

Game Setup and Formats

Q: How is stratification decided?

A: The field is divided into 3 approximately equal strata, based on the average MP holding of the pair. This is a recent change, and matches what we do in our face to face games. Because stratification depends on who chose to play that day, limits can vary greatly from one game to another. Recent "C" strat limits in open games range from 144 to 556. In our 499er game, we have had a C strat limit as low as 28.

Q v1: Have you considered running games of 21 boards with 6-minutes per board?

Q v2: We always finish the round early. Why don't you reduce the clock to 6 minutes?

Q v3: I feel rushed. Have you thought about putting more time on the clock?

Q v4: If 21 minutes is too long for 3 boards, and 18 minutes is too short, why not use 19 or 20 minutes?

A: We field frequent suggestions from well-meaning club members regarding the format of the games we run on BBO. While making no claims that what we are doing is perfect, we would like all those involved to understand the reasoning, and some of the limitations of what we are working with.

When we started running online games, we chose to follow the same format that the majority of other clubs were using - 18 boards and 7 minutes/board. This is still the most common arrangement. Once our players gained more experience, we received more requests for 21 boards at 6 minutes. Our current schedule provides 2 games per week at 21/6 - on Thursday evening and Friday afternoon. All others remain at 18/7.

[More pages...](#)

[Click above to see all pages or to download.](#)

We do not have the option of 19 or 20 minutes for 3 boards; the system forces us to choose a whole number of minutes **per board**.

We set the clock to 6 minutes for the 21-board games and 7 minutes for the 18-board games to keep the total scheduled time consistent. Some members have made it clear that they don't want to spend any longer in front of their computer. That is why we offer more boards to the "faster" games, but not to the "slower" ones.

When we are using 6 minutes per board, we make the rounds 3 boards to allow a little more cushion in case one of the boards takes a little more time. The only time we tried 6 minutes and 2 boards, we heard from too many players who felt rushed.

In any case, once all tables are finished playing, the next round starts right away. So, although you may wait a lot, if you are waiting, **SOMEBODY** is still playing (and possibly feeling rushed!).

Q: Why not run more Howell movements?

A: In fact, there are few situations in which there is much to think about, given that we restrict ourselves to 18 or 21 boards. Within that restriction, our directors may choose the movement they feel is best.

Standard practice is to run Howell movements for the 18-board games if we have less than 6 tables; for the 21-board games it's less than 7. Six tables for 18 boards can be run either way; it makes a "perfect" Mitchell movement - 6 rounds of 3 boards, so every N/S plays every E/W. A Howell movement awards more Masterpoints, but introduces another element of chance, with different pairs getting to "skip" different opponents.

Within our limitations, a Howell movement is not possible with 7 or more tables, which requires 26 or more boards. Not everybody believes that more

is better when it comes to the number of boards. If players sign up for an 18 or 21 board game, and we change it to 26, because it's a "better movement", we will hear from some unhappy members.