

Movement Options

Pairs

The purposes of a movement are to maximise the number of different opponents played against and the number of score comparisons made with opponents who will appear in the same part of the ranking list. However, this has to be done in a practical way, within the time constraints applied to the session.

A normal club session lasts 3½ hours, which is time to play c26 boards, allowing for a break. It is not deemed sensible to play one board rounds, so the maximum number of opponents that can be played is 13. Thus the ideal number of pairs for a session is 14 playing a 7-Table Full Howell movement, where all pairs play 2 boards against each other pair and all of the 26 boards in play. 26 pairs is the next best number, since this leads to a 13 table Mitchell with all East/West pairs playing against all North/South pairs and playing the full 26 boards that are in circulation.

Clearly it is not practical to limit the number of pairs to either 14 or 26 and so less perfect movements have to be used to fit within the time constraints. The Guidelines for Tournament Directors paper below explains the options currently in use. The Why we Howell paper below explains the reason for using Howell movements for small numbers of tables.

For movements involving more than 26 pairs the maximum number of opponents, 13, is always achieved. However, as can be seen from the table, the percentage of boards played reduces as the size of field rises. This in itself brings in an element of unfairness since not all pairs face the same challenging hands. The percentage of boards played directly affects the number of score comparisons between pairs sitting in the same direction. The actual number depends on the number of tables between the pairs concerned, but the minimum number is 100 less twice the % of boards not played, i.e. for 18 tables the worst case will be that two pairs would only be comparing scores on 44% of the hands (12 of the 36 in play and a missing pair could reduce that to 8.) Clearly this is hardly fair, particularly when other pairs may have as many as 22 comparisons.

The EBU has recently advised that from 1st August 2015 results will not be acceptable for National Grading Scheme purposes if pairs play less than 75% of the boards, i.e. the worst case for score comparisons falls below 50%. For this purpose half tables can be ignored. This means that if we reach 18 tables the standard 18-Table Mitchell movement will not be acceptable.

There are several options available including, running two movements, Eddy or Appendix Mitchells and Web Mitchells. All options require two sets of boards to be Duplimated. Running two movements is not really acceptable, because it reduces the number of opponents played, e.g. splitting 18 into two 9's means only playing 9 instead of 13 opponents out of the 35 other pairs present.

The Mitchell options all use 26 boards so there is no issue with score comparisons. The one favoured by the EBU is the Web Mitchell, which is the simplest from the players' movement point of view. Board movement is also simple, although the initial set up is more complex for the Tournament Director. The method works perfectly for even numbers of tables. For odd numbers of tables a limited amount of board sharing is required

Teams

Setting up a teams movement is generally more complex than for a Pairs event because of the constraint that the same boards have to be played by both halves of the team against the same opposition. In addition it is also highly desirable that teams have played the same opponents before the break, so that they can score at “half time”. The basic requirements of playing as many of the boards in circulation and as many of the opposing teams as possible remain.

There are several types of movement available. The two most commonly used are American Whist and Stagger. American Whist is very similar to the Mitchell movement used in Pairs events and is ideal for odd numbers of teams. It can also be used for even numbers, but has the disadvantage that one opposing team is not played. The Stagger is more complex and ideally requires two sets of boards, but does enable all opponents to be played when there is an even number of teams. Movements for 4 & 6 teams are particularly unwieldy and are not recommended for club evenings. Examples are given below for 12 & 13 table movements.

Thirteen is an ideal number, playing 2-board matches against each of 12 opponents gives a sensible length of session. The movement can be divided into 2 halves of 6 rounds each, with a scoring break in the middle. The recommended movement is the standard American Whist down 2 variant, in which the normal movement is for East/West to move down two tables and the boards to go down one table. To facilitate the scoring break East/West move up 5 tables for the first round. In the second half East/West move up six tables for the first round. The third move would then bring them back to their home table, so that round is a double jump, i.e. down 4 tables, with boards going down 2. This can be used for 14 tables, with one opponent not being played by each team.

The 12 Table Stagger is completely different. The movement is divided into two sessions. In the first all odd teams play each other and all even teams also meet. In the ideal world the room is laid out in 2 parallel lines, with tables 1 & 7 opposite each other. One set of boards moves round each line and the pairs do the standard down 2, boards down 1 movement. In the second session odd teams play against even numbered teams. Again the pair and board movement is standard. The other complication is that this would lead to playing either 22 or 33 boards. To reduce this to a more manageable number it is normal to play 3-board rounds in the first session and 2-board rounds in the second session, giving a total of 27.

For 11 tables the American Whist movement is fine, but playing four 3-board rounds before the break and six 2-board rounds after the break.

For 10 tables the Stagger works well with 3-board rounds throughout.

The recommended movements will be set up on “club standard” on ScoreBridge.

Guidelines for Tournament Directors

Standard session

A standard session is of 3½ hours duration including a 15 min break approximately half way through. The number of boards played varies depending on the number of tables and the movement chosen. The tables below show the movements that should be used and the expected timings for the event, based on 7 mins per board. This is the equivalent of the EBU standard, which is 8 boards per hour including movement.

The recommended movement is generally the simplest which will provide an acceptable degree of score comparison, but minimising the duration of the sit out, if there is an odd number of pairs. (e.g. a 7 table Mitchell is acceptable on a Thursday, but a Howell should be played if there are only 6½ tables.)

Session Timings

Play is scheduled to start at 7:00pm and every effort should be made to ensure that time is not lost before play starts. It is rare that players arrive after 6:55 so the Director and Scorer should be able to achieve a prompt start. However, they should always be mindful of what they will do if there is a “late” arrival.

The break is normally at the half-way point for an even number of rounds and at the first move after half the boards have been played for an odd number of rounds. It should be of 15 mins duration, but may be curtailed if the resulting finish time would be later than 10:35.

Slow Play

The biggest risk of a late finish is caused by slow play. There is no cure, but we can take some action to control the impact on others. All solutions require that the Director and their partner play at a good pace. The move should be called as soon as there are only two tables left in play, or when all the remaining three tables are down to at most 6 cards.

Boards per Round	2	3	4
Start Time	7:00	7:00	7:00
Minutes per board	7	7	7
Minutes for Move	1	1	1
Total Playing Time	3h02	3h09	3h16
Total Moving Time	12	8	6
Break	15	15	15
Finish Time	10:29	10:32	10:37

Tables	Boards per Rounds	Boards in Play	Rounds Played	Rounds not Played at End	Total Boards Played	% of Boards Played
5	5	25	5	0	25	100
6	5	30	5	0	25	83
7	4	28	7	0	28	100
8	4	32	7	0	28	88
9	3	27	9	0	27	100
10	3	30	9	0	27	90
11	3	33	9	2	27	82
12	3	36	9	2	27	75
13	2	26	13	0	26	100
14	2	28	13	0	26	93
15	2	30	13	2	26	87
16	2	32	13	2	26	81
17	2	34	13	4	26	76
18	2	36	13	4	26	72

Note there is a skip in movements with an even number of tables. Hence the number of rounds not played at the end is 1 less than the number of rounds not played

The 5 & 6 table options are set to 5-board rounds, i.e. 25 boards in total, but can be increased to 6-board rounds, i.e. 30 boards in total if required.

Why We Howell

The objective of Duplicate Bridge, as opposed to Rubber, is to compare your performance against that of others with the same cards. This is achieved by keeping the cards in a board and passing that board around the room. It is also desirable to play against as many different opponents as is practical. There are two distinct types of movement, which are aimed at achieving the twin objectives of ensuring that players play as many as possible of the boards in circulation and against as many different opponents as is possible. They are the Mitchell and Howell movements.

The Mitchell movement is the more straightforward. East/West Pairs move up one table at the end of each round and the boards move down one table at the same time. The number of boards per round is calculated to ensure that the moving pairs play as many opponents as possible. Thus we play 4-board rounds with fewer than 9 tables, 3 boards with 9 to 12 tables and 2 boards with 13 tables or more. If there is an even number of tables it is necessary to introduce a skip, to prevent East/West from meeting the hands they started with after moving half way round the room. The arrow-switch technique can also be used, if a single winner is required for the event.

In a Howell movement the majority of the pairs move, so even if you start off East/West you will play North/South as well for roughly half the evening. In a Howell you generally play against the majority of other pairs in the movement. Again this depends on the number of boards to be played and the number of tables in play. It is normal to play either 13 2-board rounds with 7 or more tables and 9 3-board rounds with fewer than 7 tables.

Many players do not like Howell movements because they appear less ordered than Mitchells. Howells are used when there are fewer than 8 full tables to increase the number of opponents played against and to reduce the length of the sit-out, when there is an odd number of pairs. For 7½ tables playing a Mitchell the sit out would be half an hour, whilst a Howell reduces that by half.

The two complaints we hear most about Howells are, I do not like scoring and I do not know where to go. Bridge scoring is complex, but then so is the game, so anyone who can play it should be able to learn to score. Finding your way round is easy. Simply look at the movement card when you sit at your starting table and see who is sat where you are going to move to at the end of the round, then follow them all evening. There are always some stationary pairs to accommodate those who have problems moving round the room.

The alternative to a Howell is to persuade your friends to come to the club. That way we will have more tables and so will not need to play a Howell.

Phil Green
Sunday 28th October 2007