

With reference to the minutes of the last committee meeting, I am sending you a copy of the paper I wrote at the end of May with my thoughts on Online teaching of Bridge.

This was forwarded to Lorna Watson, Donna Wright and Jacks Morecambe at EBED on 7th June.

To date, I have not received any reply.

### **Online Teaching and Bridge**

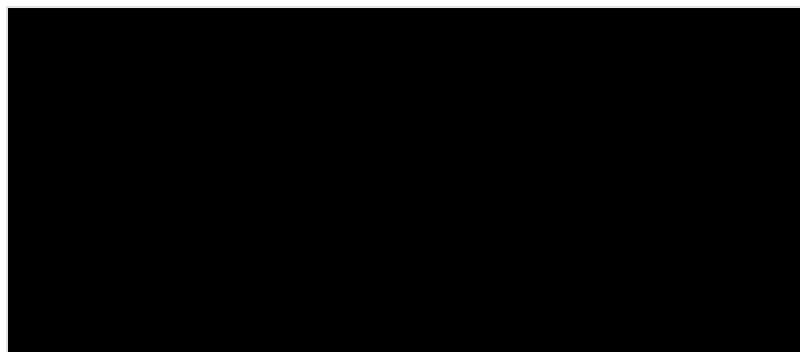
I am a Bridge teacher based in Kent. I am very keen to promote teaching online so I wanted to put forward my thoughts based on my own experiences over the last few months. I very much hope that this insight may be helpful to EBED.

My personal feeling is that we are in this for the long haul. We all know that, at the moment, right across Europe, even in countries that are starting to ease their lockdown, you still may not have gatherings of more than 10 people.

I do not believe, in the foreseeable future, that the UK Government will allow Bridge Clubs to reconvene. The logistics of upwards of 24 people sitting at small tables, sharing cards and bidding boxes with no possible way to practice social distancing is inconceivable at present. When you then factor in the age and/or pre-existing medical conditions of many bridge players it becomes obvious that it will be many more months before we will be in a position to consider playing bridge again face to face. It may, in fact, not be possible at all without a reliable vaccine or at least proven medication to alleviate symptoms in those who are badly affected.

However, I do think that we have a golden opportunity for the EBU and EBED to promote learning or playing bridge online. Public Health England has published new guidance setting out principles to follow to help people to manage their mental health during the Covid crisis. The following link shows the full list:

[Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)



**Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of co...**

You will see that PHE suggest focusing on a hobby or learning a new skill, maintaining contact with friends and family via telephone and video calls, they suggest considering how to connect with others, joining an online class, and keeping your mind active by doing something you enjoy.

Clearly, learning to play bridge online can fulfil all of these. If the EBU were to use social media platforms and the media in general to promote learning or playing bridge, I believe we could help people to get through what is proving to be a very difficult time for many. It would also introduce new members to the EBU and eventually might even increase membership of clubs in the future. There may also be the added bonus of sales of items online from the Bridge Warehouse.

There are benefits for teachers who may continue to teach bridge online after this crisis is finally over. Those teachers will not only be able to work from home but they will also be able to teach students anywhere in the world. For example, I have two students in separate groups who are currently living in France but they have easily been able to continue with their studies through my online lessons.

There are also benefits for students who will have learned a skill they can build on and they will meet new friends online in lessons. From my own experience students love online lessons – they like chatting at coffee time and it gives them a real lift in spirits to be seeing others (almost) face to face. If the students are local, once the social distancing restrictions have been lifted they may have a readymade new circle of friends to meet in person.

To be able to offer this, clearly, we will need yet more bridge teachers who are willing to provide online lessons.

I have achieved this with my own courses but it has taken many long hours, over several weeks to get to my current position. There are others in Kent who are now enjoying similar success – but only, like me, by spending a great deal of time and effort in coming to grips with this unfamiliar technology. Sadly, it seems we are in the minority as I believe many EBED teachers have been unable or unwilling to step into this new territory.

I believe they might yet but they need more help. The tutorials delivered by EBED were excellent but not every teacher will have taken advantage of them. I still think more could be done – specifically aimed at those who have little or no experience with computers and who are daunted by the whole idea.

I feel a structured, clear step by step guide should be produced and delivered to every trained EBED teacher giving much more detail into some of the topics Jacks described in her tutorials – such as:-

How to use Zoom to teach students including sharing whiteboards

The actual mechanics of negotiating the screens in BBO rather than a quick overview.

The basic logistics of getting students to move from the Zoom screen to BBO whilst leaving the original screen open

How to download practice hands as Lin Files from the Teachers Zone and transfer them to BBO

How to teach Minibridge online using BBO

How to use No Fear Bridge – especially helpful for bidding practice in class and for setting homework

How to write and deliver a Powerpoint presentation

Structuring online lessons and the different teaching methods you need to use

Teachers should also be directed towards the excellent Zoom Tutorials available online and the NFB tutorial which Leigh Harding did. There are also very good demonstrations on various subjects on YouTube.

To summarise, I believe we have a real opportunity for potential students, teachers, EBED, and the EBU to all benefit from the current circumstances. We surely must regard that as a positive in what have been very challenging times for us all.

Pat Welsh

21<sup>st</sup> May 2020