

## Best Practices using BBO to play Online Bridge for Unit 124 Virtual Club Games

BBO and the ACBL came to the rescue of many clubs across the country by providing virtual club games to support existing sanction holders. The games have been popular across the country. Not everybody is familiar with BBO, and some have never played bridge online. Until face to face bridge returns, online bridge will be how we play the game.

This intends to help everyone get the best out of their BBO experience.

We assume you already have a BBO account and that your ACBL number is successfully associated with that account. We urge you to add your real first and last name to your BBO account so that Unit 124 members and friends from the club know who you are when playing in our virtual club games.

For help learning how to join BBO, see:

<https://blog.bridgebase.com/2020/03/18/how-to-log-in-to-bridge-base-online-and-play-acbls-support-your-club-game/>

For a video guide of BBO site see: <https://www.acbl.org/bbotutorials/>

It is up to each player to be familiar with the BBO interface to get the most out of your online experience.

How to find an NKBC or CBC game on BBO is here:

<http://www.cincybridge.com/20200331-HOW-TO-JOIN-CBC-Online-BBO.pdf>

There are several important points to remember to maximize the enjoyment of playing online – **failures can occur at each link in the 6-link chain between you and BBO:**

Link in Chain	Failures	Fixes
	Inattention Phone calls TV and other media Reading Being on another website Friends and family Partner not available Interruptions away from device	Do not use you phone during play Stay off all media Keep the App/Browser running on the BBO Page for your game Keep the BBO tab open and live. Tell people not to disturb you for 2 hours. Make sure partner is online BEFORE game time. You cannot register Late.
	Battery Power Data Service WiFi Connection Dropped (Do you remember your password?) Touch Screen Screen Size leads to touch errors Phone data service out of reach Phone calls interrupt game Device goes to sleep or turns off	Be sure your device is fully charged or you are near a charging outlet. Have your power cord available. Suggest you turn on confirm bids and plays so that touch screen aberration don't foil your game (masterpoint games do not allow Undo's). Stay where you have connection. Change your sleep setting to allow the device to stay on.
	Mouse malfunction Internet connection (WiFi/Lan) Insufficient resources to handle play in real time (rare). Device goes to sleep or turns off.	Check mouse before each game. Check WiFi before each game Shut down programs not used in play. Change your sleep setting to allow the device to stay on.

	<p>BBO App not compatible with installed operating system. App interrupted by phone calls. Finger/Touch Screen Errors Glitchy behavior</p>	<p>Make sure the App connects before you try to play. Do not buy your BBO\$ through the App – there is a 40% premium paid to the app owner. Practice with the App so you know how to touch choices accurately. Turn your device off for 20 seconds before logging in. Turning on will clear cache and other issues causing glitches.</p>
	<p>Older browsers might not support the new version of the BBO site.  Different browsers work on different devices and behave differently.</p>	<p>Be sure you use the latest version of the browser or BB Application on your device.  Check the URL for BBO to be sure the site engages as intended.</p>
	<p>WiFi problems Router Failure Router Power Internet Connection Failure Power Outage Weak wifi spots in your home/playing area (walking around with your device) Speed restrictions in public areas</p>	<p>Be sure the WiFi is working and power is connected. Stay in a place where you are comfortable and the WiFi signal is very strong. Stay away from weak spots with poor WiFi connection in your home/play place.</p>
	<p>System overloads – too many players/tables Dropped out during game. Dropped out before game Can't log back in Other BBO specific problems</p>	<p>Peak times are daytime EDT. When tables approach 50,000 slow response and dropping out might occur. If dropped simply log back in. If not able to log back in, try again every 20 seconds or so.</p>

**Tips to Have the Most Fun Possible:**

1. Be sure to **prepare a convention card online** for you and your partner. Each partnership needs a separate card. When you put your partner's screen name on the card, it will show up for every (paid) game that you play. (If you keep a convention card on BBO you can make a tinyurl link for the pdf of that card and include the tinyurl in the system description line at the beginning of the card. That link will be live and allow people to see a regular ACBL card format. BridgeWinners membership is free. Tinyurl is found at <https://tinyurl.com/>. Be sure to add the browser link to your Browser links list so you can create a tinyurl on the fly).
2. If you intend to play, be sure to log on under your screen name – **DO NOT CHOOSE INVISIBLE**. If you do, you will not be found for the game! Invisible means you hide from everybody including the director and your partner.
3. Be sure to know your partner's screen name. Log on, and look for your partner's screen name under **PEOPLE** tab on the far right of the BBO window. You have to follow your partner to have them show up in your people window. **Search** their **BBO name** and follow them. (On the **PEOPLE** Tab **Search** is at the bottom of the pane).
4. Once your partner shows up in the **PEOPLE** tab, send them the invite to play (either partner can invite). You can also chat with them on BBO before the game and between rounds by clicking on their name and using the Chat line in the dialog box. Alternatively, you can click on the destination button on the site chat and select your partner's name then begin chatting.

5. Join the game as early as you can. You can log off after you and your partner join, but you **MUST LOG BACK ON BEFORE THE GAME STARTS – no exceptions**. The director cannot add you back in if you aren't online when the game starts.
6. **Pay attention** to the game – do not allow distractions during play. If you have to take a quick break do it between rounds or when partner is declaring a hand. Tell the table “brb” for “be right back” and return before the next deal starts. Tell the table “I’m back”. If you need more time, take your device with you.
7. If you are **inactive** too long while playing a game, or **unresponsive** when a director asks you a question, the director might drop you out temporarily and replace you with a standby player. If this happens, simply log back in and accept the invitation to return when it shows up automatically. You will join your partner for the next hand.
8. If a game starts and you have been dropped before the first hand, message the director – if there is a way to return you to the game, they will. If not, then review what happened and avoid what didn't work next time. Some watch-outs:
  - a. If you play solitaire on BBO while waiting for the Virtual Club Game make sure you **keep the tab and page where you signed on to the virtual club game open**. If it isn't, BBO doesn't know you are there – free games and services are on a different server from the paid games, and one does not communicate with the other.
  - b. If you sign on as **invisible** – you will not be found by the system or the director when game time come. Avoid using the invisible option when intending to play. You cannot play as invisible.
  - c. Once you and partner log into the game, **leave that browser tab open**. If you want to go to another website, **open a new tab** for that site.
  - d. Pay attention to the **audible signals** that BBO offers – “*shuffling the deck*” when dealing a new hand – a “*boink*” sound when it's your turn to bid, a “*swish*” when a card is played, and a “*ping*” when someone chats with you directly. This sound will happen as long as your BBO **browser tab stays active**, and the **sound is turned up** on your device. So, if you go to amazon.com while waiting for the game to begin and you hear cards shuffling, you know to go back to the BBO tab immediately.
9. BBO frequently checks **inactive browsers** with a message to see if you are still there. If you do not click yes in time, they log you off. If this happens while playing a game, simply log back on and you will be automatically be invited to play in the same game with the same partner. Don't panic.
10. **Etiquette:**
  - a. Add your **real first and last name** to your BBO account. People want to know who they are playing.
  - b. Offer a **first name introduction** along with your system and defense before the first hand of the round. “Hi! Steve & John – Precision UDCA 3/5s 4N” is one example. (Precision is our general approach, Upside Down Count and Attitude, 3 and 5<sup>th</sup> versus suits, and 4<sup>th</sup> vs NT).
  - c. Avoid praising partner during the round – you might not know the opponents were responsible for the result. “wdp” for well done partner is enough if you must say something.
  - d. Never comment on opponents play except to offer them **praise** for their play and **good luck**.
  - e. Each player owns a responsibility to be part of everybody's fun.
  - f. Remember **ACTIVE ETHICS** and **ZERO TOLERANCE** apply.
11. During the game remember that **you have to alert your own bids**. You opponents see your (and partner's) alerts. You only see your own alerts – partner does NOT see them. This keeps Unauthorized Information between partners to a minimum. Create and save a text file or word document with short phrases for the most common alerts. Keep this page open in a narrow window on your computer, so that you can cut and paste phrases quickly onto the alert line.

12. **Self-alerting:** write the alert before you bid. Once you select the number and strain the bid is made. If you bid and remember to alert, click on the bid you made and fill out the explain line, then click submit. If you need to modify the alert, click on explain for the bid and make the change. The opponents will know that an alert is coming.
13. **Propriety for Chatting** During Game: Never ask about bids with the chat aimed at the **TABLE** – Partner is not allowed to know about your questions. Instead point the chat line to “**Opponents**”. They will answer you.
14. Be sure to pay attention to any chat request from opponents during bidding or play. A **request for explanation** about a bid might show up as a bright yellow dialog box – simply fill out the explanation. If they message the **table**, reply to the **opponents**, and not to the table. Help the opponents do the right thing. If they message you, reply to the asker. Avoid the temptation to chat to the table to talk to your partner about the hand you just played. Wait until the round is over and **chat privately to your partner**, not to the table.
15. You cannot **communicate with partner** during a hand or round. Don't try. You can communicate with partner between rounds and before and after the game.
16. **Claims** – make them often. Obvious claims require no explanation. If you need to draw trumps, say so. Use the explain line on the claim dialog box to state your play, then claim the number of tricks you expect to make. If you are certain your side cannot win any more tricks, concede. Playing out every hand wastes precious time. If a dispute arises over a claim, call the director only if you believe your side has been damaged.
17. **Call the director** to report an infraction or procedural problem. Continue to play while the director comes to your table. Describe the issue simply and directly. **DO NOT STOP PLAYING** – you will be dropped from the game!
18. The **time for each round** is strictly controlled. If you are running out of time, **DO NOT STOP PLAYING**. Purposely allowing the clock to run out to avoid a bad result is highly unethical. If this happens be sure to call the director if you believe either side has been damaged.
19. Finally, keep a **contact list for the directors** handy on your device or a piece of paper. If you get logged off and cannot return, call or text them and let them know. They might be able to help you reconnect. Your partner will continue playing with a substitute. (One way to do this is to keep notepad or word open on your desk and copy the information from the director's introductory chat and paste it to the page. Note: you can always scroll back to the directors information, but if you are dropped from the site, well.....).

Please let one of your BBO directors know when something doesn't work right after the game is over.

We will update this tips list with every useful tip we learn from you.

Steve Moese on behalf of John Taylor, Cordell Coy, Isaac Stephani for Unit 124  
30 May 2020