

The History of Austin Bridge

In the 1950s, Curtis Smith, a local bridge professional, and his wife Jerry Jungmichael opened the 1st duplicate bridge studio in Austin, at Guadalupe and 16th Street.

In the 1960s, duplicate bridge was played at another studio on 38th Street near Seton Hospital.

In the 1970s, a studio downtown Austin at 6th Street and Blanco, hosted duplicate bridge games.

In 1973, The Bridge Studio of Austin opened at Palo Duro Road and Koenig Lane, and remained open until 2002. But the BSA lost its lease, and from 2003 to 2006, there was no official ACBL site in Austin. During these lean years, Austin bridge and Unit 207 found venues at the NW Recreation Center, Austin Presbyterian Church and the Dell Jewish Center.

In 2006, The Bridge Center of Austin was established at Lamar Blvd and Koenig Lane.

Duplicate bridge games were played at this location until 2011.

In 2011, everything was moved to our current location at 6700 Middle Fiskville Road, and the Bridge Center of Austin had found a permanent home.

The BCA must lease this property, and there are many bills to pay. But it seems that the BCA Board is hoping to stay at this location for a while. There have been many updates to the interior of our space in the past few months. Fresh paint, new carpeting and bridge-themed murals are lovely updates at the BCA.

Bridge is a partnership game. Your partner is your friend, not your competitor.

The areas you keep improving are: 1) Bidding; 2) Opening Leads; 3) Play of the Hand; and 4) Defense.

In the 1960s and 1970s: Most people played strong 2-bids, also known as Goren bridge. With Goren, players opened hands with 4-card majors and not 5-card majors, as they do today.

Players also used a bridge convention known as Canape to show a hand with a 4-card major and a 5-card minor. Using Canape, players bid their 4-card suit 1st, and their 5-card suit 2nd.

By the 1990s, many of the conventions we use today were starting to be used. These conventions include: transfers, negative doubles, support doubles, Drury, Lebensohl, splinters, upside down signals. Other more advanced conventions followed, including: Bergen, Flannery, Michaels Hamilton/Cappelletti, DONT, Meckwell, Snapdragon, New Minor Forcing, XYZ and Spiral.

*** **Beginners make the mistake of trying to use conventions instead of common sense.** ***

Today, most duplicate bridge players play 2/1, Standard American or Precision.

In the 1970s:

1. Players opened hands with a solid 13 high card points with 4-card majors.
2. 3 and 5 level bidding belonged to the opponents.
3. There was less interference from your opponents.
4. Fewer competitive bids were made, and the focus was on defense and making the opponents make mistakes.
5. Vulnerability mattered.

Today:

1. Players open with lighter hands, often a good 11 point distributional holding.
2. Players strive to open with or get to a fit in a major suit.
3. The Rule of 20: Is a useful tool for evaluating distributional hands that will be played in a suit contract. Add the total high card points in your hand with the sum of the length of your longest suits.
4. Vulnerability matters much less.
5. Players will try to push their opponents up a level too high.

Recommendations:

1. Read! Read! Read! — Try reading your Bridge Bulletin, if not a book.
2. Get into the auction as soon as possible.
3. Passing out a hand probably gets you a below average board.
4. Get into the auction with a double, if needed. Even if you must make an imperfect double, do it! This often results in a Moysian fit (where you hold 3/4 of a suit in your hands).

Beginners fear that they might make a bad bid and go for minus 200 or 300 points. But so what?

Modern bridge is a bidder's game. What could happen?

1. You might go down. (but that could end up being a good score!). Remember that George Watkin's says and believes, "Down One is Good Bridge".
2. But if you don't bid, you are probably not keeping up with the field of opponents.
3. If you end up in a bad contract you will have to play it, and that will make you a better declarer.

Partnership:

1. Don't criticize your partner at the table — the hand is OVER! Discuss the hand later.
2. BRAG on your partner when she does something good. Do this without making the opponents feel or look stupid.
3. Do NOT give lessons to partner or opponents at the table.

How To Get Better:

1. Get hand records and discuss the hands after the game.
2. Change conventions if they are not working.
3. *** Discuss bad boards. *** (The opponents are allowed to do things right!)

Rules:

1. Cover an honor with an honor.
2. Jack is led. AQxx is in dummy (on the board). If you have the King, cover the Queen with your King. Partner may have the 10.
3. Third hand high.
4. Lead partner's suit! Lead the highest card in your partner's suit, hoping to stay in the lead.

Declarer:

1. Set up your long suit in the dummy as opposed to ruffing, especially if dummy has high honors.
2. Do not always pull all of the opponent's trumps as you may need them for transportation.
3. Do not try to remember everything you have learned on every hand. If you make a mistake, it is not a major tragedy.
4. If you try to pay attention to every rule people tell you about, you will become confused and you will often be misinformed.
5. Practice as much as you can by actually playing.
6. Playing with better players will be the best sort of training for you.
7. Don't just read — Study!

Recommended Books:

1. The Law of Total Tricks, by Larry Cohen.
2. Play of the Hand, by Louis Watson.
3. How to Read Your Opponent's Cards, Mike Lawrence.
4. Points Schmoints, by Marty Bergen.

The Director is Your Friend!

The Director has a number of roles. They arrive early, make the boards and determine the seating for the game to ensure that everything runs smoothly. The Director is called to a table during play when there is an irregularity, or a disagreement. Their goal is to help resolve the disagreement in an equitable fashion.

A person must study the laws of duplicate bridge and pass an exam to become a certified ACBL Director. During play, the Director must resolve a variety of issues and/or scenarios — and they must do so quickly, quietly and fairly — without disrupting the other tables. Their skills require strong finesse, knowledge, organization and kindness.

Don't be afraid to call the Director to your table if you feel you or your partner have been damaged. Call the Director if you need help or clarification with a situation. Don't try to argue your way out of a situation with an opponent. Instead, call the Director! They will make a fair and unbiased ruling, based on the laws of duplicate bridge.