

# The Bridge Trip

**By Gary King**

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Over the years I have spent time talking with quite literally hundreds, if not thousands, of students about bridge. I talk with prospective players who are considering beginning lessons and with rabid duplicate addicts who are consumed with the game.

What strikes me as most interesting is how many things are reflected in this game that we play and love so much. In numerous ways, this game is like other sports and even like life itself.

Several years ago I received a telephone call from a previous student. She and her partner had a dispute about a particular hand and called so that I could mediate. We discussed the auction and the hand (she was a GOOD student because she had the auction and complete hand written out including all passes, vulnerability, dealer and every hand which remarkably had 13 cards).

After a few minutes of discussion she sighed and with a little frustration said, "Do you ever think I will get this game?"

How would you answer that question? Have you ever felt that way? My answer was very straightforward. I replied, "You are thinking about this game all wrong!" There is no Utopia. There is no plateau at which you arrive and realize that you know everything that you need to know. There is no heaven-like existence where you never make mistakes and can play with little or no effort. You must realize — and learn — that the enjoyment of this game is the trip. Learn to enjoy your travels along the path to becoming an accomplished player. Enjoy the scenery, the people and the experience.

It is the trip that is the fun. Do not be like the vacationer who is in such a hurry to get to the final destination that he views the Grand Canyon from the car while passing by.

Stop and take in the enjoyment and pleasure that this game has to offer. Enjoy the game, enjoy the people, enjoy making good decisions, enjoy your wins and enjoy the wins of others.

If you recognize areas that need work (in your own game or in your partnership), make a brief note and discuss it later. During the play is generally not the time.

At the very least, wait until the round is over and you have stepped away from the table.

Try to locate a mentor. A mentor should be a player with greater experience and one to whom you have at least regular access (in person, by phone or e-mail). Use the mentor not to teach you but to help you and partner work out the root cause of problems in your bidding and play. With the root cause identified, you can then work on those skills on your own.

If you think about this game for a minute, it is beautiful in its simplicity. The laws of the game do not dictate how you and partner communicate. At any given time, the methods you choose to use are totally up to you. You can use whatever tools you think are in your best interest. It is this flexibility of design that keeps a player continuously striving to improve. It is also this simplicity that keeps providing greater and greater enjoyment from the play.