

This document provides instructions for setting up, running and directing BBO Tournaments. This is a dense document that is being cobbled together from any source that has useful information about managing online tournaments and teams matches.

See the companion getting started document for more easily accessible information if you are not well versed in online directing:

BBO Tournaments – Getting Started – Directing.

The companion document will have screen snapshots and is designed to be a clear and concise introduction to newcomers.

Sections in this document are:

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BBO Tournaments Overview

Any authorised user can create and run a Tournament. An authorised user is simply a BBO member in good standing who has been granted privilege.

There are some basic ground rules:

1. You and your customers are still bound by basic BBO rules.
2. Directors must provide reasonable service and this includes:
 - Not playing unless the tourney is very small.
 - Not bailing during play.
 - Keeping the number of players manageable.
3. You must use the authorization to keep the privilege.

It is not a lot of work but it is work. It is not for everyone.

The host, who is usually also the director, creates the tourney from the Play Bridge area in one of the Tournament sections. Only authorised users will have the Create Tournament Button enabled.

Creating a Tournament and creating a Teams Match are basically the same, except a Teams Match is explicitly 2 tables.

When all is said and done it is still a game of bridge. However, there are a lot of minor differences which are mainly due to the problems of delayed communication. You need to be patient when playing and directing online.

Create Tournament

Creation is done through a dialog where set some basic parameters using the information you already decided by arranging the entries or advertising for players.

1. Specify the director or directors. Can specify multiple. Sometimes just you.
2. Maximum number of entries. Maximum of 40 per director is a reasonable limit.
3. Clocked. If checked, rounds will terminate and unplayed boards assigned an average.

Once created a tourney cannot be edited. You can delete and start over or call a Yellow for help. The moment it is created it is visible to all BO customers.

Players can click and register themselves and their partner. Registrations are refused after the maximum is reached.

When starting time rolls around the tourney starts. Any pair not online at start time is discarded – both players must be present.

BBO then creates the tourney automatically:

1. Tables are created as per the accepted online entries.
2. A Sit-Out is created if required. The director must now find substitutes to complete the movement.
3. All pairs are then swept into the tourney. Whatever they were doing is terminated and they are finds themselves at their designated tables. They cannot leave the tourney table. If they logoff and logon, they are returned.
4. After the first round ends, the players are swept to the next table as per the draw.
5. When the last table completes the tourney ends and the tables are closed. All players are now released.

After the tourney ends, players can check the Leader Board or Movie their own results and go to the MyHands page for past results.

SetUp Checklist

The following checklist is the items that you need to attend to directly or be aware of when creating and starting a tournament.

1. Time per board or round. Alternatively, just set a time for the whole tournament.
2. Type of tournament:
 - Clocked
 - Unclocked
 - Swiss All tables must finish before anyone can start the next round.
 - Survivor All tables must finish before anyone can start the next round.
3. Names of the directors – both real names and BBO Names.
4. Any restriction of system or partnership agreements.
5. Whether tournament chat for players is allowed.
6. Whether kibitzers are allowed. You really need a good reason to deny kibitzers access to a tourney.
7. The official language of the tournament.
8. Whether any director will play in the tournament.
9. Whether the director will offer board adjustments. This is considered a requirement in well run tournaments unless the director and/or the participants are very inexperienced.

If any of the above have unusual settings, they should be included in the tournament description (or rules for serious tournaments). Especially, you should declare the time allotted per board or round. Suggested times are 8 minutes per board and 2 board rounds as a norm.

A reasonable director requirement is one director per 20-25 tables depending on the experience of the players.

Some estimate of when the tournament will end should always be made. This can have a number of benefits, not the least of which is some people cannot do simple maths and will and will not understand how much time they have committed for.

Manage Tournament

Before and during the tournament you can use the Manage Tournament and Edit Tournament dialogs to perform a variety of functions. Most of them will be straightforward in principle and will be understood from an operational standpoint after you have done even a handful of tournaments.

Especially, you will be required from time to time during a tournament to perform substitutions and adjust scores. These are big topics in and of themselves. They will be touched on here but, for serious tournament direction, you are going to have to find the experts and talk to them.

One byway that I will talk about here is the Other Functions available on the Manage Tournament screen. You can select one of these and click Execute. The options available are:

1. Display tournament status (summary)
Provides a snapshot of high-level information for the director.
Useful when thinking of changing the schedule during an event.
2. Show the board history for a player
You can specify a player and then drill down to Bridge Movies for the that player has played. Investigation city.
3. Upload preset hands for a tourney
Interesting function which allows specialised tournament support.
4. Upload conditions of Contest (LIN)
Experienced directors can have a file that contains their standard conditions of tournament for each event type and upload it via this function.
5. Clear the list of pre-set hands for tourney
You have uploaded hands and you change your mind.
You can even do this during play, but it may have a limited effect.
6. Unregister offline teams
This is used close to event start time and kills off in one hit, all of the entrants with one or more players who are not online. Use with care.
7. Stars play free (IND only)
Basically this sponsors strong players for paid events.

The Upload preset hands for a tourney option provides a lot of scope for creating tournaments with hand sets that are instructional or interesting. You can also have preset documentation that will be of interest to the participants. If you want to go this route then you will need to find someone who can assist with the mechanics of mulching hand sets and generating reports.

During the Tournament

Once the Tournament has started there is not a lot to be done unless something goes wrong. Problems and exceptions will be dealt with in following sections where appropriate.

There are some basic duties you have to attend to. Amongst these are:

1. The moment the Tournament starts, check the table list. If you see a Sit-Out Pair at a table, replace them with two substitutes.
2. Then make your welcome announcements to the tourney. Instruct the players to call you if their opponents or partner seem stuck. Generally ask them to give a disconnected person a chance to return before yelling for the director.
3. When called to a table, always ask first if you are needed in case the call was accidental or has become irrelevant. Most calls will be about disconnections and therefore substitutions if unresolved.
4. Start performing score adjustments at your peril. Difficult stuff when you cannot explain in person. Also, discourage complaints about alerts, lack of alerts and poor explanations – these will become more relevant as experience online grows.

Substitutions, Adjustments and Cancel

Substitutions and Adjustments are initiated from the green Table Button inside any Tournament.

From the resulting screen you can adjust results, substitute players or Cancel the Tournament.

The screens attempt to be self-explanatory. You do need to be aware of:

1. No Double Substitutions.
One player can only substitute for one Tournament Player.
2. Replacing Sit-Out
You can replace each member of the Sit-Out Pair with a real Player.
Replace them one at a time.
3. Adjustments require some work.
Practice them. You need to know the board, the username and what you want to adjust the contract to.

You can assign various averages which are self-explanatory:

A== A-- A++ A+= A-+ A-=

Apart from PASS for Passout, the adjusted contracts use the general format:

[Level][Strain][Declarer] [Doubled] [ReDoubled][+|=][Number]

Where:

- [Level] is a number.
- [Strain] is the normal character.
- [Declarer] is the normal character.
- [Doubled] is X if Doubled or ReDoubled.
- [ReDoubled] is X if ReDoubled.
- [+|=] is who the adjustment applies to and who gets extra or less.
- [Number] is a number.

The director should adjust unfinished boards in the following manner:

1. The director sees that a particular outcome would be reached with any reasonable continuation of play or the players agree on an outcome which is reasonable.
Award that result.
2. More than one reasonable continuation exists which would produce different results.
Assign an Average. Penalise one side where appropriate.
System default of A- each is reasonable if no information.
3. Defence already has or will have a good result.
Award a sensible result. For instance, the defence already has two tricks against 6NT.
Award the contract as 6NT-1 or more off if appropriate.

Slow play should not be a factor in awarding an adjusted score or result but should be dealt with as an entirely separate issue. Slow play fines can be curly because there are many factors which can contribute to slowness, not all of which are under the control of the participants.

Boot players who make silly bids and cancel the board.

After the Tournament

Once the tournament is over, there are standard things to do when you close off and then make sure that you have taken care of any outstanding matters.

First ensure that normal courtesies have been observed. Thank the players and other helpers and ensure they have been informed when they will be sent results and/or where and when they can access them.

Amongst the things to remind the players are:

1. The Leader Board contains the lists of Players and Rankings.
2. The Movie Button offers Players their individual results and scores.
3. The web provides a view of travellers for the boards at:
www.bridgebase.com/myhands

The Leader Boards will be visible for about an hour and will then go away. The Leader Boards for older results are also available via a link on the MyHands welcome page. Good luck finding one, however – you are looking at a very large list.

Bugs and Limitations

This section lists a few of the bugs and limitations that were present in the software, some of which may have been fixed or superseded by improved functionality.

Amongst known limitations are:

1. The IMP/Matchpoint scores are not completely accurate. Use the published scores to find relative and not absolute results.
2. Players who finish a Tournament early are considered to be part of that Tournament until the Tournament completes. They can sign up for another Tournament but will be discarded if the second one starts before the first completes.

Amongst historical bugs were:

1. Rarely, play at a table can get mixed up. If this happens, don't try to fix it – get someone to claim to curtail play and then assign an adjustment for the board.
2. If the Director-Needed Dialog is up on your screen, the Chat Window will not accept the Enter Key.
3. If both member of a pair are replaced with late subs in an event, the new pair may play very few boards together and win with a high score on those few boards. This should have been fixed.
4. There was a problem where players having finished could enter another table and get stuck there. This should have been corrected.

System Cards

BBO provides the ability to use interactive system cards which provide automatic alerts during the bidding.

There seems to be very little doubt that these should be used by any pair that want to play a Highly Unusual Method.

Directors need to maintain awareness of the standard of alerting and ensure that it is being done in a reasonable manner.

System restrictions can be difficult because you need to police this for it to be meaningful. Remember that you should assume very little – even SAYC has different versions as players do not read and adhere to published standards.

Disclosure of methods is some you can have a little or a lot of control over as a director. However, you must insist that players disclose their basic system and key information when asked.

The rules about pre-alerts apply in pretty much the same way as they apply in live games.

Checking Results

The results of tournament are available first as an overall result with positions and secondly with details of specific Boards.

To see the overall results, look at the list of completed tournaments and select yours. You will be presented with details of the tournament and there will be a Tournament Results Button underneath the descriptive detail.

You can get some level of detail by going to successive screens from here. This is basically like the scoresheet you see when they post results after a session at your club.

To get drill-down details of specific boards, you can go to the My Hands Web Pages at:

www.bridgebase.com/myhands

From here you just enter your BBO Name

Director Topic – Handling Director Calls

There is quite a lot to managing director calls where the procedures logically change from live calls.

The biggest challenge is providing enough time. You need to allow a minute for someone to respond to a question before deeming that they should be pressed for an answer. Like George says in Seinfeld, this can be a long minute.

Mandatory penalties are no good – the director must make a call on each specific instance.

When dealing with disclosure, keep an eye on how long the table is taking to deal with a problem. You can eventually remove a pair from a tournament but this should, naturally, only be done very much as a last resort.

There are timing issues for some things that are not the same as live games. The director should attempt to do things quickly but without hurrying the players. If boards are disputed you only have about 15 minutes after play finishes to do anything so most issues should be dealt with on the spot when problem arises.

Claiming is a tricky beast because less information is generally provided and the director needs to consider the experience of all concerned, including himself.

Especially note that the director must award an adjusted score if an invalid claim is accepted.

Director Topic – Undos

Undos are a curly problem for tournaments because it is not easy to determine whether a request for an undo is legitimate.

It is reasonable to not allow undos but this must be declared in the tournament description.

You can allow undos for bidding and play or for bidding only. Once you make decision stick to it – it is difficult and politically dangerous to try to accommodate a change during a tournament.

This is certainly a topic that requires discussion with the player group if there is a core of regular players. This is one of the areas where the best practice behaviour online is not the same as that you would use when playing live.

In principle, if you allow undos then only allow them if the undo is not consistent with a change of mind but is a clear misclick. This is the only way to convince the playing population that you are being fair to all. If in doubt, especially if the undo does no serious damage in and of itself, leave it be.

A more difficult problem is how to deal with a claim for an undo which is disallowed – you must be alive to the possibility of unauthorized information.

Director Topic – Chat

It is common to allow players to chat during tournaments but you do have to do a little monitoring of this to ensure that players are not talking about boards or being rude.

Also, you cannot monitor chat with the same ease as when you are actually in the room. Experience is probably needed to do the right thing here. The capability for this to get out of hand is one reason that directors should not play where there is any substantial number of tables to be supervised.

It is not easy to control this, but players are expected to minimise chat during play. It is very easy to chat online thinking it is not distracting – this is not true. Try to leave any discussion of boards until the end of a round. You should basically use the same rules as when you restrict your chat in a live game.

Director Topic – Substitutions

Substitutions are a very common activity for directors to have to handle. They can be needed for a variety of reasons and be temporary or permanent.

You always have to monitor the start of a tournament and sometimes provide a substitute player or pair while someone who is expected is getting to the table. This is much more difficult than a live situation and the director needs to monitor such problems closely.

Temporary substitutions are common because of players being disconnected and having trouble getting back on. Sometime you provide a substitute while waiting, possibly the director himself if the expectation is that the player will definitely return if possible.

It is common to have to award a score for a single board to both pairs because of time lost during a reconnect. Anything more than a minute really requires the director's attention.

In general, allow 3 minutes before forcing a substitution unless an acceptable request has been made for a substitution earlier.

Naturally, you should replace a player between boards if at all possible.

Most substitution problems in tournaments which are not serious tournaments can be handled with common sense. The most important thing is to be aware that protocols are different online – this means that a new director must be willing to learn and listen in such matters.

Director Topic – Behaviour

Like many things online, behaviour is easy to deal with when things are basically OK but much more difficult to deal with when not.

It is harder to gather evidence and judge intent for a variety of reasons. You need to be careful when doing things and also be aware of your responsibilities.

At a club, you do not necessarily need to consider things outside of your pond but everyone online belongs to the world and you are expected as a director to monitor behaviour standards and be willing to report people who get out of line.

The director can warn rude players and remove them from a tournament where required. If difficult to judge who is at fault, it may be necessary to warn an entire table.

Where appropriate the director should advise someone who witnessed an incident of the right to create a screenshot and report the rudeness to abuse@bridgebase.com

The BridgeBase help has a tutorial on how to create screen shots for reporting.

Online Help Sources

There are a lot of available resources that contain useful information for budding Online Tournament Directors. This section deals with those that are available on the web.

Amongst these are:

1. Bridge Base Online – Tournaments

This is a group of articles which can be found at:

www.bridgebase.com/tourney/help

2. Bridge Base Online Help

This is the help system that is provided when you click the Help Button on the BBO Toolbar:

www.bridgebase.com/help/3/common/text/index.html

Go to the contents and have a look around for tournament material.

3. BBO Results

This is not help but results. It is mentioned here because you really need to know this location – you will be asked about it:

www.bridgebase.com/myhands

4. Bridge Base Forums

These can be found at:

<http://forums.bridgebase.com>

There are quite a few of them with a wide variety or erratic information.

There is Tournament Directors Forum, however, with some good stuff.