WOODSPRING ONLINE CASUAL LOUNGE

Our Woodspring Online collaboration between the Kingston Seymour and the Clevedon & Portishead bridge clubs has been a great success but we've found it impractical to play on evenings when there's an SCBA County League match as so many of our regular players and most of our directors are involved in that competition.

On those evenings we can't all play together, we'll set up RealBridge sessions in which members can practice their bridge or just play socially with other members or their friends in casual foursomes. The link to those sessions will be published on the website a day or two in advance.

You could of course decide with your friends to play on a casual table on BBO (which is free of charge) if you're all familiar with that platform. You could even make that decision when you've logged into RealBridge to see who else is there, but you'll need to use the chat facility if you're all still in the lobby or actually sit at a table to talk. BBO doesn't have built-in audio and video capabilities, but you could, for example, use Zoom or FaceTime alongside your BBO session to provide that. It does give you a comparison with other tables which have played the same boards and, as already mentioned, it's free of charge for a casual table. Your choice!

If you do decide to use RealBridge, the process is simple:

1. You gather a group of four players and tell them how to find the link, log in and join your table.

2. You email your club treasurer to let them know you're going to play and that they should charge your account. The cost will be just £1.50 for the whole table, with nothing being charged if you don't play. You could of course send that email after playing if you're not sure whether or not you're going to (or which platform you'll use) but PLEASE don't forget to do it!

3. You can plan to start play anytime which suits you and to finish anytime. The session will be open all day so you can play in the mornings, afternoons or evenings – or even overnight if you're that keen or are playing with friends in other parts of the world.

4. You can play up to 20 boards – and can play fewer than that and then return to the table to play more of them later (as long as it's on the same day) if you wish.

5. When you log in (your name is all that's required if you don't have an EBU number), choose a table where you can see your friends or, if you're the first to arrive, where boards haven't already been played – showing a current board number of 1.0 under the table number. If you do join a table where the current board number (now shown towards the top-left of the screen) is not 1, simply leave it and join another one.

6. As soon as you're all there, you can start to play.

7. Note that, because these are set up as practice or social bridge sessions, the only comparison with other tables you will see are where other people have played in the same session – but there will be no IMPs or Matchpoints calculated. You can of course choose to use Chicago or simple rubber bridge scoring as you possibly would if you were playing socially face to face.

8. Whether or not you choose to score, you'll always be able to use the double-dummy analysis and the 'par' result shown against each of the boards (behind the 'scores' button) to help you discuss how you might have bid and played it differently – or for a more experienced player or a bridge teacher to visit the table (as a director) and help you in that process.

9. Note that the sessions do not have a director although one might drop in from time to time to see that everything is running smoothly. If you do have a problem, it's much more likely than anything else to be with one of the player's connections, and our document on minimising the risk of that (which you can find on our RealBridge page) will help with most of those.

10. Also note that if there are two or more players sat near one another, you're likely to hear echo or the screech of audio feedback. This isn't unique to RealBridge (you'd probably, for example, also get it on Zoom with two people using different devices near one another) and can usually be resolved by simply muting the speakers and the microphone on one of the devices – when you'll still be able to hear and be heard via the speaker and microphone on the other.

Sessions will be 'closed' very shortly after their date, but you'll still be able to look back at the scores for a few days after that by clicking on the link on the RealBridge Lounge page.