



How To Find and Play With A Pro

Would you like to jump start your bridge game?

Playing with a professional bridge player or a true expert is one of the fastest ways to improve.

The purpose of playing with a pro is to learn to play bridge more quickly and correctly without forming bad habits that will need to be unlearned later. “Hiring a bridge pro is similar to hiring a golf or tennis pro,” says five-time National Champion Shannon Cappelletti. “If you find the right one, your game can really skyrocket to new levels!”

All pros want to help you play better bridge. “Winning masterpoints is a bonus, but not a real indicator of play,” says Cappelletti. World Champion player Amin Hakim agrees: “When approaching a pro to play, explain to him that your goal is to become a better player and to learn properly,” Hakim says. “While we understand that developing players want to earn masterpoints, we are not as enthused about helping a client who is in it solely for that reason.”

The best place to meet pros of all levels is at Regional or National Tournaments. This is where the pros are in their true competitive element, playing on teams or in pairs and often with clients or “sponsors.” The pros know they are among newer players and most pros are happy to chat for a moment outside the game or have their picture taken with you if you ask them nicely.

At our District 9 Regionals, we host social gatherings that provide a comfortable environment to meet other players, including pros. For more information, click the Special Events tab for each tournament under the Tournaments section of the District 9 Website.

Information can be found on the District 9 website at: [District 9 of the ACBL \(district9acbl.org\)](http://district9acbl.org).

You might also find a pro at your local club. Ask your club’s director, your friends or some of the better bridge players in the room if there are any experts in the room. Do some research. “There are a lot of fake pros out there,” says Hakim. “You want to work with a true expert of the game.”

Watch what your pro is doing very closely when you are playing together. How is she bidding? How is he playing? Your pro should be willing to spend time with you after the game to go over the hands. “If your pro never says he is sorry, immediately move on,” says Hakim. “Even Zia makes mistakes at the table. When there is a mistake, someone has to take responsibility for it. A true expert simply apologizes and moves on to the next hand. He will not make a big fuss at the table over your mistakes or his, but he will acknowledge his own mistakes.”

Kibitzing pros is also a very valuable experience. If you find yourself with time to spare, try to make time to kibitz the experts at a Regional or National. Just ask the Director! He will know which players would be willing to have you kibitz. Pull up a chair, stay silent, watch, and learn! You will see bridge played at a completely different level. One beginner described it this way, “So THIS is bridge? I am playing Go Fish compared to these guys!”

–Tracy Nolan