

A Case for Your Child to Learn Bridge

Whether you are a parent, a teacher or a school administrator, there are few activities available to children today that offer more lifelong rewards—or more fun—than bridge. Last year Unit 144 Tennessee Bridge Association began to sponsor activities for youth to learn bridge and to continue playing the game. Summer camps were held in July, youth games were available both at the Sky Rocket Bridge Tournament and at MA Lightman Bridge Club here in Memphis. In addition, an After-School program was held. There is a tremendous upsurge of interest in bridge nationally and internationally, and we who love bridge think this interest should be reflected in Youth Bridge as well. See below a case made by Patty Tucker, Director of Atlanta Youth Bridge, as to why every child should learn the game of bridge.

Bridge is now available to any child from any socio-economic background and can provide benefits on many levels:

Academic Enrichment: Studies show that learning bridge can improve your child's ability to perform better on standardized tests. According to a study from Carlinville, Illinois, middle-school children who learned bridge had test scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills that were 10-35% higher on the various subtests than their non-bridge playing peers. One teenage bridge player commented that when taking the SAT he was able to concentrate longer and more intently than his peers – an ability he attributed to the level of concentration and focus that he learned at the bridge table.

Socialization: Bridge offers many social benefits. How many of your children take part in an activity that allows them to meet, talk and play with others in a safe, controlled environment? How many of your children have the opportunity to meet children from other countries? How many of your children ever get a chance to talk and socialize with adults on a relatively equal footing? All of those opportunities are available through Youth Bridge.

Teamwork: Your greatest success as a bridge player often comes from your ability to depend on information from your partner when you make decisions. Bridge teaches young players how to trust and communicate with others for mutual gain.

Inferential Thinking: Bridge requires you to analyze the information you receive, translate that information into a vision, make a plan for success based on that vision and *learn to adapt and adjust your plan* when additional information becomes available—all basics of inferential thinking.

Competition: Youth Bridge provides opportunities for play in international, national, regional and local competitions. From serious competition to social play, bridge offers fun and challenges at every level. Even children with physical or emotional disabilities can find a "level playing field" with their peers at the bridge table.

Financial Opportunities: Scholarships are available not only for expertise in play, but character and sportsmanship. Many bridge players obtained their first jobs through people they met through bridge.

Social Networking: Bridge can introduce you to people who will become your friends for life. Many players, young and old, met their spouses at the bridge table. Young players moving to a new town with their family or for college or for a new job can join a bridge club where they'll meet new friends who can ease the transition. Does your child want to go to an exclusive college or university? He could meet deans, presidents, professors and alumni from every college in North America at bridge clubs and competitions.

Your question shouldn't be 'Why should my child, with his overloaded schedule, add one more activity to his life?' Your question should be *'Why haven't I introduced bridge to my child?'*

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