

English Bridge Education and Development Strategy

Our strategic objective is to support the game of bridge and its long term future.

We do this via:

- A focus on fostering future generations of players (i.e. Youth)
- Providing support to bridge teachers
- Training and qualifying tournament directors

General Aims

Life Benefits: We are convinced of the life enhancement that comes from learning and playing bridge. It aids in the development of young minds, teaching logic, inference and deduction from often incomplete information, cooperation and is a vehicle for social interaction. It provides lifelong intellectual stimulation and socialisation, aiding mental health and sustaining cognition. In short it gives health, life skills and pleasure.

Broad Participation: EBED wants as many people as possible to gain these benefits. Our objective is to widen the pool of players rather than concern ourselves directly with elite bridge. If some go on to become experts after our support at the start of their journey, we will be content.

Education: As our name suggests, our activities include both bridge education and development, but our emphasis is primarily on education.

EBED - Who We Are

We are a passionate small team of employees and trustees with diverse and complementary career backgrounds including finance, information technology, education as well as the management of procurement, operations, logistics and events. All share enthusiasm for the game, several are either bridge teachers or involved in club management, one is an ex-England youth team member.

Bridge in England runs mostly on volunteers and EBED is hugely grateful to ours who make significant contributions to our aims, particularly for youth.

Means

Schools

Schools are a natural place for us to offer the benefits of Bridge to children. We will promote the game directly to them and seek local support to sustain activities. A champion from within the school's staff is extremely beneficial. While the aim is broader we may at times seek engagement through their mathematics departments or Duke of Edinburgh programmes.

Where a school approaches us we will seek local support to help them. We will liaise with County Bridge Associations (CBAs), their Youth Officers and clubs.

Universities

We believe that the student experience is enhanced by having an active Bridge Society/Club.

Together with the EBU we will look to identify potential students to champion and lead the game at their college. We will find ways to encourage and support this and are piloting a scheme of reward for the meeting of a set of criteria including sustainability. The decline in university bridge must be reversed.

Youth Holiday Camps

These are two to three day residential camps held in holidays and half-terms for children, and often parents/grandparents/guardians. Bridge is the main subject but other fun activities are laid on. All levels of experience and none are catered for. We have for some years run one of these and an additional two were run by groups of volunteers. From 2024 all three have been brought under our support umbrella, still with the sterling contributions of the volunteers. We aim to expand the number of attendees and to establish a fourth one in the north of England.

Depending on individual financial circumstances the attendance fee can be subsidised by us and occasionally further by a CBA. The Worshipful Company of Playing Card Makers has in the past provided funds for trophies and prizes.

These camps are enhanced by having the national youth squads attend.

In order to grow both school and camp participation we intend in 2024/5 to pilot an EBED Roadshow of presentation and taster session at a targeted group of schools near to the location of a camp.

We believe that these camps are a great way to spread and further the joy of Bridge, as participants return to school and tell their friends what fun they had.

Youth Competitions

We plan to add to the existing number of tournaments which currently include the Schools Cup, the Schools League and the Grand Prix. Allied with our learning statuses of Bronze, Silver and Gold this will give further opportunities and incentives for children to achieve and play more bridge.

Safeguarding

This aspect is of great importance to us. In 2024 we are rewriting our policy jointly with the EBU to have one policy for both organisations. The new policy will be more comprehensive and cover both principles and operational aspects.

Communications

We seek to help create a central website hub for youth bridge to make it easy for all interested parties to find information. We also intend to promote the benefit of becoming a bridge teacher, believing that there is latent demand for learning and that more teachers and more marketing would reach this. We recognise the need for marketing the game and its image.

English Bridge Teacher Association (EBTA)

We do not directly teach the game but support those that do. We provide comprehensive book and online (the Teaching Hub) resources for members, newsletters as well as a help line. In 2025 we intend to restart a National Conference, as used to be held before the Covid lockdowns. Alternatively, we may try a more regional approach.

There are three levels of accreditation which members can attain to demonstrate their professional level.

Our learning syllabus "Bridge For All" is based on Acol as opposed to Five Card Majors, or any other system. This is for mostly for historical reasons. We are not opposed to other systems; we merely want more people to play and provide a basis for getting started in the game.

In 2022 the EBTA membership fee was increased to £45 p.a. We have no intention to make a further increase for the foreseeable future.

Training of Tournament Directors

We run a number of courses each year to turn out club TDs. These are well subscribed and delivered by qualified contractors. The course covers 4 days including the assessment, the pass rate is high but not everyone passes first time. We also run an Advanced TD course, but the County TD one is delegated to the EBU.

There is also a one day online course on scoring and Day 1 of the CTD course (How to Help with a Club Duplicate) can also be delivered online.

Club Teacher Training

Our course is two days long and covers various aspects of teaching including how to utilise our extensive teaching aids. Course fees are often rebated to clubs by the EBU.

This course is currently being upgraded.

English Bridge Union

The EBU and EBED are natural allies and complement each other in supporting the game. We both want essentially the same outcomes. Our activities are not limited to EBU affiliated clubs and members. On a day to day practical basis we share accounts, IT and office resources on a commercial basis.

In order to successfully support activities around the country we need to liaise and mutually cooperate with CBAs and local clubs. Large clubs have the potential for a youth section and we will encourage and support this.

Financial

Roughly speaking we have revenue and costs of around £200,000 p.a. - roughly one sixth of the EBU's. In any individual year we might make a minor surplus or loss, though during the Covid period a substantial loss was incurred.

In 2023 we were very grateful to receive a six figure legacy from the estate of the late Gerald Faulkner. Being a registered charity, as we are, is beneficial to attracting legacies and donations. We intend that by demonstrating good use of these funds that we may attract further generosity from bridge players. In 2024 we were delighted to receive a four figure donation from The Bedford Bridge Centre.

We make grants ourselves to organisations that support our aims.

In our long term thinking we cannot assume that current revenue streams will stay the same. Hard copy book sales for instance could decline and more content is becoming available online. We have established a Reserves Policy whereby as well as funding projects, working capital and risk management, some funds have been allocated to generating growing income.