

Robot Half Tables **eliminate sit-outs**

This procedure was developed by the City Center Bridge Club of Philadelphia, Jay Whipple and the good folks at *The Common Game*. CCBC is a small club running lots of Howells with three four and five board sitouts, Nobody likes sitouts, long ones are especially annoying. Thanks.

Note that all of the screen shots used in this article were taken from the Windows 10 web version of BBO. Screens from the Apple and Google apps will differ slightly.

Overview: The purpose of this process is to eliminate sit outs in duplicate bridge games. This is done by setting up two BBO robots as players to fill out the movement.

Hardware requirements: At least two devices that can connect to BBO online. Phones are acceptable, but small and hard to see, computers a bit bulky and the players must be able to use a mouse. A tablet of seven to ten inches is best. These can be Mac, Android, Windows, or Linux. These devices must be connected to the internet. If there is no local WiFi connection you will need hot-spot.

You will need an Electronic scoring System (ES). It can be any system; BridgeMates, BridgePads, even Bridge Tabs. (Yes, this could be done with travelers, but the work load goes up.)

A computer connected to the internet, to act as host of the robot table. This can be the computer you use to run ACBLscore and the ES.

One time ACBLscore modification: Add two players to your club database. These are the ACBL numbers you will enter for the robots. For example; Create players BBO C3PO and BBO R2D2. For an ACBL number, use any number shorter than six digits, and make the lead character a pound sign(#) The first name of BBO tells *The Common Game* and fast results that these were ineligible robots. A player number starting with a pound sign (e.g. #2018) tells ACBLscore this is a local player who is not an ACBL member. If you enter the number (without pound sign) into the BridgeMate or BridgePad table unit, the ES will accept those numbers and display the robot name.

Preliminary: The first step is getting your hand record file (the file used by the duplicating machine) into the ONLY format accepted by BBO, that is the LIN format. You have several options.

Option 1: Most dealing software will also produce an LIN format file. Create a LIN file when you are creating the DUP or PBN file. Just make sure to save it somewhere that you can find later.

Option 2a: If you use *The Common Game* hand records, there is a SITOUT directory in your dropbox. You will need your ACBLscore game-file. So, setup the game as you normally but for full tables, no phantom or rovers. Where the sit-out, the missing players are located; enter your BBO players. The ones you created in 'One time ACBLscore modification' above. Backup this file, then copy the backup to the SITOUT directory in your Dropbox account. In five to ten minutes a LIN file will appear in that directory, download it to somewhere you'll remember. (Note: This file will have boards in the correct order.)

Option 2b: Same as Option 2a Only copy you hand record file into the SITOUT directory first. The name of the hand record file must meet this requirements: 1. Must be a PBN file. 2. The name must start with the date of the game in the ACBLscore file. 3. Should have the club identifier in the name. For a game on May 21 2018, a name like ‘180521JTBCHandRecord.pbn’ fulfills all the requirements. (e.g. *The Common Game* will convert your hand record file to LIN, and put 180521JTBCHandRecord.LIN in the sit-out folder.

Since The Common Game charges \$100.00 to set up an account, you may wish to this website site to convert you files. <http://johnfromarran.org.uk/Bridge/PbnToLin.html> . This file set will not be in the correct order..

One Time BBO Setup: On a phone or a tablet, you should download and install the BBO application. With a computer and a browser start at <http://www.bridgebase.com> You will need at least two and maybe three new BBO accounts. They have very good help pages and I’m sure somebody at your club plays on BBO. The accounts are free, and only one (the host) requires a money deposit.

The host account, also known as the director account, can be your personal account, easy if you are the only director. Or, you can create a club director account, better if your club has multiple directors. This account required a positive credit balance (money). The money is needed to rent the robots. Only one robot is required, it plays all the empty seats. As of May 2018 a basic robot is \$1.00 per month, an advanced robot is \$2.00 per month. The basic robot is a good C player, the advanced robot understand and plays more conventions. Both are very good defenders. Deposit money in this account.

When you create a host account, use a name like ‘*yourclubnameDir*’, with the clubs initials as the password. Keep it simple. This isn’t Fort Knox or your bank account. Write the names and the passwords down so all the directors have access and use them.

Setup two player accounts. These are the accounts the players will use. All players use the same BBO accounts. Once again use names like ‘*yourclubnameWest*’ and ‘*yourclubnameEast*’, and use the same password as the director account. (e.g. JTBCEast and JTBCWest like the illustrations.)

Before every game: Login to the host account. Click on ‘MyBBO’ in the top row of tabs. Click on ‘Hands and Results’ in the drop down menu.

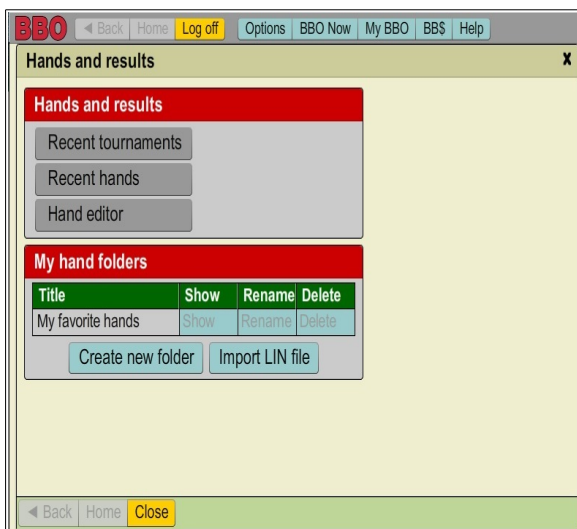


Illustration 1: Create hand folder

You will get the screen in Illustration 1. Click on ‘Create new folder’ in the new window pane. The folder’s name will default to the current date and time. Change the title to something easier.

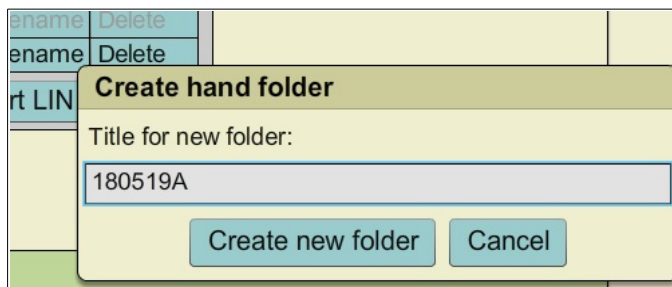


Illustration 2: Folder title

This could be the date and/or time of the game, or even the name of the AS gamefile. as in Illustration 2. This will make it easier to identify later.



Illustration 3: Select folder for LIN import

After the folder is created, Illustration 1 will reappear with the new folder listed. Click on Import LIN file. The pane in Illustration 3 appears. Click on 'Select' next to the file you wish to use..

You then browse your computer to select the LIN file and import it into BBO. (Do you remember where you put it!)

After a few seconds your hand records will be uploaded and available. But remember this page and screen. You may need it during the game because it is where you can jump to any board in the set and load it to the teaching table.

The screen in Illustration 4 appears.



Illustration 4: Browsing for hand record file

Game time: ACBLScore setup: Needless to say AS is not setup with a phantom. You can enter the robot player numbers (without the pound sign) into the table units or directly into AS. Remember to make them ineligible. (In ACBLScore; F9, then option #4, then option #4 again. Change the 'Y' next to the BBO players to 'N'.)

Note: In this procedure, the robots are North-South. You could set them up as East-West, but the direction must remain the same though out the session. If you are playing a Howell or any other scrambled movement, you will have to use EDMOV in ACBLScore to swap the robots direction.

On your host computer, login to BBO using the host ID. On the home screen click on the blue box (lower left) marked 'Practice'. On the next screen, in the upper left blue box, click on 'Start A Teaching Table'.

The 'Start New Table' screen appears with BBO defaults. You must change the options to match Illustration 5. This is to restrict who can sit at your table.



Illustration 5: Start New Table

Click the box for 'Permission required to play'; several other options will 'gray out' at that time.

Enter the account names you created, for your players in the reserve seat box.

Reserve seats, West; type in the BBO account name you created for the west player. (e.g. JTBCWest)

Reserve seats, East; type in the BBO account name you created for the east player. (e.g. JTBCEast)

Click on 'Start Table'

A BBO table will appear (Illustration 6).

IMMEDIATELY click on robot for the North and South players. If you don't do this, you will get dozens of request to play at your table from strange people from around the world.

On each the devices (tablet, phone or computer) to be used by the human players, login to BBO using the appropriate player ID.

As soon as the player logs in they will be invited to the teaching table. They should click yes. The host computer will now display the two players (EW) and two robots (NS).



Illustration 6: BBO Table Initialization

The Hard Part: Believe it or not the hardest part of this process is getting the correct board on the teaching table. The director on the host computer should click on 'Deal Source' at the bottom of the table. At the top of the new window click on 'Use Saved Hands'. Click 'Select' next to the title of the folder you created and imported the LIN into.

Method 1. Close the 'Deal Source' screen. On the table screen click on 'Redeal'. The first board will be dealt. Every time the director clicks on 'Redeal', the next board in sequence will be used. Great for a Mitchell movement. If you got your LIN file from The Common Game, after sending The Common Game your ACBLscore gamefile, then boards will be in the correct order.

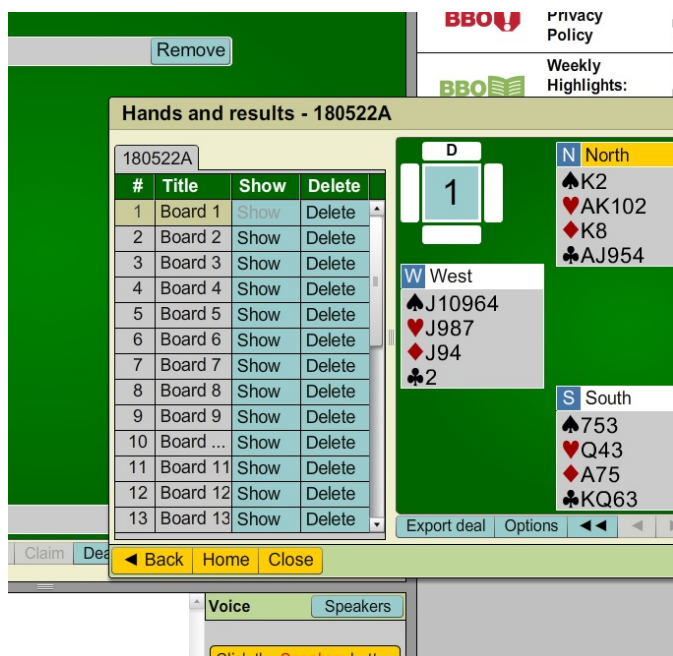


Illustration 7: Select a Hand

At the bottom of the displayed board, there is a button marked EXPORT DEAL, click it. The menu in Illustration 8 appears. Click on UPLOAD DEAL TO TABLE. The deal is now on the teaching table, available for the player. You can leave this screen on top and visible. When the players finish the board and enter the score, you just click show for the next board and upload it to the table.

Warning: If you use method 2 to use board 10 first, as an example. You must use method 2 to get board 11. Pressing 'Redeal' at that time will give the next board from the last board chosen using method 1. Let me repeat. Using method 2 to jump to a board, does not reset the last board used with method 1. Pressing 'Redeal' give the next board from the sequential (method 1) selection.

Method 2. While the teaching table is being displayed click on 'Hands and Results' in the BBO toolbar.. The list of folders will appear. Click on 'Show', next to the folder for this games hand records'. The list of available boards will now display (see Illustration 7.) Click 'SHOW next to the board you want to send to the teaching table. (Note: This is a reverse highlight. The board shown is greyed out. All the other boards will have show in black.)

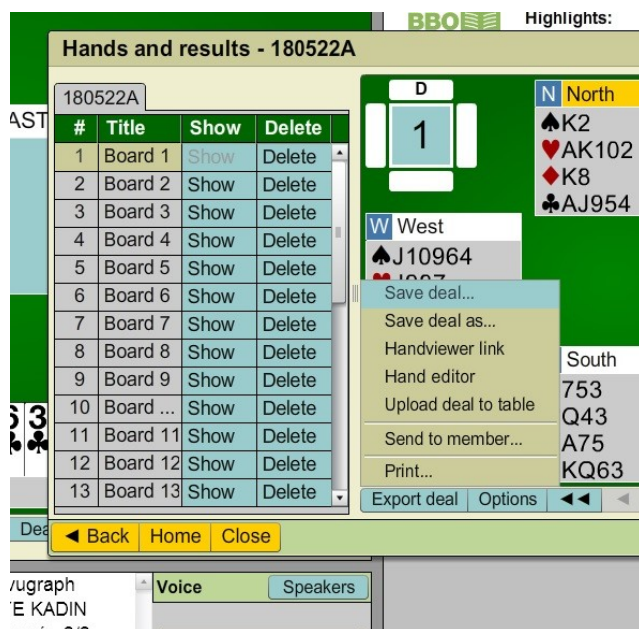


Illustration 8: Send a Hand

Play and Scoring: The hand is played, then East or West will enter the contract and results in the ES table unit. E-W self accept. Unfortunately the Director must load the new board into the training table. BBO does not know how many boards you are playing per round and you don't want to give the players access to all the hand records. Wash, Rinse, and repeat until the round is finished.

If you use the robots during a StaC or a special club game you will pay the sanction fees for the robots.

Questions?

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