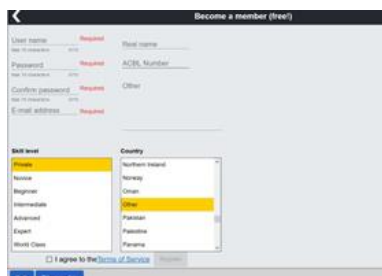


## PLAYING and ADMINISTERING BRIDGE IN BBO

### Registration

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

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



You then need to provide a 'User Name' (moniker) – the more common ones will probably already have been chosen, but just keep trying until you are able to provide a unique one (not case sensitive, and I suggest you avoid any spaces or special characters). Then select a password (repeated), and enter your email address (this is secure and only for use by BBO administration). You can then optionally choose your 'skill-level', and 'country'. I suggest you supply some form of 'real name', and 'other' is usually used for a basic system summary.

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.

### 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 keep accepting all these invitations, and 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.

Also when playing on a computer, some players have experienced problems in seeing the 'accept' button (and also the 'claim button'). It appears that a solution to this is to click on 'account' tab; 'settings'; then slide the 'split screen' to off. This should enable the accept button to be actioned (if you do this your tabs are now shown at the bottom of the screen)

#### **Full Screen View**

When initially logged-on you'll 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 border '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 it 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 moniker. However what is displayed is very much a system summary, and may be out-of-date. A full system may be shown (if cards have been filled-in), by clicking on the three-bar menu and selecting opponents or your own card (you are allowed to view your own card in online bridge).

## 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) with your explanation. 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 you need an explanation of an opponent's bid just click on the bid, and a yellow pop-up box will be displayed to the appropriate opponent for their 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 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 an intended 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. If declarer, both opponents must either accept or reject. If defender, only declarer needs to 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 of the chat message area 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 you partner), by replacing 'table' with 'private'. A separate box will appear asking for the moniker 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/tup – thanks; wb - welcome back (after a disconnect); brb – be right back (possibly going to make a coffee); these are frequently prefixed by 'v' – very; etc.

(Tip – to display the ♣♦♥♠ symbols, press 'shift !' followed by lower-case c,d,h,s. To display a smiley, use the standard windows facility, - press the 'windows' key and '.' at the same time).

## **Irregularities**

BBO will not allow you to, bid out-of-turn, make an insufficient bid, revoke, have a penalty card, lead out-of-turn, etc. so the issues that usually involve a Director call are all but eliminated. However you should still bid or play 'in-tempo'.

## **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 all the boards by selecting the 'History' tab down the right hand side. Then choose either 'My Table' or 'Recent Tournaments', and select the latest appropriate match ('Recent Tournaments will not show 'Casual' matches). The results at both tables are shown. To display the hand record for any particular board, click on the board number.

On the board, the auction is displayed in the middle of the table, with the opening leader highlighted 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.

## **People Facility**

You can compile a dictionary of your friends and regular partners by choosing the 'People' tab on the right-hand-side. Select the 'Friends' sub-title, and in the 'Add Friend' box at the bottom enter your friend's moniker, and then 'Add'.

When a 'friend' logs-on, a yellow pop-up appears at the bottom of the screen (useful if you're waiting for someone to log-on before you can start a match). If your friend is online this will be shown in the panel above (a yellow disc indicates they're playing, otherwise a green disc – available for a game). If the moniker is coloured dark-blue, they have also designated you as their friend, otherwise it is greyed. By clicking on their moniker you can view their profile, and if they are playing at a table, click on 'Join' whereby you can watch them (if the table has been set-up to allow kibitzers).

The 'People Facility' is particularly useful when setting-up a table, to see whether players are online (assuming you have defined them as a friend).

You can also chat to a friend by clicking their moniker and enter a 'Message'. Then click 'Mail'. Alternatively use the 'Chat' area - click on the chat destination box, choose 'Private', enter their moniker (or select their moniker from the people panel list), enter the message, and then 'Chat'.

## Host Set-Up

There are many formats available within BBO, many of them playing against 'strangers' or robots. 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.**

(This facility is only available to 'old' members. Unofficially an old member is one who has been registered for at least two weeks and has logged-on at least 100 times).

You play as a pre-defined pair, with team-mates, against another similar team - a head-to-head teams' match. (The host doesn't necessarily need to play in the event).

Contact all the other players, advising them of a start time. Arrange to log-on, say 5 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:

Log-on to 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 (can be left blank).

**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**'. Enter the monikers for NS and EW for each of ,Team 1 and Team 2 – **do not** enter their initial table seatings (BBO will work this out).

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 'x' not yet logged-on). Just persevere until they do log-on. When all have logged-on, invitations will be sent, and players will see your profile together with an accept (and reject) button. They should then accept the invitation (the host is automatically accepted). The match automatically starts when all have accepted.

(Avoid clicking the 'create team match' more than once. If you do, you get an error 'can't create a team match.....', this will disappear eventually).

If you enter +private+ into the 'description', you can 'create team match' before your intended players have logged on. This description prevents any non-invited player from joining the match. Invitations will be sent to players who are logged-on, and when an absent player(s) logs-on, click on the 'Director' tab, 'Missing', 'Show Tables', and fill in the moniker of the intended player(s) in the appropriate seat, and an invitation will be sent.

If you don't enter all the monikers, and if you have not set the description to '+private+', the match will start but anyone who is logged-on to BBO can attempt to take any of the vacant seats – you'll probably be flooded with requests to join the table!

The host can also cancel the tournament at any time, using 'Director' tab, 'Missing', 'Cancel Tournament'.

### 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 host should contact all the other players, advising them of a start time. Arrange to log-on say 5 minutes before this time. 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....)

**I strongly recommend** that you select 'Permission Required To Play'. If you do this, and one of your table-players disconnects, it prevents a robot or stranger from taking their place. The table will merely wait for the player to re-connect.

You can then continue in one of two ways.

### **2.1 'Reserve Seats'**

If you know who you want to partner and play against, enter the monikers into the appropriate seats. Players not logged-on are shown in red (maybe a telephone call to prompt them to log-on).

#### **'Start Table - Competitive Game'**

When all players are logged-on an invitation is issued to all players, which they can then accept. The match automatically starts when they've all accepted.

### **2.2 'Start Table – Competitive Game' (Preferred)**

If you are unsure who you want at your table, the table will be shown with all seats vacant. As suitable players log-on to BBO you can then enter their monikers into the seats and an invitation will be sent.

With either set-up method, you have some control over the type of scoring to be used:

**2.3 (Default)** The two pairs are actually part of a larger tournament and all the boards played are x-impd with all other tables (typically ~16). 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 totalimps 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 problem with this is that other tables may contain beginners, whose results can affect your own result (if you bid say a flat game you are bound to still get a few imps).

**2.4 (My Preferred Method)** For better players, from the 3-bar menu, choose 'deal source' 'randomly selected vugraph deals'. BBO will then choose hands from a good standard tournament, but more importantly they have been played by only two 'good' teams and the result is not affected by poorer players (if you bid a flat game, you will probably get '0' imps, unlike the previous method). Since the board has already been played twice, upon board-completion the imp score will not vary thereafter.

If wanting this option you must select it *before* all players are seated at the table, since when all seated the match will otherwise start with the default deal option (2.3). You must also reserve a seat for at least one player (yourself) - method 2.1, otherwise when the deal source is selected all hands will be displayed for the first board. I usually initially seat three players, and then 'start the game'. Then select the deal source, and finally 'at the table' reserve a seat for the fourth player by clicking on the seat and select 'reserve'.

Beware – in mid-event, very occasionally BBO for some reason is unable to provide these vu-graph deals, and it reverts to random deals. You will get a pop-up advising you of this,

but from thereon you may notice theimps varying as more tables contribute to your score.

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

*Tony Haworth*