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Bridge in the New Normal September 2020

1 message

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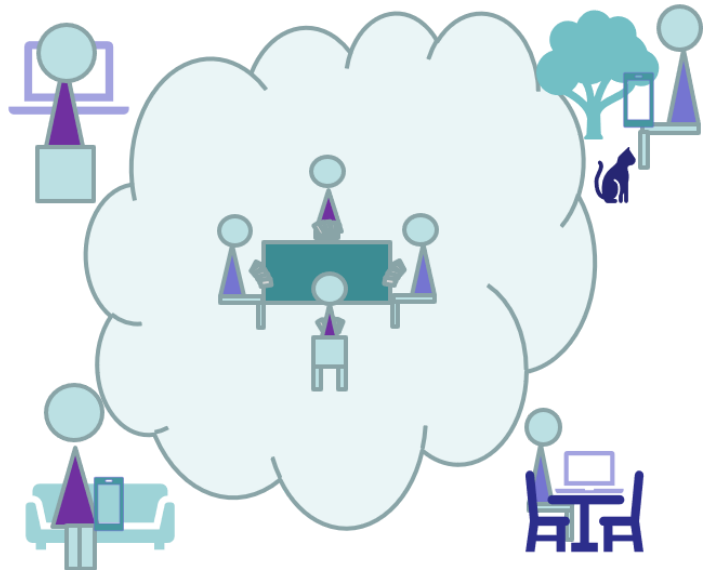
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**New
Normal
News**

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Bridgeinthewnormal



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Face to Face or Clubhouse Bridge

At least seven clubs have run clubhouse sessions and there are stories from some of them below.

Then we had new government guidance. As ever, it was scattered and ambiguous. There have been widely different interpretations. An article below addresses this.

Reminder of the Zoom Conference

There will be a Zoom conference to discuss returning to Face to Face bridge and other new normal matters.

The afternoon of Wednesday 16th September at 2pm. Many of you have already asked for an invitation.

Please use the button below to receive the link.

Send Zoom link for New Normal Bridge Zoom Conference

The plan is to offer a zoom meeting to discuss bridge in the new normal once a month. The next one will be Wednesday October 21st.

A possible theme is teaching in the new normal, however the way things have moved recently, it is quite possible that a different theme would be more helpful. Please let me have your views.

Returning to Face to Face Bridge

Northampton BC

After 5 months in lockdown, Northampton Bridge Club reopened on Monday 17th August. We plan to hold sessions on Monday evenings and Wednesday afternoons.

Although the club can hold up to 15 tables, we decided to limit the capacity to 7 tables spread between the two rooms to allow maximum space between the tables. We carried out a very detailed risk assessment beforehand, based on Nicky's excellent assessment and decided to increase the size of the tables and to place Perspex screens diagonally across the tables.

We also carried out further safety measures including insisting on pre-booking, taking the temperature of all players on entry into the club, such as ensuring that only North handled the boards and tablets. Players were required to wear face coverings on entering the club and walking round the room, but it was left to their discretion whether to wear them when seated at a table.

We had 4½ tables for the first session. Play was much slower than usual while people got used to the new regime but everyone enjoyed playing face to face bridge after so long.

If only my bridge had been better!

John Josephs Northampton BC



Returning to Teaching Face to Face Bridge

Kenilworth BC

Since the Club has been closed it occurred to me that the main room was not being used in the evenings. It seemed a reasonable idea to get Bridge lessons going again with a limited number of students as we would be able to socially distance from each other within such a large room. I had been playing with a number of students on BBO using Houseparty app to video link everyone together. We were able to play and make some comments as to the bidding and the play of the cards.

They were keen to improve their Bridge knowledge and I suggested using the space of the Club so we could get together in a more structured learning environment. Since the normal Bridge lessons last for three terms over two years I was at pains to point out that we would be teaching one subject as thoroughly as we could rather than go over the whole syllabus.

So we have started with No Trump bidding from 1NT to 2NT's through transfers, Stayman and quantitative bidding. The first lesson was all talk but I have now introduced play through BBO which has proved very popular.

Points to note :- We have asked the students to park away from each other, to enter the Club wearing face coverings and to sanitise their hands as they enter the room. They sit at individual tables which are covered with cloths which are taken away after the session and stored for a week before re-use. Couples from the same household can sit at one table. If they wish to take notes they must bring their own pencils and paper, similarly if they need a drink during the evening they must bring their own. Any teacher notes from the class are sent by e mail.

We have asked all attendees to sign a statement agreeing with the terms and conditions and to supply contact details. Social distancing must be maintained at all times particularly as they depart. We are fortunate to have a TV screen on the wall of the main playing room which is connected to a computer. We can set up a teaching table on BBO which allows all the hands to be displayed on the TV at one time. Four students are asked to turn their backs on the TV and to log in to BBO on their tablets or smart phones. It is possible to find appropriate hands for the subject being studied on BBO by simply re-dealing the hands until the right hands are dealt.

The four players then bid and play the hand while the others watch. We then - as a group - discuss the bids and the possible alternative plays. We intend to study separately, suit bidding, overcalls, defence and play of the cards. I hope the vaccine is found soon so we can return to normality.

Terry Bloomfield from the Kenilworth Bridge Club

Returning to Face to Face Bridge

Visit to Rugby Village Bridge Club

I had heard so much about Nicky Bainbridge's efforts to return the Rugby Village Bridge Club, to live and safe play. I had previously exchanged my views on the "Road Back" but felt that I should make the effort to see things for myself. So, I arranged to meet

her at the club, in Dunchurch on Monday 17th August after firstly agreeing with her safety instructions. I took the opportunity to help erect the Perspex screens, discovering for myself the problems that are involved and how Nicky has overcome some of the transporting, storing and erecting issues, alas, in doing so three of the four sets of screens have cracked but these have been fixed with the aid of Sellotape!

As members, who had pre-booked, arrived they took their places in an orderly queue outside the bridge room, waiting to be greeted, in their partnerships and whilst being guided to their seats, reminded of the safety measures they should adopt. All went ahead smoothly and despite face covering, everybody appeared to be smiling and comfortable. I took the opportunity, when most players had removed their masks, to speak to them, as they prepared for play; and without exception all of them felt safe and very grateful, for the efforts that have been made to allow us to return to live play, even if they didn't fully understand all of the physical effort that Nicky just took as part of the job – a job well done!

Terry Collier
World Card Sports

Bridge for Pleasure - Information Web Site

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Government Corona Guidance Sept 2020

In August and early September there has been a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases. Overall case levels remain low. Hospitalisations have continued to fall. Death rates are low.

The government has issued new rules making it clear that no more than six people can gather in social/domestic situations.

Since July bridge has been conducted under the different guidelines for community facilities:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

The updated version bans all events for more than 30 people however it clearly states:

"Community facilities following COVID-19 secure guidelines can host more than 6 people in total,"

On the 10th Sept the EBU posted the following on its home page, and sent an email to all clubs containing the following:

"The government has just announced that starting on Monday 14th September, social gatherings of more than six people will be illegal in England. Although there will be some exceptions to this, none seem to cover the situation of any bridge clubs.

This removes any doubt there may have been in our earlier advice to clubs about whether clubs can run any face-to-face games, and makes clear that this will not be possible until such time as further changes or clarifications to the rules may be announced."

This information is wrong. Any club that has made the decision to cancel an event on the basis of this wrong information should claim their lost revenue back from the EBU.

Of course most clubs are not open, and many may never open again, but it is legal to be open at present providing the COVID-19 secure guidelines are followed.

Contrasting Bridge Base Online and Bridge Club Live for Teaching

Showing, practising and coaching the game

The online playing platforms Bridge Base Online and Bridge Club Live allow teachers to set up teaching tables, use their own chosen deals, or random deals and encourage learners to join them in practice. The two sites are quite different in their approach, in the tools available, and in their

economics.

The health situation has led to a sudden major increase in numbers of players using these sites. It has also led to pressure for new functions both in the creation of virtual clubs and competitions and for online teaching facilities. They have both responded with increases in capacity and additional functions. They are still changing rapidly so it's always worth checking on the latest situation.

Access and Support for Teachers

Bridge Base Online is free to join so anyone wishing to teach can create one or more registered names. There is a help section on BBO explaining some of the main features of the teaching area. It's always worth searching YouTube for videos and there are new contributions all the time. BBO doesn't seem to have any particular status for teachers, any user seems to be able to teach. Bridge Base Online relies on income from advertising and from entry fees to formal competitions.

Bridge Club Live has long had a coaching corner where volunteers are organised to be available at certain periods.

You can apply to be a recognised teacher on Bridge Club Live and then receive updates from the lead teacher. Again there is an ever changing set of relevant YouTube videos. Bridge Club Live generally relies on subscriptions from members. Teachers need to be full, rather than Social members.

BCL has added a new area to the site specifically aimed at teachers teaching classes needing more than one table. In this area there is a "Lobby", a Practice Room, and private rooms where registered teachers can book regular weekly slots. The Practice Room contains random-dealt hands and is open 24/7.

Access and Support for Learners

Bridge Base Online is free to join so anyone wishing to learn can create one or more registered names. Access to

the practice side of BBO is free. Teachers and learners may meet up at random or make arrangements to play and learn.

Bridge Club Live income is based on subscription and, in principle, learners have to pay a subscription like all other users. There are two levels of BCL membership. Social membership provides access to the Social Rooms, the Coaching Corner and the Teaching Area. Full membership adds access to the competition rooms. There are introductory offers, and there are deep discounts that teachers can arrange for their students. At the time of writing, the discounts give students Social Membership for less than £1 a month and Full Membership for less than £2 a month. Alternatively EBU members can have a trial 50 day full membership.

The Coaching Corner is in the main part of the site and open all day. There are two periods on Mondays staffed by volunteer teachers where any BCL member can receive coaching. At other times there are often volunteers available to help learners. Teachers can arrange to meet their learners.

Creating and Using Tables

Bridge Base Online allows anyone to set up a teaching table and control whether it is publicly visible, who can join and who can kibitz.

The bookable teaching rooms on Bridge Club Live allow groups of learners to sit down and play at more than one table. The learners access their teacher's room using a PIN. There are some facilities for addressing multiple or individual tables.

Creating and Using Deals

Both BCL and BBO allow teachers to load deals of their choosing for play. BBO allows several sets of boards that can remain indefinitely on the site.

BCL allows teachers to load a single set of boards for their allotted slot using a pin. This set is replaced by a new set to play a different topic although some teachers combine several

lessons' boards in the set of 32, so only need to upload a new set every few weeks.

BCL gives the flexibility to choose boards by number at the table. (I can't seem to work out how to do anything but play each board once on BBO and automatically proceed to the next). The loaded deal(s) can be inspected on both sites making sure they are correct.

Communicating with Learners while Playing

Using video conferences such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype etc is the easiest way for a teacher and learners to talk, listen, see and be seen. By sharing a screen the teacher can demonstrate the play on an online web site. By simultaneously logging on to BBO or BCL and Zoom or whatever the learners can take part and discuss the play.

However, each site has some communication functions that can help to do this without a video conferencing tool

In Summary

Some things are easier and less formal on BBO. Teachers don't need to book slots and load deals to a particular slot. They don't need to have or give out PINs. They can keep costs for learners at an absolute minimum. Learners can sign up and take part in a teaching table for free on BBO. Teachers can sit at the table in as many seats as they need to. They can use all seats to demonstrate situations two, going to three, times a week. They can make up a table if they have only one or two students. A few more students can kibitz and swap in and out of seats.

BCL requires more structure and recognition as a teacher. It is inherently designed for bigger classes. Learners have to pay to become BCL members but there are deep discounts that teachers can pass on to new learners.

Bigger classes may use Zoom for plenary introductions and closing, but break out rooms for discussions at each table.

This newsletter

is planned to be issued once a month, mid month.

It is written and distributed on an entirely non profit basis, takes no advertising or commission.

Future topics

Topics under consideration include...

Using cross table screens for face to face bridge

Other social distancing measures

Quarantining and cleaning

Online teaching tools and techniques

Experience of clubs holding club competitions online

Social games in the new normal

Please suggest anything you would like to see. Please pass on your news, or submit items, especially on progress on Face to Face and online teaching.

[Click to suggest a topic \(contributions welcome\)](#)

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