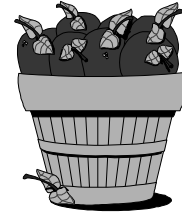


2009 Applebasket Contest Winner

By Ginny Schuett, Illinois



First Place Winner!

Translate, Translate, Translate

By Judi Shulman, New York

When my students get frustrated during the bidding because they can't remember the meaning of every auction the first time they hear it, I reassure them by explaining that bridge bidding is like learning a foreign language. My French teacher told us as schoolchildren that it was necessary to hear a foreign word thirty times before it was part of our vocabulary, so in fact my bridge students are often ahead of schedule in the learning department. They like to hear that they are not as slow as they feel they are.

To reinforce this concept of "bridge as a foreign language" and to bring all four people at the table into active participation, I have the non-bidders "translate" the bidding as it occurs. North will open 1♣ and East will say "He has at least three clubs and at least 13 points." South will respond 1♥ and West will translate "He has at least four hearts and at least six points." If the next bid by North is 1NT East's statement will be "He has a balanced hand that wasn't strong enough to open 1NT." After a little prompting the table will also conclude that North is denying four hearts and four spades. It is extremely satisfying to watch the light bulb come on as they realize how

much they know about the bidder's hand just from translating the bid into English. And of course, there is also the occasion when the translation doesn't resemble the actual hand, and then they go back and figure out where the mistake was.

By having the opponents do the translating, you eliminate the boredom element that can happen during non-competitive auctions. It is a great way to enhance the learning experience for all four players at the bridge table.

Second Place!

That Was Easy

By Kathie Walsh, South Carolina

We all know how important it is to maintain levity in the classroom—jokes, rhymes, voice inflections, songs, repetition—anything that makes the learning easier for our students.

I have never been good at telling jokes; usually the release for the students comes from my "botching" the punch line, which also works!

But I found a gimmick this year that works every time! I was shopping in Staples and saw their EASY button on the counter. I had a particularly easy return that day, and I pushed the button. A disembodied voice clearly and LOUDLY said,

“That Was Easy.”

I laughed, the sales associate laughed, other customers laughed. The AHA! moment. Why not buy a button and hit it in class after teaching a particularly “easy” or particularly “hard” concept?

So after teaching all the alerts and uses of New Minor Forcing, a concept the students were finding confusing on the first go-around, I punched my “That Was Easy” button and everyone burst into gales of laughter. The funny thing is, it works every time. You would think it would get old, but it doesn’t—there is something about the voice and the moment.

(It has all sorts of uses outside of the classroom, too, especially with the grandbabies, who want to come to Nana’s house to push the button.)

See, That Was Easy.

Honorable Mention

Designated Shusher

By Brenda Geden, Ontario

Noise control is a very important part of each lesson, especially when you are fortunate enough to have a large class of eager participants. I have found a light-hearted way to keep the rowdy folks toned down without embarrassment to anyone or constantly saying “excuse me, quiet please.”

Before each lesson I congratulate the students for their bridge enthusiasm. I acknowledge that during a lesson the bridge topic may become so EXCITING that the chit chat and

noise level at each table could become distracting. Things could get out of control. People at the immediate table or close by could find it difficult to listen to me (the one they paid money to hear) if someone else was recounting a moment of their own bridge experience.

So, I seek their assistance in this matter of noise control. In all seriousness I ask them to pick out the MEANEST LOOKING person at their table. This always produces plenty of laughter as people grimace and growl and make faces at each other. I then tell them to elect this person as the DESIGNATED SHUSHER for their table.

The D.S. will be my helper in controlling the noise level at their table should I ask for their assistance. I announce that no one at the table is permitted to think the D.S. is rude for interrupting conversation. He or she works for me.

There should always be plenty of time during each lesson for the tables to discuss things amongst themselves. But, when it is time for them to settle down and pay attention to the next part of my lesson, I just ring my tiny little bell into the microphone. The DESIGNATED SHUSHER then does the quieting for me. If the room hushes very quickly, I make sure I congratulate the “extra special meanness” of this particular group of shushers. Everyone seems to get the idea. Everyone is smiling. No one is insulted and I can carry on with my lesson without frustration.