

Promoting your Club and Recruiting Members

In order to attract new members to your bridge club, it is essential to promote the club in your community. By advertising your club you may attract bridge players who have recently moved into your area, people who have only played rubber bridge before, people who for some reason had stopped playing but wish to return to the game, some who may play at another club on a different day of the week and those who perhaps had previously thought about learning bridge but never had the opportunity.

Advertising does not have to be expensive. Many of the advertising possibilities we list in the following are free or of nominal cost. Make sure all your advertising materials carry the essential information of your club's venue, the days and times it meets, contact name(s) and telephone number(s), email address(es) and the club's website address. It is worth stressing that the club is friendly and welcomes newcomers. Adding a friendly club logo will also help. Mention that the club is affiliated to the English Bridge Union, the national governing body for bridge.

Let's look at a few different areas of advertising.

Posters

A very effective and inexpensive way of advertising your club is with the judicious placement of posters. A simple A4 size poster can easily be produced and printed off by anyone with a computer and printer. Include the club's web address and an email address. People often find it easier to discuss their needs with someone in person, so it is good to give someone's name and phone number as a contact, too.

Some of the places which are likely to allow you to put up your poster for free are:

- Local library noticeboards
- Local community centres
- Council offices
- Church and church hall noticeboards
- Local bowls, tennis, golf, cricket clubs, etc.
- Other local bridge clubs
- Community noticeboards at local supermarkets
- Any other local noticeboards you can find

If a noticeboard is outside, it is worth laminating the poster. It is a good idea to check every few months to make sure that the posters are still there and replace any which are missing or have become damaged.

Club Website

Nowadays, when people move house and look for a bridge club in their area, the first place many of them look is on the Internet. An attractive and informative club website is not only a service for members but also a showcase for the club and will aid in attracting new members. For more information on how to put together an effective website, see the separate section on club websites in this Handbook.

EBU Website

The EBU helps promote its affiliated clubs by giving them a listing on its website. This is often the first place someone looking for a bridge club in a particular area will search.

If you go to www.ebu.co.uk you will find a button at the top labelled 'Clubs'. Click on this and then on the link for 'A searchable directory of EBU affiliated clubs'. This will take you to the directory of affiliated bridge clubs and bridge teachers throughout the country.

To find your club, type the postcode into the search box at the top right or select the county from the menu at the top. Then click on the name of the club. It is obviously helpful if the details shown for your club are kept up-to-date. If anything needs updating you can do this by logging on to [MyEBU](#) and going to Account (top right) and then Club Sessions. If anything else needs to be changed then please contact [Jonathan Lillycrop](#) (Club Liaison Officer). If your club is not listed, that is because it has not given permission for a listing. Discuss this with your fellow committee members and inform Jonathan if you would like a listing.

Local County Association Website

The EBU's constituent county associations have their own websites. These can be found via the club directory as detailed above or through a search engine such as Google. It is worth making sure that your club is listed with up-to-date details on your county association website.

Other Websites

Many towns and districts have "What's on" type websites which provide information for the community and visitors as to events and activities in the area. These listings are usually free. Similarly, the local town, district or parish council often has its own website with a section giving details of local clubs and activities. Ask them to list your club. Sometimes it may take a bit of effort to locate these websites. If you are not very proficient with using the Internet and Internet search engines, ask a computer-experienced friend or relative to help you. Don't forget to check periodically that the listings are still there and up-to-date. Websites tend to change and move fairly frequently.

Newspapers

Most local newspapers have a "What's on this week" section in which listings are free. It is worth making sure that your club is listed every week. Many newspapers require regular re-submissions for this, and will not accept a one off submission for a prolonged period, so it may be necessary for a committee member to monitor this and re-submit your club's entry at the required intervals.

If you can persuade someone to write a regular bridge column and the newspaper to publish it, that can be an excellent source of publicity for your club.

If your club or any of your members has something special to celebrate, even if it is not directly to do with bridge, try to get an article mentioning your club into the newspaper. See the section in this Handbook on 'How to write a Press Release'. Sam Kelly, the EBU Communications Officer, has good media connections and might be able to help get a press release into local newspapers. Email her on sam@ebu.co.uk

You can, of course, use paid for advertisements in your local newspapers, but these are probably best reserved for the beginning of new bridge learning courses. If you put a paid advertisement in the local newspaper, never pay the "rack rate", i.e. the first rate they quote. Tell them it is too expensive, and you will think about it. They will usually get back to you offering a reduced price. Do not use paid advertisements earlier than 3-4 weeks before lessons start. Avoid using paid advertisements in August.

A good time to begin new classes is in October. September is the most popular time for people in our "target" age group to go away on holiday.

Local Radio and Television

Try contacting your local radio and TV stations to see if there are any opportunities to talk about bridge, especially if your club is celebrating an anniversary. Sometimes they are looking for new material. Unlikely as bridge on the radio may seem, it has been known for a local radio station to invite four club members to play at the radio station while explaining the game and giving some commentary over the airwaves. Explain the advantages of regular mental exercise and the chance of making new friends and expanding one's social life by joining the club.

Awareness Days, Demonstrations and Taster Sessions

It can be quite fun to get a few members together for a day at a local fair or fête to run a stall for your bridge club to recruit new members. You can have four members playing bridge, or if you are running classes for beginners, get members of the public to sit down with you and teach them minibridge. Have two or three members distributing soft drinks or tea and coffee, taking down names and addresses of anyone interested, and explaining a bit about the game. It is important to follow up any contacts fairly soon afterwards before they "go cold". You can also distribute business cards or flyers with the club's details on them.

Many of the large supermarket chains have community friendly policies, so similar events can be organised on the forecourt of your local supermarket with the permission of the manager.

Other organisations such as the local Social Club, Women's Institute, British Legion, Workers' Educational Association or U3A may be interested in holding a Bridge Taster Session. Bridge is fun and can be played by anyone of any age. The more people become aware of that, the more will take it up.

Even if your club does not itself run bridge classes, perhaps you can direct anyone interested to someone who does. Failing that, the EBU does now provide free software for learning on a computer. This is available at <http://www.ebu.co.uk/education/ltpb>

Other ideas:

Articles in village newsletters

Word of mouth

"Business cards" distributed by club members

Cards in supermarkets, newsagents' windows, café windows, etc.

Introduce Minibridge to independent schools activity afternoons

Parents' newsletters

If there are still bridge classes running at the local LEA or U3A, contact the teachers to see if they would be willing to encourage their graduates to come to your club, especially if you run supervised play, no fear or similar evenings. If you don't have such evenings, why not try putting on an occasional "Newcomers Evening" where club members, say, play with students from a local bridge class.

If you know of any local companies or LEAs which run pre-retirement seminars, try to get some information about bridge included in those.

Leave copies of *English Bridge* (with a label inside giving details of your club) in local doctors' and dentists' surgery waiting rooms. Print up and distribute flyers directly to houses, possibly using a delivery service, or getting together a group of members who would like some gentle exercise to target a particular area. Try to target areas where there may be a high proportion of people without young families.

If there is a new housing development in your area, contact the developers to add info or a flyer in their info pack for new residents/purchasers.

If you have any ideas not covered in the above, please email Jonathan Lillycrop, the EBU Club Liaison Officer, on jonathan@ebu.co.uk.