

PLAYING and ADMINISTRATING BRIDGE IN BBO

Having set-up and played in a number of BBO matches, others may find it helpful to know more details.

Registration

Before you can start playing in BBO, you need to register your details.

On the BBO web-site, click 'Play bridge now'; 'Become a member (free!)'.

You then need to provide a 'User Name' – the more common ones will probably already have been chosen, but just keep trying until you are able to provide a unique one. Then enter your own password (repeated). You must then choose your 'standard', and 'country'. Other details are optional (don't supply an ACBL number).

Agree to the terms and conditions, and click 'Register'. BBO will then send you an email with a link for you to confirm your registration.

You are then ready to play.

Host Set-Up

There are many formats available within BBO, most of them playing against 'strangers'. However the two formats which you can set-up (there are more), whereby you are only involving friends or local players are:

1. 8-Players In Two Teams.

You play as a pre-defined pair, with team-mates, against another similar team - a head-to-head match.

Contact all the other players, advising them of a start time. Arrange to log-on, say 10 minutes before this time (there can be log-on difficulties at peak times – early evening).

The host is responsible for the set-up of the game, as follows:

Having logged onto BBO, select '**Competitive**', '**Teams Matches**', '**Create Team Match**'

The host then enters an event title e.g. 'Glamorgan Teams', description (can be left blank), Name Of Team1, Name Of Team 2.

Before creating the actual match, you need to go into '**options**'. You then need to set the number of boards you intend to play (16 is an ideal number - approx 2hrs.). The only other setting to consider is 'Barometer Scoring': with this 'on' a running imp score is shown after each board (friendly match); if 'off' players can only see the result at the end of the match (tournament match).

Next '**reserve seats**'. Put in the logon-names of the NS/EW for each team. Enter the players for Team 1 and Team 2 – do not enter their initial table seatings.

You then '**Create Team Match**'. BBO will send out invites to all the players (except the host if he is playing), for them to accept. You may get warning messages (Name 1 not yet logged on). Just persevere until they do log-on. Players will see your profile together with an accept (and reject) button, and are then expected to accept the invitation (the host is automatically accepted). The match automatically starts when all have accepted.

(Don't worry if you get an error 'can't create a team match.....', this can be ignored - at least I've always ignored and all seems to be well).

2. 4-Players In A Casual Tournament (but a proper result will be obtained)

You play as a pre-defined pair, against your other pair at the one table.

The two pairs are actually part of a larger tournament (~20 - 40 tables), and all the boards played are x-impd with all the other tables. What this means is that for each board, the NS score on your table is compared with all the other tables' EW scores as if they were your team mates, and simplistically the total imps is then divided by the number of tables to give a NS x-imp score. Similarly your table's EW score is compared with all the other tables' NS scores as if they were team-mates to also give an EW x-imp (this will be the inverse of the NS score).

The host should contact all the other players, advising them of a start time. Arrange to log-on say 10 minutes before this time (there can be log-on difficulties at peak times – early evening). The host is responsible for the set-up of the game.

To set-up, the host selects '**Casual**', '**Start A Table**'.

Enter a '**description**' (blank, or whatever....), '**Reserve Seats**'.

Enter the player logon-names into the appropriate seats. As each name is entered an invitation is issued if the player is logged-on. Players not logged-on are shown in red (maybe a telephone call to prompt them to log-on).

Start Table - Competitive Game'

When the players are logged-on they can accept the invitation, and the match automatically starts when they've all accepted.

The duration is at the discretion of the players – it is not actually defined during set-up.

Playing In BBO

Some of the facilities within BBO can be somewhat confusing – some of the more common issues are:

Invitation To Play

If you are not the host, you will receive an invitation to join a table. This should be accepted. Don't be concerned if you receive a second (or further) invitations; this probably means that the host is having difficulties in setting up the table (or BBO is 'full'). Just accept all these invitations, you should eventually be able to start play.

If playing on a tablet, the 'accept' button may not be visible if the device is in landscape orientation. So if expecting an invitation, change to portrait in order to accept, and then revert back to landscape when the game starts).



Full Screen View

When initially logged-on you will have a message panel occupying the right-hand-side of the screen. Press 'Messages' to hide, and this will then convert to full width display.

Screen Layout

Each player has their hand shown at the bottom of the table, irrespective of their actual compass position. So for example, if you are designated as 'East', South will be to your left, North to your right. Partner obviously is always facing you. The table host also has a 'crown' next to his name.

The board number is shown in a small square icon either alongside or at the top of the table layout. The icon also has a 'D' to indicate the dealer, and the border colour will indicate the vulnerability.

When the contract is established, a small icon appears highlighting the contract. At any time during the play of the hand, this can be clicked to show the bidding sequence (not allowed in 'normal' bridge).

There is also a small panel which indicates the running match score (in imps.). In the case of a head-to-head teams this is only shown if the host has set 'barometer scoring' to 'on', and is updated when both tables have played the board (they are played in sequence at both tables). In a 4-player 'Casual Tournament' this indicates the x-imps to date (this may change as other tables play the board).

Making A Bid

When it's your turn to bid, a bidding panel will be displayed above your hand. To actually make a bid, choose a number (e.g. 3). Only then will the suits be displayed. Choose the appropriate suit (e.g. ♠), and '3♠' will then appear in the table bidding display.

Systems

During the game any player can access another player's system by clicking on the player name. However what is displayed is very much a system summary, and may be out-of-date.

Alerting Procedure

The main thing to be aware of is that you **self-alert**. There are no specific rules, just use common sense, which includes alerting bids above 3NT.

The correct procedure is: enter the meaning of the bid, press 'alert', make your bid. A small square box now appears on each of your opponent's screen (not your partner's). If further explanation is required, the opponents can return the message to the alerter. This box can be somewhat annoying, particularly during the play. To remove it, just click on the white heading.

If you forget to alert your bid, click on your bid on the table display. A box is shown, into which you can now give an explanation.

If during the play you need to ask a question use the message/chat at the bottom of the screen. Sometimes opponents use the chat box to ask a question about a bid. In this situation, when you reply, your partner is bound to see the meaning. Avoid if possible.

Incorrect Bid

If you make an incorrect bid (strictly speaking, an unintended bid – not a change of mind), or if you click the wrong card (again – unintended, not a change of mind), you can request an 'undo' from your opponents. Click on the three horizontal bar menu for this option (usually opponents will allow, but don't do it too often).

Declaring Or Defending The Hand

If a suit contract is declared, BBO will re-arrange the suit order display such that the trump suit is on the left. So, during the bidding if you are hovering over a lead-card, be aware the card's position may change as soon as the contract is established.

Claiming

You can claim (or partially claim) the remaining tricks by pressing the yellow 'claim' box. Opponents will either accept or reject. (If say only two or three tricks remain, it's hardly worth doing – it takes just as much time).

View Last Trick

At your turn to play, you can click on the 'L' shaped trick-counter to display the cards played to the previous trick (not the case in normal 'face-to-face' bridge).

Chat Box

To ensure that you are chatting to the table (and not to spectators, or the lobby), ensure that the blue box at the left-hand side says 'Table' (if you are the host this may not necessarily be the case). If not, click on the box and amend.

Enter your message in the message area, and then press chat.

Chat is not restricted to formal bridge messages, but use this as if you are at a normal table, congratulating or thanking partner etc. (but not gloating). Do not be abusive in your use of the chat area (BBO have strict rules on any abusive content).

You can also chat 'privately' to other players (but not your partner), by replacing 'table' with 'private'. A separate box will appear asking for the log-on name of the person with whom you want to chat. After your message remember to change the 'chat name' back to 'table'.

If playing in a long match, it's courtesy to tell your opponents what your basic system is (not too much detail). This can be done directly via the chat facility, but there is a shortcut. Beforehand, click in the chat area, choose 'chat manager', and you can set-up a system 'one liner'. Save your system, and then when you want to use this system, again choose 'chat manager', click on the system, and send to the table. You can save multiple systems for different partners – choose the appropriate one.

Messages sometimes appear to be in a foreign language (similar to phone text messages for the more elderly amongst us) – unintelligible to non-bridge players. Frequent abbreviations are: wpp – well played partner; wdp – well done partner; bol – best of luck; glp – good luck partner; sry – sorry; wd opps – well done opponents; imo – in my opinion; npp – no problem partner; thks/tx/ty – thanks; etc.

End Of Match

When your table has finished (and the other table, if playing a head-to-head), you can easily see the results on the board by selecting the 'History' tab down the right hand side. Then choose either 'My Table' or 'Recent Tournaments', and select the latest appropriate match. The results at both tables are shown. To display the hand record for any particular board, click on the board number.

On any board shown, the auction is shown in the middle of the table, with the opening leader shown with a yellow title. You can re-play the whole of the play by clicking on the three-bar menu, and choosing 'Advance Trick-by-Trick'; and in conjunction with 'Next Trick' the whole hand can be re-played'.

(There is a facility to show the optimum play or defence. Choose 'Show Double-Dummy', and a small circular symbol will appear on top of every card of the hand in play. This indicates the number of overtricks that will result if that card is played. When you click 'Next Trick' or 'Next Card', BBO will pay one of the optimum cards, and display that trick).

Finally remember to log-off.

Tony Haworth