boards prepared by the Bridge University. This activity is not only ludic and sporting; it is also convivial insofar as the afternoon ends in a snack-party and a distribution of gifts for the best, of mini-gifts and gadgets for all the others.

The parents can on this occasion meet the persons in charge of the School Bridge.

The national final

The best players of the Regional Committees finals are selected in proportion to the total participation of each Committee for the national final which is organised on a Sunday in June in Paris or in its surroundings. The first ones took place in Cergy-Pontoise, at the Head Office of B.P. France Company, then a partner of the school bridge ; then it was played in NOISIEL at the Head Office of Nestlé Company ; then in the Municipal Theatre of Neuilly, in Issy-Les-Moulineaux, in Aubervilliers, then since 2001 at the French Bridge Federation in St Cloud.



The organization is in any point worthy of the organization of any national final : the first delegations arrive at about 9:00, sometimes after a long journey (that enabled some children to take the plane for the first time) the participants are welcomed as they arrive by a breakfast ; the children then check their starting position (the tournaments were prepared by data processing, as for the “experienced players”...!). The first session starts at about 11:00 and finishes at 13:00 ; they all have lunch before playing the second session ; at about 16:00, they have a snack while the data processing specialist in charge calculates the results.



Then the results are given, trophies and gifts are distributed and everybody returns home, delighted of the day : no doubt that bridge gained new ambassadors !

The day before, the French Bridge Federation offers activities for those who wish it : cruising on the Seine, museum of « La Villette », Versailles Castle, visit of the « Stade de France », or an invitation to the Rugby Championship final...

THE ‘CLUB’ RANKING

For each school tournament, all the pupils receive “Clubs”. The pupils accumulate Clubs, which enables them to obtain a ranking: at the beginning they are “White Club”, and then progress in the ranking according to the scale below:

White Club	: up to 199 clubs
Yellow Club	: 200 – 449 clubs
Orange Club	: 450 – 999 clubs
Green Club	: 1,000 – 1,499 clubs
Blue Club	: 1,500 – 1,999 clubs
Brown Club	: 2,000 – 2,999 clubs
Black Club	: more than 3,000 clubs

