



SKY-BLUE BOOK

Supplement to the Blue Book and White Book for online bridge

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0 Introduction

0.1 General

This book (the *Sky-Blue Book*) consists of EBU regulations and interpretations for online bridge competitions organised by the EBU. It is written to supplement the *Laws of Duplicate Bridge* (2017), The EBU *Blue Book* and The EBU *White Book* where the provisions of those laws and regulations are not applicable for online bridge. The title was chosen to reflect the mixture of *Blue* and *White* and the notion of bridge in the cloud(s).

The current scope of this book is for EBU events, where the EBU is the tournament organiser, and has been agreed by the Chief Tournament Director. Some sections are only relevant to pairs events or events played specifically on BBO.

In the future, the scope of this book may be extended to events where the EBU is the Regulating Authority, and may be recommended for other events in England; and formally agreed by the Laws & Ethics Committee. The intention is for this material to be absorbed into the Blue Book and White Book in August 2022.

The *Laws of Duplicate Bridge* are written and promulgated by the World Bridge Federation's Laws Committee (WBFLC). The WBFLC may produce a supplement to the *Laws of Duplicate Bridge* (2017) to apply to online bridge, which may supersede some of the provisions of this book. There is also an earlier law book for online bridge, which the EBU has not adopted.

This book was begun in April 2020 and is effective from May 2020. This material is evolving: subsequent versions will be effective when available from the EBU website.

0.2 Acknowledgements

This *Sky-Blue Book* is published by the EBU: edited by the Deputy Chief Tournament Director and approved by the Chief Tournament Director. There has been input from the EBU Tournament Directors who are running the online games, and from members of the Laws and Ethics committee. This version follows a meeting of the Laws and Ethics Committee on 10 September 2020.

0.3 Other Tournament Organisers

Tournament organisers other than the EBU may choose to adopt these regulations.

0.4 Contacts

If you have any comments or queries, please address them to the current editor: Robin Barker (Deputy Chief TD), email robin@ebu.co.uk, telephone: 01296 317223.

0.5 Numbering

This document is numbered in a similar fashion to the EBU *White Book*, but it is numbered independently from the laws and regulation which it supplements. The material is organised in the order it appears in the Blue Book and then White Book, finishing (as the White Book does) with the laws themselves.

0.6 Abbreviations

References to the Blue Book and the White Book will be indicated by 'BB' and 'WB', respectively. Other abbreviations are from the White Book (WB 0.6).

1 Disclosure and Systems

1.1 Disclosure of Systems (BB 2, BB 3)

Pairs should upload a system card to the platform, which should be available to opponents during the round. The system card should include agreements for bidding and carding.

In the absence of an online system card, the pair should 'pre-announce' at the beginning of each round – this should include basic bidding system and carding arrangements.

Players may consult their own system card and other notes at any stage (based on 'Except as the Regulating Authority allows' in Law 20G3).

Note This general condition could be overridden by the specific conditions of contest for a tournament.

1.2 Alerting and announcing (BB 4, WB 1.3)

EBU events on BBO and RealBridge use 'self-alerting' – players alert their own calls, not their partner's.

This section assumes that alerting and explaining is using 'self-alerting' and the chat facilities, as provided by BBO and RealBridge. Events on RealBridge with 'partner-alerting' should follow the face-to-face alerting and announcing procedures in the EBU Blue Book.

1.2.1 What to alert

A player should alert any call that would be alerted or announced (by partner), as defined in BB 4 – so that includes NT opening ranges, transfers, Stayman and opening two-bids, as well as more obviously conventional calls. Opening bids which are unexpected are alerted – including (potential) canapé and 'always unbalanced'.

Above 3NT, the rules in BB 4.B.4 do not apply for alerting bids and passes: bids and passes above 3NT should continue to be alerted if artificial or unexpected.

However, doubles and redoubles above 3NT need only be alerted if required by BB 4.B.4 (c) + (d). Note that some artificial doubles/redoubles above 3NT may not be explained by opponents, and players should routinely ask for an explanation.

Players must alert even if the pair have a system card uploaded.

1.2.2 How to alert/explain

Players should provide an explanation with the alert – they should type the explanation before making the call, and then when the call is made the explanation will be visible to the opponents. The partner does not see the alert, so there is no harm in alerting too much.

1.2.3 Asking questions

Whether or not a call was alerted, and whether or not an explanation was provided, an opponent can request a (fuller) explanation by clicking on the call. The opponents can also ask (further) questions by chatting to the player making the call – when answering a question, a player should send the answer to both opponents (using 'chat' to 'Opponents'); and not send a message to the 'Table', which partner would be able to see.

1.2.4 Asking questions of both players

It should not be necessary to ask the partner of the player making a call to explain the call. Players are not allowed to try to establish if the other side are having a misunderstanding.

If the opponents ask such a question, in the first instance, the partner should (politely) point out that the original player should answer the question.

If the opponents insist that the partner answer questions, then the TD should be called. If there is no TD (e.g. in a match 'played privately'), the players will have to achieve a resolution that allows the hand to continue, by open discussion (via 'Table' chat), and reserve their rights.

1.3 Misexplanations on BBO

Experience has shown that it is possible to give the wrong explanation, even when players are explaining their own calls. It is likely that the explanation will be a description of the player's hand but not the correct explanation according to the partnership agreements. This can occur if the player forgets the system, or if they 'misclick' and do not make their intended call.

If there is a misexplanation, the opponents are entitled to a correct explanation of the agreement. If the player giving the explanation becomes aware of their error, then they must correct the explanation. Law 20F4 allows the correction to be made in Clarification Period, but online, the duration of this is controlled only by the opening leader, and the correction needs to be available to the defenders before the opening lead. On the other hand, to correct the explanation during the auction may create unauthorised information due to delays.

The suggested procedure is for the player who knows that his explanation is incorrect, is to replace the incorrect explanation with 'WRONG explanation' as soon as possible, and later (if requested) give the correct explanation to the opponents, making it clear that this is the explanation of their agreements, not the player's intended meaning.

1.4 Partnership agreements and understandings

By default, EBU online events are level 4 competitions (BB 7), but some limited events are level 2 competitions (BB 6).

1.5 BBO robots: agreements and explanations

When robots are playing on BBO, the explanations of the calls of both members of the partnership (robot or human) are provided by the platform: the explanation of the call made by a human playing with a robot is not the human player's explanation.

The robots will try to make the right call and will also provide an explanation, but the call will not always match the explanation. A player playing with a robot may choose to make a call which does not match the explanation that the robot will give. Such departures from the robots 'announced understandings' are legal, as they cannot lead to an implicit understanding.

If a player makes a call knowing that it does not match the explanation, and the player does not want inexperienced opponents to be misled by the explanation, the player can tell the opponents (in 'table' chat) that the explanation was not the player's intended meaning.

2 Advice for Players

2.1 Communication (Law 73)

2.1.1 'At the table' communication (on BBO)

It is possible to communicate to 'the table' – visible to all players at the table; or to one opponent – visible only to that opponent. It is possible to send a message to both opponents, but a reply from one opponent will not be seen by the other opponent. It is possible to communicate privately with partner between rounds.

General questions about general bidding methods and carding agreements can be addressed to all at the table so that either opponent can answer, and all can see the answers.

Specific questions about particular calls should be via the alert/announcement mechanism (in which case both members of the opposing pair will see any revised explanation), or through private message to the opponent making the bid.

2.1.2 Illegal communication

Illegal communication is cheating and is not allowed.

Do not communicate anything to partner in public which may influence their choice of calls or plays (Law 73B1).

Do not communicate with partner during the round in any way which is not visible to the opponents: Law 73B2 'The gravest possible offence is for a partnership to exchange information through prearranged methods of communication other than those sanctioned by these Laws'.

2.1.3 Skip bids

There is no online STOP card or other skip bid warning. Following a jump bid (i.e. a bid at a higher level than the minimum in that denomination), the next player should pause before making their call. If a player is consistent in their length of pause in these positions, a similar pause will usually not be considered to constitute unauthorised information. Otherwise, a break in tempo will be judged by comparison with the player's habitual actions.

As there is no skip bid warning, inexperienced online players will inevitably sometimes call quickly over a jump bid. Although this is not correct procedure, and in principle this variation in tempo can create unauthorised information, the limitations of the online playing environment mean that it is not expected that such violations will be automatically penalised.

2.1.4 'Auto-play singletons' on BBO

BBO has an option to auto-play singletons – where a player has no choice of play, the card is played immediately. Selecting this option is not consistent with maintaining a steady tempo (Law 73D1); this is true whether or not the player also has click to confirm plays. This option is an (avoidable) way of creating unauthorised information. This option should not be used in teams matches and EBU games - except perhaps in 'fast' games.

2.2 Calling the TD (WB 1.1)

Most mechanical problems will be dealt with by the platform, and there will be no need to involve the TD.

However, it is necessary to call the TD when:

- (a) the platform has not dealt with a mechanical issue satisfactorily;
- (b) a player is unresponsive, or the play becomes 'stuck' in some other way;
- (c) there is conflicting information about the meaning of a call or play, e.g. when an alert/explanation is different from the system card or does not reflect the partnership understanding;
- (d) there appears to be use of unauthorised information;
- (e) there is a dispute over a claim/concession;
- (f) there is any bad behaviour.

Note To call the TD on BBO, there is a menu option 'Call TD'. The location of the menu with the 'Call TD' option depends on the version of the BBO interface.

2.3 Behaviour (WB 1.5)

The disciplinary provisions of the laws, of the Best Behaviour at Bridge guide, and the EBU *Bye Laws* apply to online bridge.

Re ‘Greet others in a friendly manner prior to start of play on each round’, players must have their names available to their opponents (in their ‘profile’) or must give their names at the start of each round. On RealBridge, players must play as their real name.

On RealBridge, where players are visible/audible, players may not eat while ‘at the table’.

2.4 Appeals (WB 1.7)

Appeals are possible in EBU online events, and are subject to a deposit and possible sanction if deemed to lack merit.

Appeal of a ruling given during a session must be lodged with the TD online within the 20-minute correction period (see subsection 3.4). The arrangements for lodging an appeal of a ruling given after the end of the session will be set by the TD.

For the purposes of Law 93, the Director in charge is the EBU Chief Tournament Director. It is anticipated that appeals from online events will involve questions of application of law and regulation and the Director in charge shall hear and rule upon such matters (Law 93B1) and will arrange to refer other matters to a referee, as necessary.

3 Regulations (WB 2)

3.1 Participants

Software agents (robots) can play in some EBU pairs events, and the same software can play in more than one pair. But in some events, players will not be permitted to register to enter with a robot partner. Robots (and their partners) are graded for NGS.

By contrast, real players can only play as one user agent – not as two players in a pair, nor in more than one pair! Players may not play as one user and kibitz as another user.

3.2 Replacement of Players in pairs events (WB 2.3)

In pairs event, players may be replaced by a substitute at the instigation of the TD. Robots can be used as replacements, where this is provided by the platform, even in events where players are not allowed to enter with robot partners. Over the course of the session a pair may comprise any number of players (and robots).

All scores obtained by a pair where one or both players have been replaced stand for the pair and for the opponents. NGS grading will be based on the scores on all the boards played by any players representing the pair.

If the player originally entered does not play half the boards, they will not appear in the final ranking list, and, in this case, if a substitute player does play half the boards, they will appear in the final ranking list. A player who is originally entered and plays at least half the boards will be eligible for master points and will be graded for NGS.

3.3 Withdrawal and late arrival in pairs events (WB 2.4)

Pairs who are not online when the session starts will not play, even if registered.

Players who are not present/responsive will be replaced (see preceding) and may be allowed to resume on their return.

3.4 Time Limits – Correction Periods (WB 2.5)

The correction period for rulings and scoring errors is 20 minutes after the end of the session.

At that point the results become final as far as BBO is concerned but a score correction, ruling or appeal which is decided after that time will change the result for EBU.

3.5 Matches Played Privately (WB 2.6)

Matches played privately online are governed by

[EBU Knockout Events – General Regulations](#) (in particular, Section F) and
[General Regulations – Rulings & Appeals in Matches Played Privately Online](#)

4 Laws (WB 8)

4.1 Weighted scores on BBO (Law 12C1 (c))

When the TD awards an assigned adjusted score which is weighted, the BBO platform does not allow this adjusted score to be entered. Instead, the TD will enter a score as a percentage of the match points on the board – this artificial score attempts to recreate the effect of the assigned adjusted score.

If a ruling or appeal is decided after the end of the 'BBO' correction period, then this decision can (exceptionally) be entered as an assigned adjusted score, to appear in the EBU results only. The EBU results will differ from the results shown on BBO. See subsection 3.4.

4.2 Unauthorised information (Law 16B, Law 73C)

Significant hesitations and remarks ('table chat') are unauthorised information, which will constrain the player and can be subject to a ruling under Law 16B or Law 73C.

There can be reasons for pauses in an online game, due to the environment, but the TD is entitled to determine that a significant hesitation is nevertheless unauthorised information and rule accordingly.

4.3 Unintended calls and plays (Law 25A, Law 45C4 (b))

BBO and RealBridge allow for calls and plays to be withdrawn on the request of the player, and with the agreement of the opponents: called an 'UNDO'. This facility can be restricted by the tournament organiser. In all EBU events, there are no UNDOs in the play.

Note As noted in the introduction, *The Sky-Blue Book* applies to EBU Events. We hope the regulations are more widely applicable but different online game may need different regulations. The treatment of UNDOs (in the auction and in the play) is a subject which clubs and counties (as tournament organisers) are free to make their own rules for their games.

The regulation for the daily EBU 12-board open pairs games on BBO that disallowed UNDOs in the auction (or play) no longer applies. It is now also recommended that other tournament organisers allow UNDOs in the auction, subject to the requirements in 4.3.1 below.

4.3.1 UNDOs are allowed

As of December 2021, UNDOs are allowed in all EBU events in the auction for genuine 'misclicks' – a 'misclick' corresponds to a 'mechanical error', see Law 25A2. The spirit of the time limit on corrections in Law 25A (until partner makes a call) applies – the player should not request an UNDO if they have seen partner's subsequent call, but the UNDO request may appear to the other players after they see the partner's call.

UNDOs are allowed even if partner has called as long as ‘the situation has not got completely out of hand’ – all other players have called or the opening lead has been made.

On BBO, if there is a request for an UNDO in the auction, the TD should be called if the situation is at all unclear.

On RealBridge, if there is a request for an UNDO in the auction, the TD should be called

- RealBridge may not allow a TD call when an UNDO request is live – it may be necessary to reject the request and then call the TD.
- The TD will rule whether Law 25A applies and if so will instruct that the request be repeated and the other side accept the request.
- If the other side accept the request for an UNDO (without calling the TD) they will usually be deemed to have accepted the replacement call (Law 25B1 – ‘the second call stands and the auction continues’).

When enabled, UNDOs should also be requested (and allowed) when there has been a correction of a mistaken explanation (see subsection 1.3) and Law 21B1 (a) allows a non-offending player to change the last call by their side. If there is a TD, the TD should be called.

4.4 Claims on BBO (Law 68, Law 69, Law 70, Law 71)

If there is a claim and the opponents object, play continues. The opponent can object by calling the TD but the TD will be inclined to accept the table result. However, if the claimer has adopted a line not obvious in the original claim statement, which seems to have been informed by the objection to the claim, the TD will rule in accordance with Law 70 on Contested Claims rather than rule as if the players had agreed to play on after a claim.

Exceptionally, if there is a claim and the round ends (and play is curtailed, see subsection 4.5) before acceptance/rejection of the claim, then the TD will rule on the claim using Law 70, as if the opponents had objected to the claim.

If there is claim and the claim is accepted but the opponents subsequently disagree, the TD will apply Law 69B.

If one defender concedes and the other objects but the declarer accepts the claim/concession, then play ceases – there is no option for play to continue. In this case, or any case where one side object to their side conceding tricks, the TD will apply Law 71.

If there has been a claim that the opponents have rejected (so the claiming side’s cards are visible to the other side) and then a subsequent claim/concession which requires a TD ruling, determination of ‘likely’ and ‘normal’ will take into account that one side can see all the cards.

4.5 Slow Play in pairs events on BBO (WB 8.81.4)

Pairs events on BBO are run under a regime where the round ends after a fixed time and the play of any unfinished boards is curtailed. If there are only at most four tricks remaining, the platform will assign a result based on the outcome from robots playing on from the point where play was curtailed. If there are more than a few tricks to be played, the TD will assign a score based on the auction and play that occurred.

It is possible for slow play to result in an advantage for one side; for example, if declarer can avoid taking a two-way guess until the last four tricks and the round ends before the board is finished, the assigned score will be the outcome where declarer always ‘does the right thing’. If the side that was responsible for slow play gains an advantage in this manner, the TD can assign an adjusted score: for example, a weighted outcome between normal lines.

The laws expect an artificial adjusted score for boards which are not completed (Law 12C2) but a WBFLC minute (item 3 of the minutes of 2008-10-10) allows an assigned score 'if a board is incomplete but has reached a stage when completion of the board can be foreseen' (see WB 8.12.7 and WB 8.12.10). This allows the TD to award an assigned score, rather than an artificial score, when a board has been curtailed by the online platform. If the assigned score is weighted it may have to be entered as a match-point percentage (or IMP score), due to limitations of the online platform, see subsection 4.1.

4.6 Information available from the platform

This is to clarify that information provided by the proper use of the platform is authorised.

4.6.1 Review of the auction after Final Pass (Law 20C)

Where the platform allows players to view the auction after the final pass, players are allowed to do so; Law 20C notwithstanding.

4.6.2 Inspection of quitted tricks (Law 66C)

Where the platform allows players to view the previous trick, players are allowed to view the last played trick until they play to the next trick; Law 66C notwithstanding.