

A Case for **Your** Child to Learn Bridge

Many of you know about my organization Atlanta Junior Bridge (AJB), which offers free bridge instruction to children in the greater Atlanta area. Some may also know that I work on Youth Bridge at the national level. 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. I'd like to take this opportunity to make my 'case' for Youth Bridge and hope you will read and forward this information to anyone you know with children or grandchildren. Bridge should be for everyone, not just adults.

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

- Academic Enrichment
- Socialization
- Teamwork
- Inferential Thinking
- Competition
- Financial Opportunities
- Social Networking

Academic Enrichment: Studies show that learning bridge can improve your child's ability to perform better on standardized testing. According to a study from Carlinville, Illinois, children who learned bridge had a 10-35% higher rate of gain on the Iowa Standard Test than their non-bridge playing peers. One teenage bridge player I interviewed commented that in taking the SAT he was able to concentrate longer and more intently than his peers.

Socialization: Bridge can offer 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 your partner to help make decisions. Bridge teaches a young player 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 a fun challenge at every level. Even children with physical or emotional disabilities can find a "level playing field" with peers their age at the bridge table.

Financial Opportunities: College 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. I know of at least two bridge players whose investment capital came from players they had met and played against.

Social Networking: Bridge can introduce you to people who will become your friends through your entire life. I know of numerous cases (young and old) where players met their spouses through playing bridge. Young players moving to a new town with their family or for college or 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?' There are few activities available to children today that offer more lifelong rewards than bridge---or more fun.

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