

## BRIDGEBASE ONLINE (BBO)

URL: <http://www.bridgebase.com>

Playing online is a fun way to improve your game and make new friends. There are other sites where you can learn, play, and improve your game; I don't use them to play, only to learn better bridge. See <http://www.acbl.org> for links to other sites.

BBO is free except for some tournaments which have a small fee; you can kibitz (watch) regular games & read articles and newsfeeds without joining, but you must sign up to play. You can play with robots, human beings, or a combination.

### **SIGNING UP**

Upon joining you will create a screen name, login password, and profile. Choose your screen name with care - once set up, it can't be deleted or changed. If you have later misgivings, you'll need to start all over again, but you'll lose not only your profile, but also friends lists, notes, convention cards, & BBO points. For security, change your password and delete all of your lists and notes before abandoning the name. Your profile is very important; you really must have one. It introduces you and gives others an idea of what to expect and how to relate to you. You want to let others know your level of expertise, describe the basics of your bidding and attract others who like your profile and want to play with you.

### **HOW TO ACCESS and WRITE YOUR PROFILE**

To create or update your profile, go to the "My BBO" menu (next to Help); the first item is "User Profile." You can also access it during play if you want to edit: your name is in the upper RH corner of the window. Click on it to edit at the table.

Here's what I suggest:

Your username -- the one you log in with -- must be 10 characters or fewer. It can also serve as your profile name if you like, but it's a wasted opportunity. A profile name can describe you a bit more. If you don't want to use your real name, you might use something friendly that indicates your interests -- this gives others a way to communicate with you on a different level. If you might say "I never met anything made of chocolate that I didn't like" then you might name yourself Chocoholic.

Set country to USA. Set skill level as you deem appropriate. Don't leave blank or make private. Choose a stock picture that appeals to you, or upload your own.

In the Notes section ("Other") you might put something along these lines:

"Basic SAYC. Open 12+ or Rule of 20. 5-cd maj/better min. 1NT 15-17, 2NT 20-21. Weak 2 DHS. 2C 22+. Stayman, regular BW, Gerber over NT. Trans to maj only. Keep it simple please - if it ain't in my profile, I don't play it. Play for fun! Enjoy learning, helpful comments after play appreciated. Please be polite."

**Be careful what you put in your notes. If you would not like the entire world to know that information, keep it to yourself.**

### **PLAYING**

On the Home page you will see all of your options; I recommend taking some time exploring these before you dive into actual play. Once you've made friends, the first thing you'll want to do after login is to click the "Who's Online" tab at the right of your BBO screen to see which of your friends is available. Don't be shy - there are plenty of opportunities to play with humans. Search out others at your playing level. A small minority of players, especially the so-called "Experts," can be rude to Beginners. You might want to avoid the Main Room, where they mostly hang out.

If you prefer to improve your game before getting your feet wet, you can play as long as you like with Bots. From Home page, click Play Solitaire Bridge, then Just Play

Bridge. Bids are highlighted. Put your cursor over them to see what they mean (preview the meaning of your own bids too). Bots use a different bidding system from Standard American, called 2/1, pronounced "two over one". They sometimes bid strangely, and many bids are artificial. Don't expect good defense from your Bot partner; sometimes they play very poorly, and they ignore defensive signals.

When you're ready to play for real, don't click "Help me find a game" + "Take me to the next available seat". Play in the Relaxed Room. To find a game, select "List All Tables" + "Relaxed Bridge Club." You'll see tables with open seats first, but if you just want to kibitz, click on "Full Tables." Click on players' names to see profiles.

## **PRACTICING AT A TRAINING TABLE**

You or your pard (or a person you have asked to teach you) can set up a Bidding Practice Table or a Teaching Table: from Home, click on Start a Table. See options under "Start a Training Table." When you set it up, you are the Host: you'll have many options - you can invite players by name, forbid or allow kibbies & their chat, require your permission to kib-or-sit, make table invisible to others, etc. Only the Host can see all 4 hands at a Teaching Table. You can practice bidding & play, ask questions, undo any bid or play, etc. At the end of the deal, you'll be shown all hands. After you've discussed the hand and are ready to work on a new hand, click "redeal." At a Bidding Practice Table, you'll just bid the hand, but you won't be able to play it. For that, you need a Teaching Table & 4 players: a teacher & 3 students. The Teacher, who sets up & hosts the table, is the only one who can see all hands.

## **SETTING UP A PLAYING TABLE**

When you are ready to play and would like to invite friends to join you for a game, click on "Start a Table" from the Home screen. You'll see several options. Under "Start a Bridge Table," choose "Start an IMP Pairs Table." This opens the table settings. Click on Reserve seats, invite your friends, and set table permissions. You may find it easier to play South so you'll have the correct perspective for reviewing play on the VuGraph (a small diagram of the hand to the lower right of the table, which will show you the auction and cards played).

## **CHAT ETIQUETTE**

Some tables allow kibs to chat with players - this is configured by the host, so if you are at a table where chat is blocked, you can leave the table, contact the host by pulling up his/her profile, and request that chat be opened. Don't chat during bidding or play (unless privately to Dummy) so you don't distract the players. You can chat either privately (by clicking on the person's name to see a chat box for text entry) or to the table (click on the table button to type in the chat field). Be careful not to use table chat when you want to chat privately, and always respond to private chat in kind. Private chat names appear in your chat box in green, table chat names in blue. There is also a chat button for kibs - you can chat privately with any kibs and your conversation is hidden from the players.

To greet an online friend, do so when they're not at a table, or are only kibbing. Don't greet a playing friend (except as dummy) unless they greet you first.

You may want to pull up the table host's profile - he/she will have a crown next to the name. Introduce yourself briefly using the chat field at the bottom of their profile (private chat). "Hi - BBO newbie here. Mind if I kib?" "Hi - I'm a learner - may I kib for a while?" "Hi - Been kibbing and enjoying table vm. Like ur SOH and warmth, may I friend u pls?" If you don't receive a civil reply, find another table.

While seated, you are permitted to chat privately with kibitzers, either opponent or both jointly, but never with your partner, for obvious reasons. This is not to say that phones and other manners of communication might not be employed by cheaters.

It's impolite to chat to the table in a language other than English (except very briefly as a matter of introduction) unless all at the table are conversant in that language. It

can lead to a serious violation of Bridge Ethics, as secret information may be exchanged between partners. This is strictly forbidden by the Laws of Contract Bridge.

## TABLE ETIQUETTE

If you need to leave the table for any reason except an emergency, don't just go; it's poor manners. Finish the hand, say goodbye and explain briefly why you are going: phone call, doorbell, grandchild begging for attention, need a break, dinnertime, bedtime, etc. If you need to leave the table right away because someone was rude to you and you aren't the host, just say goodbye and exit. The others will know why.

If you only need to leave briefly, like for a call of nature or a glass of water, tell the table "brb" -- be right back -- and open the "Who's Online" tab at the right of the window. The button at the bottom says "be right back." Click it and your name will be grayed out showing that you aren't at the table. This is called being "afk" -- away from keyboard. If you don't activate brb mode and are unresponsive when it's your turn, the system will assume you're stuck, and boot you from the table automatically.

Tip:

I sometimes use brb when I need more time to think about a play. One is allowed to take care of personal needs, or answer phone without leaving the game, so it's OK.

When you don't want to log off, but are not interested in chatting or responding to friends, enter brb mode, which shows your friends that you are temporarily afk. When you are ready to respond to chats and invitations, don't forget to enter active mode again. If an afk friend is at your table, remind them to click on brb again.

If you just want to stand up from the table for some reason, for example to switch seats with another player, click on your name. You are still at the table, just not seated. You can now sit at any empty seat. When you want to leave the table for good, click on the Home button after making your polite goodbyes.

It's considered a form of cheating to explain your own bid to pard just because you're playing together for the first time and haven't discussed all your conventions yet. Nonetheless, people in Relaxed Club do this all the time. If you think you really need to do it, it's courteous to ask permission from the ops first. When you use any convention, you're supposed to alert it before you send it to the table. When you type your explanation into the Alert box and then send your bid, only the ops can see it. Your pard is not entitled to that information.

If you hate cross talk at the table, don't play in the Relaxed Club.

Don't criticize the play of others at the table. Don't yell at your pard for making what you think is a bad play. Pard knows - the results of the hand, and the comparison with the other tables that have played the same board, are visible to the right of your screen, under Results. Sometimes what you thought was a bonehead play gave your side a top board, in comparison to the others seated in your direction at the other tables. That's how duplicate bridge works. Your real opponents, scoring-wise, are all of the other pairs sitting in your direction.

Always remember: **An unhappy partner is a dangerous partner.**

If you must say something, say "been there done that" or "Let it go, p. Next hand." If you want to give useful advice to a beginning or novice opponent, chat privately. I might say something like, "Would you like some advice on the play of that last hand? There's a way you could have set the contract." Usually they'll say yes. Novices tend to concentrate on bidding to the exclusion of card play, and are generally grateful for tips.

## **FOLLOWING TABLE CHAT**

This is important. Whether you are playing or just kibbing, be sure to follow table chat - it reveals a great deal of information regarding the "friendliness level" of the table. Look for polite comments, greetings, and acknowledgements. Figure out how to chat quickly and efficiently and understand the chat of others by learning:

### **COMMON ABBREVIATIONS**

wlc = welcome

gm = good morning / gn = good night

bj = bonjour = good morning (French speakers)

bs = bonsoir = good evening (French speakers)

ciao = hi (Italian speakers) / hola = hi (Spanish speakers)

Try to greet and respond in their language if you can. Being vastly outnumbered, they can be a bit sensitive about not knowing any English. Kindness is never wrong.

typ/tup = thank you, partner; tyo = thank you, opponents

tyvm = thank you very much

gr = gracias = thanks (Spanish speakers)

yw = you're welcome

pls or pl = please

gt = good try (gtp, gto)

nt = nice try (ntp, nto)

wd = well done (wdo, wdp) / vwdo = very well done, ops

wpo = well played, ops

nj = nice job (njp, njo)

gj = good job (gjp, gjo)

gb = good bidding (gbp, gbo)

gd = good defense (gdp, gdo)

sp = sorry p, my bad

mfp = my fault p

npp = no problem p

nm = never mind

brb = be right back

afk = away from keyboard

sry lost con = sorry, lost connection

wb = welcome back

gtg ty all esp p = got to go, thank you all especially partner

f2f = face to face: bridge in the real world - "bridgenaught is my regular f2f p"

ikr = I know, right?

**soh = sense of humor**

**jk = just kidding** - use if you suspect your comment was misunderstood

**rofl = rolling on floor laughing**

**roflmao = rolling on floor laughing my a-- off**

**lol = used to mean Laughing Out Loud. Has since expanded to include:**

**i find that humorous / i think i'm saying something funny or clever / i didn't really mean it / i'm only joking / teasing / i sympathize / i'm embarrassed and didn't know what else to send to the table.**

**Can also mean Little Old Lady (rare on BBO).**

## EMOTICONS

Just as in email and chat, emoticons help to convey feelings that might not be clear from your text. This is very important at the table! Misunderstandings can offend others and get you blacklisted, when you meant no harm but were simply taken the wrong way. Preceded by either a colon or a semicolon, they show up as pictures.

:) = plain smiley

;) = winking

:( = sad

:d = laughing

:\$ = embarrassed

:p = sticking tongue out (to be used only in a joking manner with friends)

## PICTURES OF SUITS

lc = club

ld = diamond

lh = heart (also means i luv u when not referring to the suit.)

ls = spade

## BE WARY OF:

1. Those who consistently ignore greetings, compliments, or apologies. Even non-English speakers know the abbreviations for common courtesies, or can send you a smiley. If you believe there is a language problem, ask.
2. Vulgarians. Indecent language, public or private, ought not to be tolerated.
3. Those who use long strings of question marks ?????????????????????? It's **very** poor manners. Sometimes used by Dummy (the silent partner of the pair that won the contract) when disagreeing strongly with Declarer play, or by a Defender wondering why her partner trumped her good Queen. Sometimes Pard has a valid reason for appearing to make such an elementary error.

Many awful errors happen due to misclicks; players should give each other the benefit of the doubt. At a friendly table, you may ask for - but not demand - an Undo.

## REQUESTING AND GRANTING UNDOS

Undos are never available in tournaments, and are rarely given in the Main Room. If your misclick causes a poor result, you simply move on to the next deal. You can make your own decision as to whether you will allow an Undo for an opponent.

Sometimes it's a legitimate request, resulting from a misclick, but sometimes the player had second thoughts about the bid or play that was made. This is routine for beginners, which is why I like to give them the benefit of the doubt. It helps them improve their skills and doesn't interfere with their enjoyment of the game; nobody wants to disappoint their Pard. Many players will only allow an Undo during the auction, before the opening lead. When granted any Undo, always thank the ops.

## DEALING WITH UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

If someone cheats, is unpleasant, rude or offensive, or you just don't want to play with them again, pull up their profile ASAP and click the "ignore" button (this used to be called the "enemy" button, but then BBO decided that wasn't PC). After you mark them their name will show in black in their profile. You should always note why you blacklisted them - "rude to his p," "insulted me," "foul language". This lets you avoid tables where this person is playing, prevents them from chatting to you, and saves you from having to read any of the offensive things they might say.

If you are Host and someone's behavior is unacceptable, blacklist them first, then

boot them from the table. BBO is serious about abusers. Report them to [abuse@bridgebase.com](mailto:abuse@bridgebase.com) .

## **FOLLOWING / FRIENDING**

If you meet someone you would like to play with again, chat with, or kibitz their play, click on their name and the "follow" button on their profile. When both you and the person you like have followed each other, you become "Friends". Those you are following don't know they're being followed until they follow you in return.

Upon logging in, click "Who's Online" to see a list of Friends and Followeds who are online. Next to their name it will show if they are idle, kibbing or playing, and will show you the name of their Table Host. In your Friend's profile, there is a button to Join Table. Click to watch their table or to sit. To find someone by name even if they're offline: at the bottom of the "Who's Online" tab there is a "Find Member" search field. Enter the name - their profile shows you if they're online and if they're at a table. I like to add notes to my friends' profiles saying when I met them, where they're from, my impressions of them, info about their bidding, etc.

Be careful what you put in the notes on your own card. What you write there can be viewed by anyone, worldwide. When you sit or kibitz, your profile is visible. It's OK to share a URL privately with a friend, but don't do it at the table unless you want the whole world to see it.

## **BIDDING SYSTEMS YOU MAY FIND IN PROFILES**

SAYC is Standard American Yellow Card. ACOL is an English system. SEF is French. Precision is complex and rare. 2/1 (Two over One) is a popular modern system, based on Standard American but with major innovations.

When you get a new pard, ask if they can please play your "card." Always read your P's profile before bidding and let them know what conventions you can't handle.

If you don't understand an op's bid, ask for an explanation. On most browsers, double clicking on the bid pulls up a "Please explain" dialog box that only the op making the bid can see. Alerts are the reverse of F2F bridge; the bidder alerts the ops, not bidder's P. P can't read your alert - it's only for the ops to see.

You will find that BBO players, as in F2F duplicate, will bid more aggressively than rubber bridge players, and take more risks during declarer play, straining for every chance at an overtrick.

## **HOSTING**

The Table Host has special privileges: reset score, require and grant play & kib permissions, or allow anyone to sit or kib without prior approval. The Host can also allow/disallow kib chat, invite players, and dismiss anyone from the table.

You automatically become Host when you've sat the longest. Access your privileges by clicking on "Table" at lower left of table. When I'm Host, I "lock" the seats so I can vet the applicants. I want to see a profile, name, skill level and country.

## **TOURNAMENTS**

BBO offers many options for tournament play with both Bots and humans. "List All Tournaments" shows what's coming up. Free tourneys are just for fun. "Speedball" is a popular form requiring fast play. ACBL sanctioned tourneys award masterpoints, and charge entry fees. There are also BBO tournaments: cheaper but only BBO masterpoints are awarded. You pay for both kinds of tournaments with BBO\$.

You can invite your favorite p to play, or they can invite you. If you don't have a p, there is always a partnership desk where you can choose a p from others who are also looking. If you can't find one, you can always sign up for a Bot event.

THAT'S IT - NOW GO AND HAVE FUN!