

RULES FOR NCBA INTER-CLUB “TEAMS OF EIGHT” ONLINE LEAGUE

Issued August 2026

The League is under the management of the NCBA committee and administered by an appointed League Secretary. Clubs are welcome to send in any suggestions about the league to be considered by the NCBA Committee. All players are expected to ensure that matches are arranged and played for mutual convenience and enjoyment. Where problems arise, captains are urged to consult one another to resolve matters to mutual satisfaction before contacting the League Secretary. The League is the county's qualifying stage of the Garden Cities Trophy; the EBU publish the qualifying requirements on their website.

General

1. The entry fee for the league is payable before the start of the season.
2. Any club wishing to enter or withdraw a team must let the League Secretary know before the advised date.
3. All differences and disputes that cannot be settled between teams shall be referred to the League Secretary immediately; so timely action can be taken or settled by the NCBA Committee, whose decision shall be final. For any breach of any of these Rules or any other irregularity, the Committee may impose such penalties either by way of deduction of points or otherwise as it may think fit.
4. If at the end of the season a team has played less than half of their matches then the results for the matches they have played are cancelled. If the offending team has played half or more of their matches then their results stand and the other teams in the division that have not had the opportunity to play against the offending team are awarded VPs in accordance with a conceded match (Rule 19d)
5. New teams entering the League will start in the lowest division.

Team Eligibility

6. The League is open to teams from EBU clubs affiliated to NCBA. These NCBA clubs may join together to enter as a single team under both their names, but may not enter any other teams under their own or joint names. These joint Clubs are unable to qualify for the Garden Cities Trophy. (GCT) Affiliated clubs from other counties may join by invitation from the NCBA, but are unable to qualify to represent Nottinghamshire for the Garden Cities Trophy.

Player Eligibility

There are slightly different rules for the League, and those who are competing in the top division to represent the County in the Garden Cities Trophy. All league clubs and players must comply with these NCBA League Rules. Those who qualify to play in the GCT Trophy must additionally have complied with the EBU regulations for the Trophy. (See Rule 10 and check on the EBU website for the latest guidance.)

7. Player eligibility

- (a) Players must be bona fide members of the club they are representing, which means that players must be a registered member of that club and play regularly at the club or for the club. (See note 5)
- (b) No player may play for more than one club within the League in any one season.
- (c) There is no limit to the number of players who can represent any one team.
- (d) To encourage participation, in the lowest division only, a team may include a non EBU member on two occasions only (i.e. two such non-members in the same match, one in two different matches, or two in one match each). Their names must be clearly identified on the result sheet. This rule does not apply if the League has only one division.

8. Where a club enters more than one team:

- (a) For each team, apart from the lowest ranking, four players must be nominated who will only play for that team or a higher ranking team.
- (b) Nominated players must play at least half of the matches during the season, and for the team for which they are nominated. For example, if the team is in a 10 match division, at least 5 matches to be played for the team for which they are nominated. If an 8/9 match division, at least 4 matches.
- (c) The names of nominated players must be sent to the League Secretary by the 31st December. These names will be published on the NCBA website.
- (d) No player may take part in more matches than the largest number of matches played by a team that they have played for.
- (e) Subject to the above, a player may play for different teams within their club, against any other team.

9 A team found to have played an unauthorised player is not allowed to win that match. The team has failed to field a complete team of eligible players so will incur an adjusted score in line with a conceded match under Rule 19d. Unauthorised players include those who:

- (a) Have been nominated for a higher ranking team.
- (b) Have already played the maximum permitted number of matches.
- (c) Have previously played for another club in the same season.
- (d) Are not EBU members, subject to Rule 7d.

10. Regarding the Garden Cities Trophy eligibility, Clubs in the top division are competing for entry into the regional stage of the Garden Cities Trophy. They must therefore comply with the current EBU rules for the qualifying stage of the Trophy. Failure to comply could impact on their entry to the GCT should they qualify by winning Division 1. The winning club needs to enter the GCT by the date to be announced by the EBU
<https://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/garden-cities>)

- (a) For the 2026_27 season clubs may only play those who have been registered club members for at least 3 months prior to their first match. (This new rule came from the EBU, for those counties whose qualifier is run over several months.
- (b) Teams may include members who are not affiliated to the county, but the NCBA will not pay for those individuals' entry to the GCT regional or national stages. Neither will the NCBA pay for those players who might be chosen to represent their club who have not played in any of the league matches.

Matches and Results

11 Matches are to be played on the BBO platform. Only if both Teams agree can they be played on RealBridge or Face to Face (F2F) Matches should start by 7.00 p.m. and players should make every effort to finish no later than 10.45 p.m. Earlier times are acceptable if both teams agree. The Home team are responsible for setting up the matches, but may ask their opponents to if they so wish. The BBO IDs of the away pairs must be sent to the home captain 24 hours before the match. If matches are played on RealBridge the host club is responsible for any payments. If played F2F this must be in accordance with current government/EBU Covid guidance, and room hire charges are paid by the hosts.

12 a) Matches are to be played over 24 boards with imps scoring, and the current Victory Point scale prescribed by the EBU. Where 24 boards cannot be played (for whatever reason) at least the same 18 boards must be played by all pairs for the match to be valid. If less than 24 boards are played the Result Sheet sent to the League Secretary should clearly state how many boards were played and why. For 18-23 boards the appropriate EBU Victory Point scale will be used.

(See: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/vp-scales>)

b) Matches must be set up in line with EBU guidance. No kibitzing and no barometer scoring. The same as applies in F2F play. No un-dos are strongly advised to avoid any disagreements and exchange of information.

c) If there is a voice and mic option captains should agree beforehand to use it. Captains should be made aware of any players who do not have that facility, or do not wish to use it.

- 13 If a ruling on the laws of bridge is required, the captains of both teams should make contact at the end of the round, and they should attempt to agree on a ruling. (For help contact the League Referee: details at the end of the Rules). All irregularities should be reported to the League Secretary either at the time of the occurrence, or with the result sheet. The result sheet is to be emailed to the League Secretary, and copied to the opponent's team captain, within 7 days of the match. The opponents have 3 days to dispute a score line with the League Secretary. No appeal will be considered once this time period has relapsed. If a F2F match the result sheet should be signed by both captains. Captains are advised not to sign a score sheet if they have a dispute that could not be solved on the night.
- 14 The result sheet is to be emailed to the League Secretary, and copied to the opponent's team captain, within 7 days of the match. The opponents have 3 days to dispute a score line with the League Secretary. No appeal will be considered once this time period has relapsed. If a F2F match the result sheet should be signed by both captains. Captains are advised not to sign a result sheet if they have a dispute that could not be solved on the night.
- 15 The head-to-head matches between teams from the same club must be played at the beginning of the season, or when advised by the League Secretary. If the match is not played at the due time the result will be recorded as 0 – 0.
- 16 Match dates must be agreed and played by the date given by the League Secretary at the start of the season; unless prior permission has been given for a later date. (See Note 3) Matches not played by then will be recorded as 0 – 0, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Those teams in the top division who are competing for entry to the Garden Cities Trophy may be required to complete their matches by an earlier date than those of lower divisions.
- 17 It is the responsibility of the home team to contact opponents to arrange fixtures. Fixtures must be agreed by the date advised by the League Secretary at the start of the season.

18 An agreed match date may be re-arranged at any time without penalty only by mutual consent. However, in asking for a re-arrangement, or cancelling a match, a team is agreeing to concede if their opponents do not wish to rearrange, or a new date cannot be agreed. It is advisable for Teams to make sufficient allowances for last minute non availability of players. In the event of poor weather conditions, it is reasonable to agree to cancel a F2F match.

19 Non or late arrival of players

(a) Players should log on at least 15 minutes before the start time and immediately report any problems to their captain. If players are unable to join a match, or to continue playing, for technical reasons the match may be delayed for 1 hour at the start, or for 30 minutes after the start of a match. If at least 18 boards (See Rule 13) have been played by all tables the match can be considered as completed. If less than 18 played then the match will be rescheduled.

(b) If playing online or F2F penalties for non-arrival or late arrival of one or more members of teams, and conceded matches is as below:

All of one team is present

(a) If no members of the offending team are present / logged on 45 minutes after the scheduled start, then the match is considered as conceded by the offending team.

(b) If some members of the offending team are present

(i) After 30 minutes of failure to log on or late arrival the match is reduced by 2 boards and for each extra 15 minutes a further 2 boards. A total of 18 boards must be played. For each board not played 3imps is awarded to the non-offending team.

(ii) The match cannot be abandoned until 1 hour 30 minutes has elapsed from the scheduled starting time. After which the offending team concedes the match (Note 2: This period of time may enable the team to be completed either by the logging on or arrival of the player(s) or by replacement player(s) being found).

Neither team is complete at the scheduled start

(c) The team which is completed first is the non-offending team and Rule 20 applies.

Conceded match

(d) The offending team is penalised by 6 VPs and the non-offending team awarded 12 VPs or its average score for the season or 20 minus the average score of the offending team whichever is the greatest.

- 20 As a matter of course, any team not completing the full fixture list by the date specified by the League Secretary is not eligible for promotion to another division, irrespective of their position in the league. Applications for exceptions to this rule should be made in writing to the League Secretary as soon as possible, and each case will be considered by the NCBA Committee.
- 21 At the end of each season, provided that the structure of the League remains the same, within each division the two teams with the most VPs will be promoted to the division above and the two teams with the least number of VPs will be relegated. In the event of a tie the team that won most VPs in the head to heads will take precedence. In the event of that being tied it will be decided by a draw of a card by the NCBA Committee. In the event of a team withdrawing from the league before the constitution is set the protocol is the teams are still relegated and promoted as agreed at the end of the previous season. The gap left is filled up the divisions by the third placed team in the lower division/s"

Rules of Play

- 22 If F2F Computer dealt hands may only be used with the prior agreement of both teams. Prior meaning when the match is confirmed and again, for the avoidance of doubt, before the match starts.
- 23 Any artificial call at any level, or any call that would normally be alerted or announced in a F2F game should be explained by the player making the call using the Alert box with an explanation. At no time should a bidder's partner be able to see the explanation. If F2F all pairs must have matching convention cards (see note 4). Failure to do so will mean that when any bidding dispute or ruling on the laws of bridge is required (see Rule 14 above) players without convention cards may be disadvantaged.

24 If F2F any form of paper or electronic scoring, such as Bridgemates and BrIan, may be used, but only with the agreement of both teams. It is essential that these systems do not at any time show hands which have already been played.

25 The EBU laws and regulations as set out in the Blue and White rule books.

Alongside the Sky Blue book which refers to online competitions.

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/laws-and-ethics/skyblue-book.pdf>

Notes:

1. The comparative ranking of teams is determined by the divisions that the teams are in, and if in the same division their final standing from the previous season.
2. If one team is entirely at fault, (including withdrawal from the league after the half-way point) that team receives 0 VPs. The non-offending team receives (a) 12 VPs or (b) its average score for the season or (c) 20 minus the opponent's average score, whichever is the greatest. Matches may be played after the end of the last playing period with the prior permission of the League Secretary.
3. Only teams that can demonstrate beyond doubt that their failure to agree a match date, or complete their fixtures, is through no fault of their own may be exempted from this rule. The Committee's decision is final.
4. All players are recommended to have convention cards; otherwise, they may be disadvantaged in the event of a bidding dispute or ruling. Convention cards can be downloaded from the EBU: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/regulation-and-conduct/system-cards> and customised to individual pairs' systems.
5. If there are concerns about a player's eligibility the League Secretary will contact the relevant club and request evidence of compliance. For those players who are **new to the team this season** evidence would be to see if the player has joined the club and played at least three times at the club before playing in the team. In past seasons this has been done by reference to the Club's Personal Analysis on their website. This is to prevent teams playing a person who has no previous connection to the club and it brought in at short notice. Often referred to as a "ringer". This is to enable fair play and is for the benefit of all Clubs.

League Secretary: Jane Hall (janehall151@btinternet.com)

League Referee: For issues concerning the Laws of Duplicate Bridge contact the lead County Tournament Director Keith Spencer (keith.m.spencer@btinternet.com) . If Keith is not available, or it concerns his own club, the NCBA will nominate another qualified County Tournament Director.