

# play bridge

*A section designed with the newer player in mind.*

## Are you ready for the big time?

About a month ago we ran a sectional tournament at our bridge club. Trying to promote the events, I talked to one of the newcomer players about attending.

“A tournament? You must be kidding,” was the response I got. “I just started playing a year ago, and am not qualified to play in a tournament,” my newcomer said.

As I went around talking to people, I found this to be the prevailing attitude. It might even be an opinion you hold. So here is the “skinny” on the ACBL and its tournaments.

There are three types of tournaments: nationals, regionals and sectionals. At all of these tournaments there are events designed for the newcomer. You might look for the designation I/N. This stands for Intermediate–Newcomer and indicates games designed with the newer players in mind.

Some of these games might be called 199er games — this simply means that no one is allowed to enter the event with 200 masterpoints or more. Similarly, a 99er game is for those people with fewer than 100 points. Many of these games award trophies or some other prize, in addition to masterpoints.

Okay. You checked the tournament schedule and the 99er game is Saturday morning. You should have four things with you on your way to your first tournament:

- Your ACBL number. The ACBL identifies you by your number. Put it in your wallet next to the money.

- Your convention card. This is where you and partner explain your agreements. It may be as simple as 15-17 NTs and Stayman. It should sit on your bridge table and be available for your opponents to view. Your partner should have an identical card. Inside your convention card, you should try to keep a private scorecard. This is a record of your results on all the hands you have played.
- Your partner. If you are nervous attending your first tournament, get your best partner to go with you. If you want to try a tournament without a partner, most sponsors will be happy to arrange a partnership. Usually someone is listed in the tournament advertising as partnership chairman.
- Your smile. You are in for a good time. Most of the others in your event will be just as new to the tournament scene as you are. Take this opportunity to make some new friends.

At the tournament site, there is still room for confusion. The first thing you see is the registration desk. Venturing up to buy your entry, you find that this is where you are greeted. At our registration desk, we have name tags, candy, notepads and any other “goody” we might be handing out at the tourney. This is not where you buy your entry, though.

To buy your entry, find the director who is selling the events for that day. The directors are very friendly



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and will help get you into the right event and tell you where you will be playing. The director will hand you an entry, which has blanks for the two names of the partnership and ... their ACBL numbers!

After you and partner have had an enjoyable session of bridge, do not forget to pick up a hand record. This is a copy of all the hands that have been played in the session. If you have kept score, you can go back and check your results looking at all four hands. This is when you most commonly hear the phrase, “If only ...”

When the session is over, the directors hang a sheet on a wall that shows how everyone in the section did. Beside your name, you will see a percentage. If you won some masterpoints, those will be listed. If there is a big “1” beside your name (meaning you were first), watch out — you’re hooked!

What is the difference between a knockout team game and a Swiss team game? What does stratification mean? These and other questions will be discussed in March. □

*Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers*