

Important changes to BBO subscription

Since Covid dramatically changed our habits and the modus operandi of the Club, Bridge Base Online (BBO) has been extensively used both by our members individually and by the Club. We should have all received an email in the last day or two in which BBO set out substantial changes in their payment arrangements. These affect you and the Club.

In essence there will be two levels of membership:

1. Free

2. Premium. The initial cost of Premium membership will be \$5.99 per month rising to \$9.99 after one year.

The free membership is to be severely restricted and will affect your use and some of what the Club currently offers you. The fundamental restriction is that you can only play 6 hands of social bridge per day. There are allowances for when you are invited to join a table by a premium member (see below).

The premium membership is unlimited allowing as much play as you wish.

You will appreciate that this is only a summary. The new structure will come into effect later this month and we will all be 'given' one month free premium membership. BBO will notify us all when this commences. At the end of the month you will receive two days notice in which you need to decide whether to continue with premium or revert to free.

These changes also have a material effect on the Club. It is early days, and your committee will investigate further, but we believe that the changes will affect our Teams Competition and our Saturday morning Roll-up. We currently think that our Thursday evening sessions will continue as they are and you will be able to play in them as a 'free' member of BBO paying the current 'table money' of £1.25.

Saturday mornings:

This is a valuable part of our bridge especially for our older or more distant members. However, it is social bridge and falls under the limit of 6 boards. This makes it unworkable unless enough of those playing are Premium members and can issue table invitations. It could become a tournament organised by the Club but the constraints would spoil it and there would have to be a table money charge.

Teams Competition:

This is another important part of our bridge. In principle it can survive as it stands but only if all team captains are Premium members. Free members are permitted to play in Team matches when invited as a guest and the hands played would not then count towards the permitted 6.

There may be other options but how we proceed will in essence depend on what level of membership you choose.

Before moving to the next step, I think it is important to stress that the major effect of these changes will be on the way in which each of us uses BBO in our social context. I am aware that many of us have regular games with friends. These will no longer be feasible unless at least one of you is a premium member and invites you.

As you may glean from this how the Club moves forward will depend on what you, our members, choose to do. This year the total cost would be £53.50 approximately. This will rise to about £90 next August. Table money for Thursday evening will still have to be collected.

I would stress that it is early days and we will be coming back to you. As a first stage we suggest that you look for yourselves at the detail. I hope we can link it to our homepage in case you can't find it. In the next few days we will send you a brief questionnaire to try to get a handle on what you are minded to do. This will not bind you in any way but will help us decide what the Club will do.

Personally, I think this regrettable but in some ways inevitable. We all see in our daily lives the regular increases in premiums for our TV and Internet. This is yet another.

I repeat that these are early days. I hope my summary is accurate and apologise if it is not. Please do ask any questions and we will do our best to provide answers.

Tim