

Directors Blog 19 Jan 2021

New click and tap options for bidding and play

- The former two-taps method has been removed and replaced with two different options for different devices.
- Double-tap (tablet style) now emphasises the bid or card when selected with a single tap, as seen below. Tap the bid or card again to play. Tap elsewhere to cancel.



- Double-click (mouse style) emphasises a bid or card when the cursor is moved over it. **Two fast clicks** are required to play a bid or card.

Any input style can be used on any device. For example, a desktop user can use tablet-style double-tap. The names are simply suggestions.

RealBridge Etiquette

Now we are seeing and talking with each other again, we need to adjust our behaviour back to face-to-face like at the Club.

Background noise is one of the biggest spoilers on Realbridge. Please play in the quietest setting available to you in your home, where you won't be disturbed by other people, animals or noisy machines. Consider using headphones, as these make easier listening for you, and reduce noise for other players.

If your partner lives in the same house play in separate rooms.

In order to reduce any background noise, consider muting your microphone except when you are in conversation with others or announcing or explaining bids.

Ensure that any phones in the room are on silent or answerphone. It is not acceptable to use a phone during play unless there is an emergency. If there are occasions when you need to answer a phone call, please excuse yourself and put your microphone on silent and ensure you return to the table as soon as possible.

If you need to eat or drink, please do so as quietly as possible with the same consideration to others as you would use at the club.

It is not acceptable to conduct another activity when playing on this platform.

If you need to leave the room, inform the other players, turn off your camera and mute your microphone until your return

Undos on RealBridge

We cannot turn off the Undo facility in RealBridge so players can **ask** for Undos. It is however the Club policy not to allow Undo's so please do not ask for one and if a player at your table asks for an Undo **DO NOT** agree it. This aligns us with the EBU policy in the SkyBlue Book

Asking for Undos brings complications, the opponents may or may not agree, and it takes time for the TD to arrive and determine what has happened. Some players use it inappropriately (when they change their mind, rather than genuine accident). Opponents refusing an Undo often leads to bad feeling. Players asking for Undos unfairly does the same. We do not want to have people getting upset at others, so the simplest solution is to ban Undo requests. Then it is all down to the mis-clicker alone and is the same for everyone.

RealBridge Directors Blog No 1 26 Nov 2020

Now that Trowbridge CTBC has decided that we will be running at least one RealBridge session a week, the Directors thought it would be helpful if we produced a blog to help players have a more enjoyable experience.

Over the past 6 months, whilst playing online using BBO, some folk have become accustomed to multitasking when playing online or having a meal because the other three players at the table cannot see what you are doing. When playing RealBridge, you should treat the bridge table exactly as you would do when playing face-to-face bridge at the club.

We are aware that for some members poor bandwidth and small screens (when using tablets) are an issue. There are workarounds such as turning off your video when the bidding starts, and uploading again when play has finished for the two boards.

From a Director and Treasurer point of view there is a need to get folk to identify themselves adequately. That is necessary for checking against personal accounts, as well as uploading to NGS. Therefore, please ensure you complete the signing in using the name you registered with the EBU as well as your EBU number. For example, it isn't enough to say your name is Gerry or that it is gerry mcainsh. In my case it would be Gerry McAinsh. In future if Directors spot players who haven't registered properly, you will be asked to shutdown and re-register with your proper details.

If there is a local powercut, as we experienced today, please get online again as quickly as possible and we will get you back to your table/partner.

Etiquette/Code of Practice

1. Play in the quietest setting available to you in your home, where you won't be disturbed by other people, animals or noisy machines.
2. In order to reduce any background noise, consider muting your microphone except when you are in conversation with others or announcing or explaining bids.
3. Ensure that any phones in the room are on silent or answerphone. It is not acceptable to use a phone during play unless there is an emergency. If there are occasions when you need to answer a phone call, please excuse yourself and put your microphone on silent and ensure you return to the table as soon as possible.
4. If you need to eat or drink, please do so as quietly as possible with the same consideration to others as you would use at the club.

5. It is not acceptable to conduct another activity when playing on this platform.
6. If you need to leave the room, inform the other players, turn off your camera and mute your microphone until your return

trowBRIDGEclub BBO Directors Blog 5 – 28 Sep 2020

BBO Usernames and Real Names

BBO usernames can be opaque and it helps overcome the strangeness of playing online if you know who you are playing against. Fortunately, there are two things we can do to help

- In BBO go to Account | Profile and add your real name. Then your opps can click on your BBOuser name and see your real name.
- When playing, at the start of each round, include your real names in your short system description.

Alerting/Explaining

On BBO **all** conventional bids (including those above 3NT) must be explained by the bidder. If you make a bid that has additional meanings to “what it says on the tin” you must explain. Your partner will never see your explanations so there is no danger of giving him unauthorised information. **If in doubt alert/explain.**

Similarly, if you suspect a bid is conventional and it has not been alerted click on the bid and wait for an explanation. If you are asked to explain a natural bid – just say “natural”. Please don't get into “I didn't alert so it must be conventional” response. Just because it is obvious to you it may not be obvious to your opponents. Please reply to enquiries by clicking on the ‘Explain’ window, or by select ‘Opponents’ in the chat system. Do not chat to ‘Table’ as that is unauthorised info for partner.

System Explanations

We ask all pairs to start each round with a short summary of their system. As all conventional bids will be self alerted this does not need to be overlong but should as a minimum cover:

weak or strong NT

4 or 5-card Major (and if 5-card major whether short Club , better minor or any minor),

and your carding eg Count, Attitude, DODDs.

Convention Cards

You can also include system information in your profile. When you are adding your name in Account/Profile, underneath ‘real name’ is a box ‘Other’, for you to briefly include your usual methods.

For more detailed convention card, click on the Convention Card tab at the top, and select a card, eg Simple Modern Acol, and edit it. You can then say who you play that with, and it will automatically appear as NS (or EW) CC when you play with that partner.

Gerry, Phil M and Stan

trowBRIDGEclub BBO Directors Blog 4 – 7 Aug 2020

Robots system

The robots on BBO cannot be configured by players. They play Standard American 2/1. This is not as scary as it sounds. Strong (15-17) 1NT, better minor (1C and 1D could be 3 cards) A two level response to a 1 level opening is forcing to game so the 1NT response can be much stronger, up to 12HCP, and is forcing on opener for 1 round. The robots explain all their bids. A detailed explanation of the robots system is [here](#) or by clicking Help, then 'Robots system' in BBO.

Timings

If you have not started your second board before the clock times down to 4 minutes you will not get to play the board and will be awarded 50% by the software. There is no way of putting it back, even if we extend the time, by changing the minutes-per-board option, later in the round so that a table delayed by player dropout can finish the board.

UNDOS

BBO has an all or nothing attitude to Undoing. It's off or on and it does not distinguish between undoing calls and undoing cards. When it is switched on a player can request an Undo and both opps must agree.

When we set up the virtual club we chose to allow undo's for a brief period so that new BBO players could have the chance to get used to the system. It was always intended to align with the EBU policy in the SkyBlue Book of not allowing Undos.

Asking for Undos brings complications, the opponents may or may not agree, and it takes time for the TD to arrive and determine what has happened. Some players use it inappropriately (when they change their mind, rather than genuine accident). Opponents refusing an Undo often leads to bad feeling. Players asking for Undos unfairly does the same. We do not want to have people getting upset at others, so the simplest solution is to ban Undo requests. Then it is all down to the mis-clicker alone and is the same for everyone.

There is a way of avoiding mis-clicks. If you are prone to mis-clicking, then it is recommended to select 2-stage clicking from the menu options in BBO. Go to Account – Settings and select 'Confirm Bids' and Confirm Cards'.

Sky Blue book – (self) alerting bids above 3N

The EBU have updated the Sky Blue book effective 1 Aug 20. The [link](#) on the website finds the new version.

Clause 1.1.2 says that conventional or unusual bids **above** 3N should be (self) alerted. We had already published this as our policy but just to emphasise: splinters, cue bids, Gerber and responses, and Blackwood and responses should be self alerted.

trowBRIDGEclub BBO Directors Blog 3 – 23 Jul 20

BBO for the terrified

We have several volunteers happy to play friendly Bridge on BBO with a Skype or Zoom meeting in the background so that you can talk about how to use the various bits of BBO. This is a really great way of gaining confidence with using BBO. Contact [Gerry](#), [Phil M](#) or [Stan](#).

I think a bid is conventional but it hasn't been explained/alerted? What should I do?

Click on the bid and wait for an explanation before you make your call. Unlike face to face Bridge, the opps partner will not hear the explanation (or even know that a request has been made) so no harm can be done. **Directors encourage players to ask and have little sympathy when a player has not asked about an opponent's bid.** On the other hand, if you are asked to explain a natural bid just say "natural".

If you have any queries about bids, either chat privately to the bidder or click on the bid to ask for an explanation. Don't use "Chat to table" to ask for or provide information. If, for example, you say "misclick" during the play of the hand, you are giving unauthorised information to your partner.

I have mis-bid or mis-clicked. What should I do?

Misbidding is not an offence – misinforming is.

As in face to face Bridge, your opponents have a right to know what your bid means in your system, not what you thought it meant or that you have misclicked. So if your misbid/misclick is conventional in your system you must explain it as per your agreed system. Click on the bid to add your explanation. If you want to apologise wait till the hand is played out.

Saying Thank you.

It's incredibly easy to seem impolite when "chatting" so a quick 'Thank you' or "ty" to everyone for informing their basic system at the start of each round will never go amiss.

Round Timings

BBO's round timer works in increments of whole minutes per board. Typically we are taking about 15 minutes a round so 8 minutes a board seems comfortable. If everyone has finished then the round moves on automatically, we don't twiddle thumbs waiting for the clock. But please finish up quickly where obvious, just because we have 8 mins, does not mean you should take it slowly. The corollary is that we won't extend the round because of slow play although we might if it was a connection problem etc.

Bidding and play on the website. You can now see the bidding and replay all of your BBO hands on the 'club's website. On the website, go to your Scorecard or the Traveller and click on **“Play”** on the result line for any board.

The screenshot shows the BBO website interface for the 25th June 2020 session. On the left is a bidding table for '10 EW - Robot 1' with 18 boards. The table includes columns for Board, Versus, Bid, By, Ld, Tks, +, -, High, Low, Pts, and %. Below the table is a 'Player' section for Robot 1, showing roles like Declarer, Dummy, Lead, and Defender with their respective statistics. On the right, a hand details window is open for 'Board No 1 None Vul Dealer North'. It shows the deal: TROWbridgeCLUBThurs, NS EW Bid By Ld Tks +Sc -Sc + -. The hand is 6NT S ♠ Q 12, with West leading 4♣. The hand details window also shows the cards for North and South, and a 'Play it again' button.

This screenshot shows the Bridge Solver Online window. It displays the hand details for the selected board, including the cards for both sides and the bidding options. The window shows the hand: ♠ A 7 5, ♥ 9 8 7 6, ♦ K J 2, ♣ 6 5 4. The bidding options are shown as a grid with '4' selected. The window also shows the 'Optimum' contract as NS 4N; +630 and the 'LoTT: 18-19 = -1'.

This opens a Bridge Solver Online window.

Your auction is shown in the top right-hand corner and makeable contracts are shown in the bottom right. Click on **Play: XX by XX** and the window changes slightly.

This screenshot shows the Bridge Solver Online window after clicking on 'Play: 4H by S'. The window now shows the hand with cards played marked with blue stars and the little figures showing how many tricks each pair can take from that point onwards. The window also shows the 'Contract: 4♥ by S' and the 'NS Tricks: 0' and 'EW Tricks: 0'.

Cards played are marked with a blue star and the little figures show how many tricks each pair can take from that point onwards. < and > step through the deal. You can try alternatives by clicking on cards.

You can also try playing in different contracts. Click on the makeable contracts grid bottom right.

Moving to one non-playing Director. We have now gained sufficient confidence in Directing on BBO to move to having just one non-playing director. The Director will be logged on as vEBU422671 and should be your choice if you need to talk to a Director. There may be other Directors playing but we will avoid using them unless things go really pear shaped.

BBO Chat Manager is an easy way of sending a standard message to the table explaining your system. David Dunsford [explains](#) how to use it.

Registering The registration desk for our games opens two hours before the start of the event. Both you and your partner need to be online with at least 3BBO\$ in your accounts. Registering early allows time to contact one of the Directors if you run into unforeseen problems.

Auto Purchase BBO\$ Unless your partner is paying for you, you and partner need to have 3BBO\$ in your account or you will not be allowed to play. BBO's [auto purchase](#) is a great way to avoid running out of funds

Director training. Want to be a BBO Director? We are more than happy to train you. It's not essential that you are already a Club Director, the software stops players revoking and calling or leading out of turn, self-alerting avoids problems with misinformation and all the bidding and play information is available later for judgement rulings. In many ways Directing is more like Scoring in a face to face Club. You do need to be happy using a PC though.

Gerry, Stan and Phil

trowBRIDGEclub BBO Directors Blog 1 - 19 Jun 20

Eighty strong. It's amazing. Eighty different members and friends have taken part in one or more of our first five games on BBO.

Alerting. On BBO **all** conventional bids (including those above 3NT) must be explained by the bidder. There is an excellent video by David Dunsford of Nottingham Bridge Club [here](#).

Connection problems. With 40+ players on internet connection and the heavy load on BBO particularly in the evenings, there is plenty of potential for players to drop out during the game. The directors get instant warning when this happens and we normally allow a minute or so to see if the player comes back on line. If they do not return, we feed in a substitute to complete play of the board. Once a missing player gets back on BBO they will be re-seated at the end of the current board.

Robots. Directing a BBO game is a bit different from face to face bridge. The software does not allow revokes or lead/calls out of turn so most of our time is spent finding players to fill a half table, (there are dire warnings against playing with an empty half table), coping with a player that drops out because of connection problems and sorting out adjusted scores when play on a board is not completed within the allowed time. You will increasingly see us using robots for the missing players for several reasons. Robots are more reliable. Once selected they stay till they are no longer needed. They are also better than the average player at picking up in the middle of play. The robots we use have an NGS grade of around 53%.

Robots system. The robots on BBO cannot be configured by players. They play Standard American 2/1. This is not as scary as it sounds. Strong (15-17) 1NT, better minor Club (1C and 1D could be 3 cards) A two level response to a 1 level opening is forcing to game so the 1NT response can be much stronger, up to 12HCP, and is forcing on opener for 1 round. The robots explain all their bids. A detailed explanation of the robots system is [here](#).

SkyBlue Book. The EBU has published the [SkyBlue Book](#) which includes regulations and interpretations for online events. trowBRIDGEclub has decided to run its online events in accordance with these regulations.

Over the next few week's our tip of the week will point to some of the key differences between online and face to face bridge. One significant difference is that players may refer to their own convention card or other notes during play.

Stan, Gerry and Phil M