

Getting started with BBO

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These notes explain how to create your BBO Account, covers basic navigation around the BBO website, helps you to change some settings, and gets you to play a practice game of bridge with a stranger.

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1. Create your account

Start your web browser (Edge, Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, etc). Search for “Bridgebase Online” or navigate to this webpage:

www.bridgebase.com

You should see the main BBO page similar to Figure 1. Click on the red “Play bridge now” button (or go via the options bars at the top right of the screen).

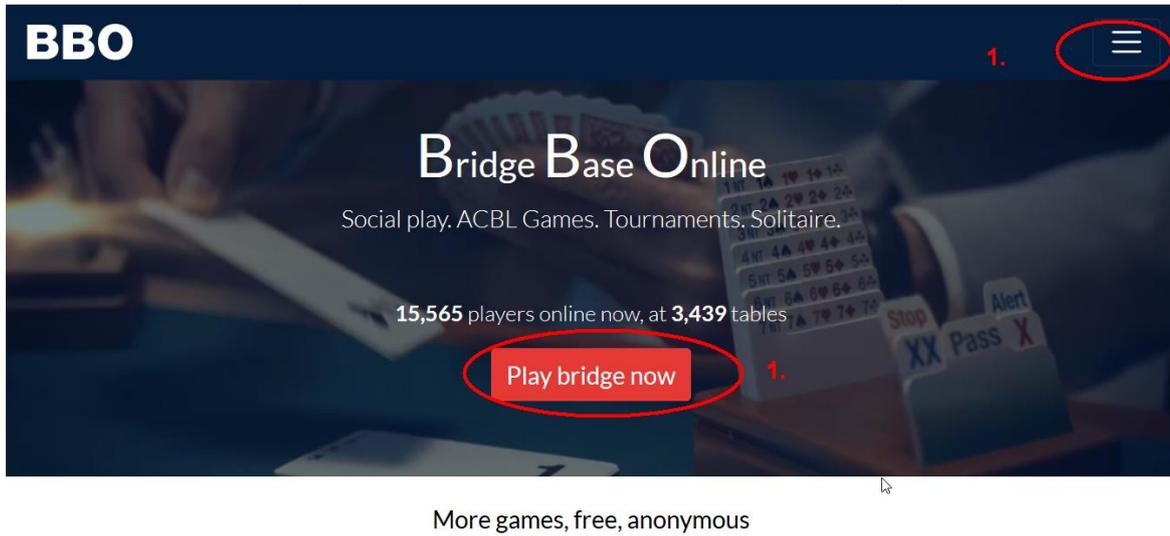


Figure 1. Main BBO webpage

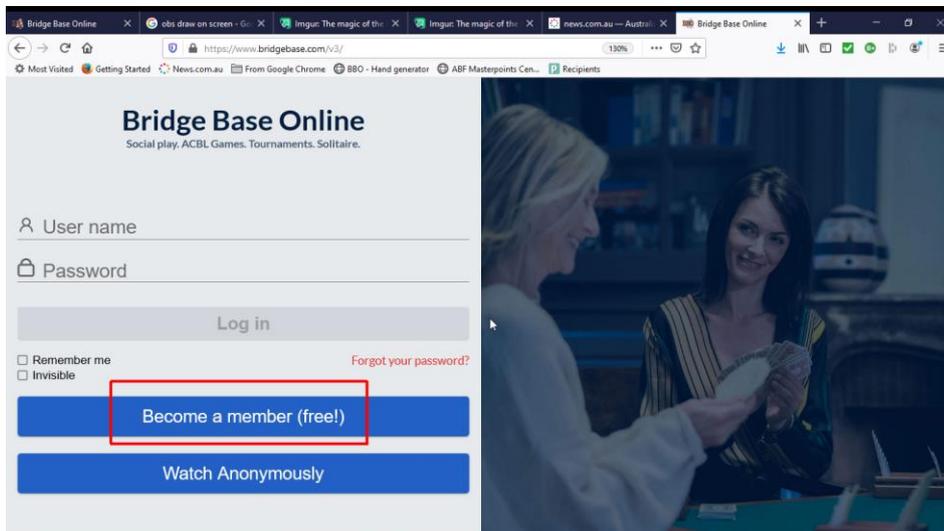


Figure 2. BBO login screen

On the BBO login screen (Figure 2) click on “Become a member (free!)”.

The image shows a registration form for a BBO account. The form is divided into two columns. The left column contains fields for Username (1. wookie99, Available), Password (2. Required), Confirm password (3. Required), and E-mail address (4. chris@snook.id.au, Required). The right column contains fields for Real name (5. Chris Snook), ACBL Number (6.), and Other (7.). Below these are two dropdown menus: Skill level (8. Advanced) and Country (9. Australia). At the bottom, there is a checkbox (10.) for 'I agree to the Terms of Service' and a 'Register' button (11.).

Figure 3. BBO account details

Referring to Figure 3, fill in the data for your account.

1. Make up a **username** that you will use and that you don't mind other people seeing. Some people make up a crazy username, and that is fine, provided you and your friends can remember it. When you request a username, the blue text to the right of where you are typing will say "Available" if this username is available and will say "Unavailable" if it has already been allocated to someone else. You might have to be rather creative with your attempts. I wanted "Wookie" because it has been a common nickname for me (do you watch Star Wars?), but back in 2010 it had already been allocated to someone in the USA. For this tutorial I had to get to "Wookie99". Don't base your username on your email address, nor on some part of your human name, because this is not good computer/internet security practice.
2. Make up a **password** that you will use. You must remember this but you should make it so it is not easy for an outsider to guess.
3. Re-enter the **password**.
4. Enter a valid **email address**. This will be used to confirm your identity when your account is created, for high end admin communications and if you use the "I forgot my password" link. It is not used for anything else.
5. Enter some part of your **real name** so your friends will know who you are.

6. We are not members of the ACBL (American Contract Bridge League) so leave this blank. At some time in the future we may need/use your ABF number, but not yet.
7. You can include other **comment** if you wish.
8. Choose an appropriate **skill level** to describe yourself. I think everyone should put beginner to start with, and those with higher bridge skill can change this as they become more comfortable with using BBO. You might consider the advertised skill level of someone you don't know when you decide whether to play with them in an open session.
9. Use the scroll bar to find and click on "**Australia**". This is important because later in the year the ABF or QBA or the Toowoomba Bridge Club might run dedicated session just for locals.
10. Read the "Terms of Service" and if in agreement tick the check-box.
11. If all the above details are correct, click on "Register" and follow the prompts. You will soon receive an email from BBO asking you to confirm your account details and to finalise your registration. This is an important step or you won't be able to login.

2. Logging in to BBO

Now go back to the BBO Home Page. It probably looks like Figure 4, and enter your **username** (1) and **password** (2). Before you go any further tick the box to the left of "Remember me" (3) – this way your name and password will be prefilled when you next access this page. If you share your computer with other people, then untick the "Remember me" checkbox and you will have to enter your username and password on each access. If you have forgotten your password, enter your username and click on "Forgot your password?" and BBO will send you an email with instructions.

Last step is click on the red "Log in".

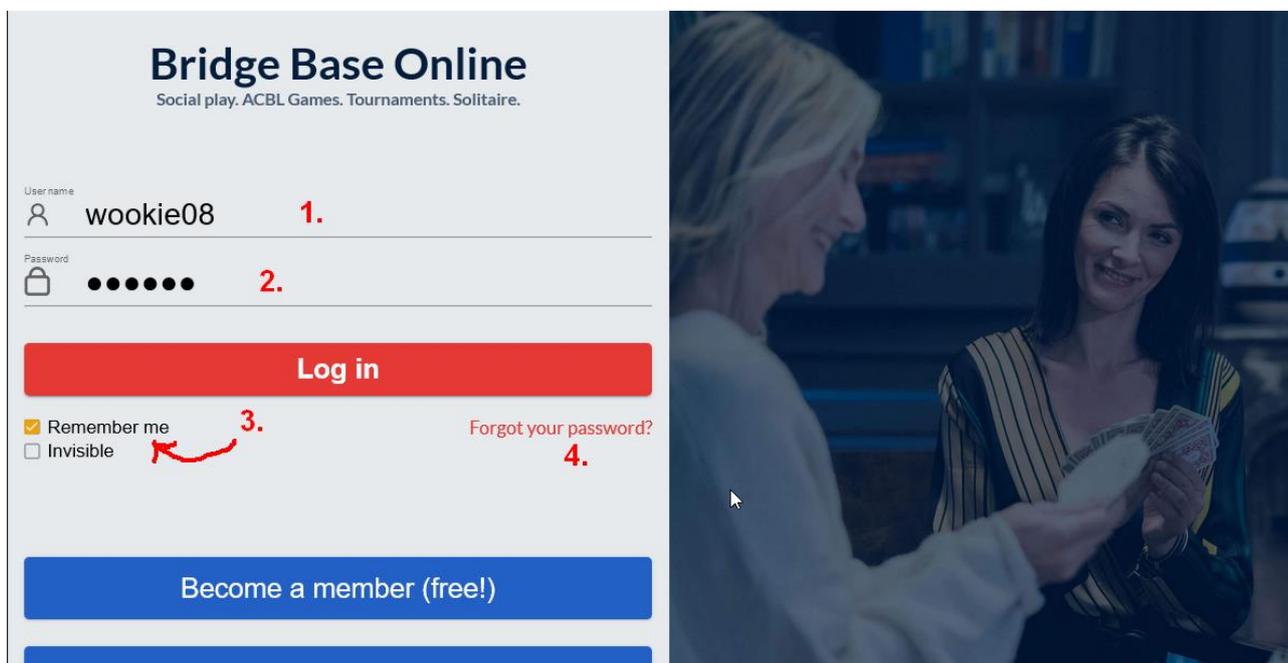


Figure 4. BBO Login page

3. Simple navigation of BBO

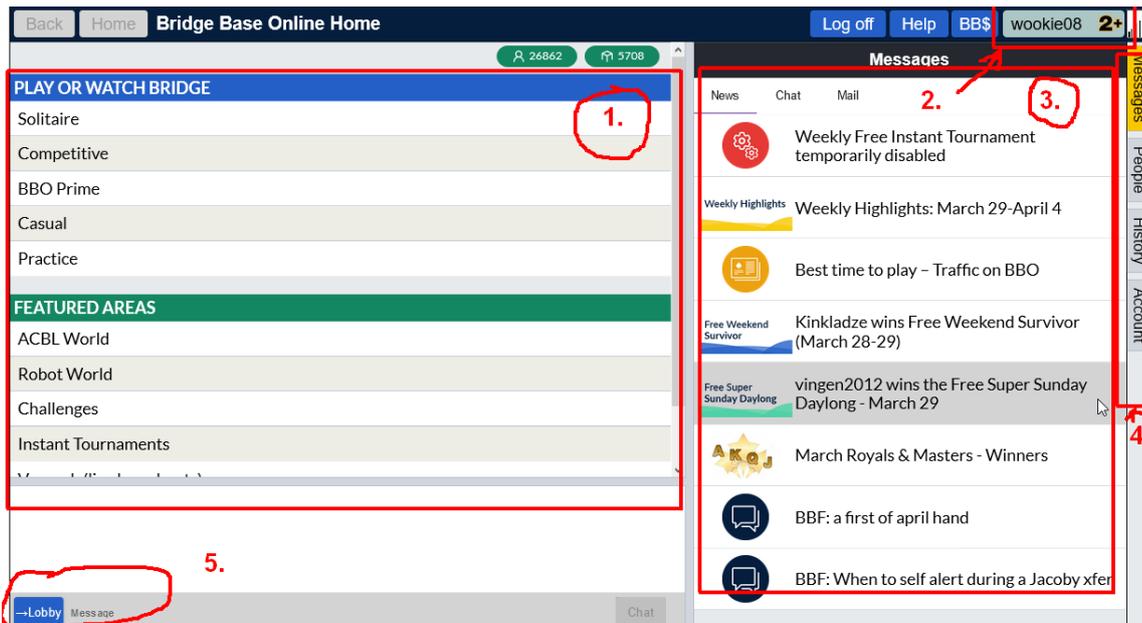


Figure 5. BBO Home page

You will now be on your BBO Home Page (Figure 5). There are five main areas of the screen that you need to know about at this stage:

1. “The Play Bridge Home” area which you will use to find a game of bridge to play (more on this later);
2. “The username” area where you can see more information about your account;
3. “The Messages” area which is used for different purposes depending on what you are doing at the time; and
4. “The Toolbar” area which is very important so I will go into this in more detail now. It is a dynamic menu which means it changed depending on what you are doing.
5. “The Chat” area which allows you to “chat” with people that you know, or with people at your “table”.

3.1. Toolbar : Account

We’ll start with the “Account” tab on the right-hand toolbar. Click on this and the main Account panel shows (Figure 6). This is where you can change information that you gave when you created your account and where you can change your password. Remember you can have free text under “Other”, so I wrote my basic system of “Precision”.

In “Account -> Settings” you can change quite a lot of BBO’s appearance and behaviour. Scroll up and down the panel to see what they are, but don’t change too many things at a time.

This is where I turn off the “Sound effects” that occur when playing cards, etc, by moving the green slider to the left.

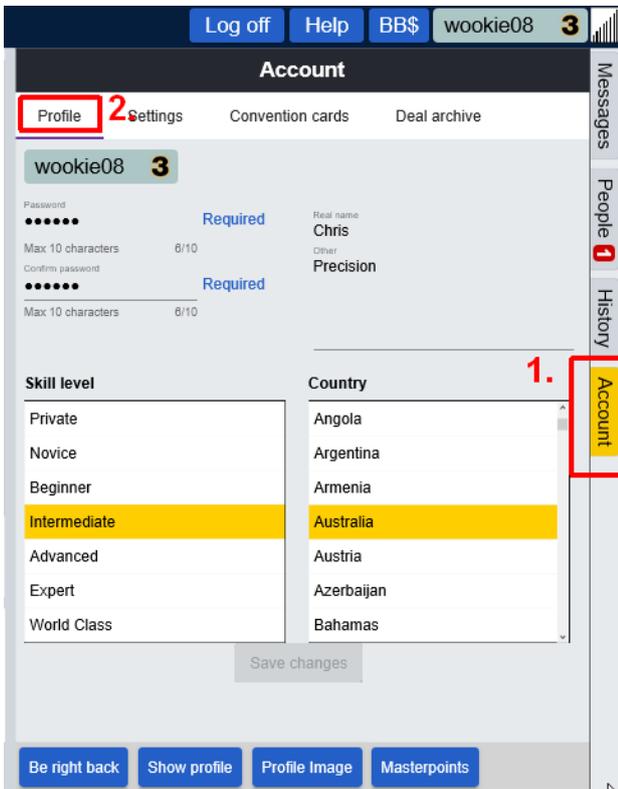


Figure 6. Account panel - Profile

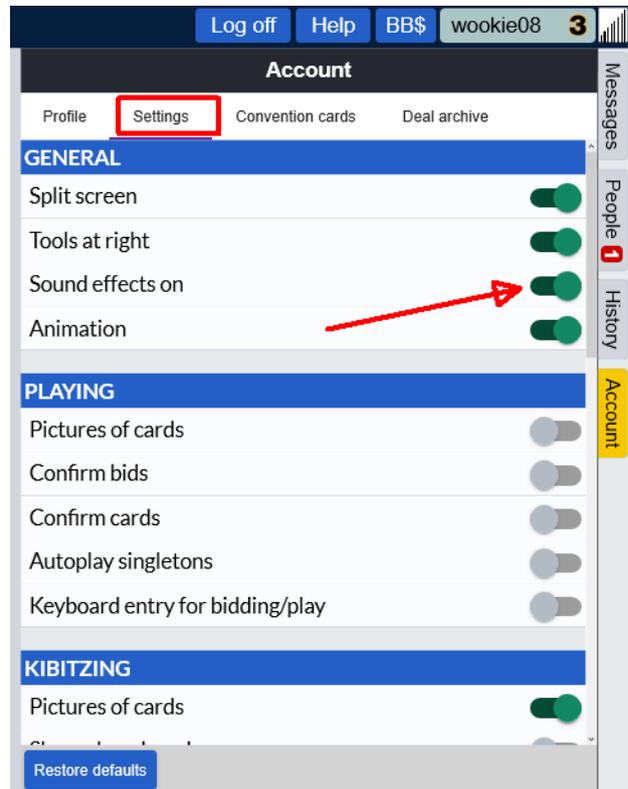


Figure 7. Account panel - Settings

3.2. Toolbar : History (Home)

If you are viewing the Play Bridge Home page, then the “**History**” tab on the toolbar will show a list of “recent tournaments” that you have played (if any). If you click on the name of one of those tournaments then you will see the boards that you played in that event. You can also click on “My Table” but since we aren’t playing bridge yet, it will be blank.

3.3. Toolbar : People

The “**People**” tab (Figure 8) is more interesting (soon). At the moment you will see a number of selection items: “Friends”, “Hosts (x)”, “Stars (x)”, “Search (x)”, and “Ignores”.

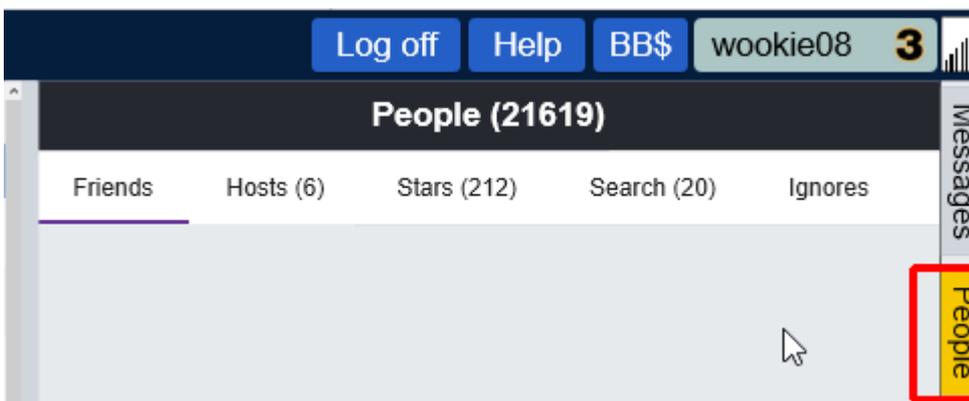


Figure 8. People panel - Friends

Friends : This will list people that you know and have chose to “follow”. This way when you login you will know whether any of your friends are logged in as well. There is somewhere between 9,000 and 25,000

people logged in at one time, so looking for your friends in lists is not possible. In Figure 8 I can see that none of my bridge friends are logged in at the moment.

Hosts (6) : If you see a username in yellow, then this person may be able to host larger events and may be able to offer more help at the tables. The number in brackets is the number of users in this list.

Stars (212) : Stars are players of high status and who have won a major (National) championship.

Search (20) : Click on “Search” and then look for and type a username at the bottom of the people page (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Search for people

This will then list all the names that match or closely match your search item (Figure 10). Then you can click on the username of the person you searched for to see more details about them (Figure 11). Use the dropdown menu at (1.) to “Follow” the other person. When they do the same then you appear in each other’s “Friends” list. To the right of their username will be text that will indicate whether they are “online”, “offline” or “playing at a table”. If they are online then you can chat to them by typing a short text message and clicking on “Show chat”.

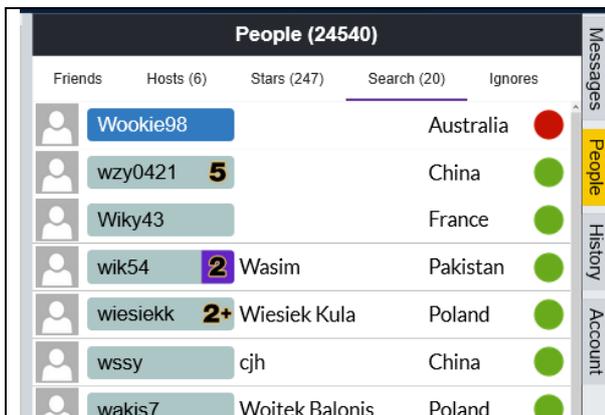


Figure 10. Lookup one person

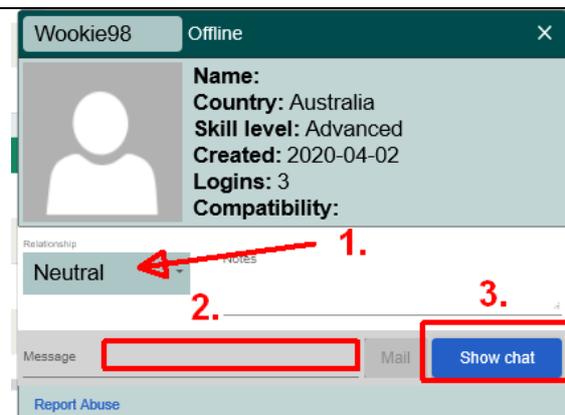


Figure 11. Follow/Friend request and chat

4. Let's play bridge

4.1. Play Solitaire

Solitaire is what you do when you just want some quite hands of bridge by yourself. Move to the Bridge Base Online Home page and click on “Solitaire” under the “Play or Watch Bridge” section (Figure 12).

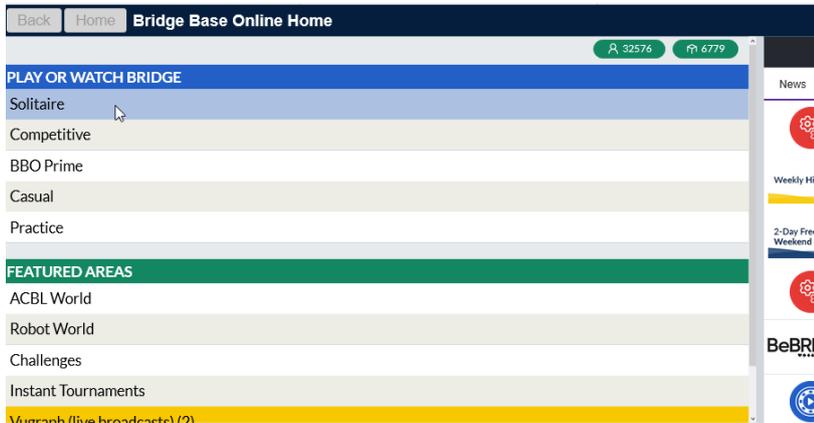


Figure 12. Navigating to Solitaire

Now choose “**Just Play Bridge (Free)**” and you will be placed South at a table with a robot for partner and two robots as opponents. Solitaire robots don't cost you any money.

If you want to know what one of partners or the defender's bids mean, just click on their bid. You are playing single boards, so you will see a board score (eg +420, -50) when you finish but no % and no IMPs because you are not in a tournament.

When you have hand enough, just click on the blue “Back” or “Home” button.

4.2. Play with anyone in a “Casual” game against random opponents

Choose on “Casual” under “Watch or Play Bridge” and then choose “**Take me to the first seat available**”. You will be placed at a table with someone from anywhere in the world and will play against real opponents (although they might not be a regular partnership). Your partner might show part of what their system is in their “Profile”, so click on the name to view it. Now focus on the little blue box in the bottom left corner of screen, and change it from “->Lobby” to “->Table” so that any comments you type in the chat bar are seen by all your table but no-one else.

Once you sit to play, it is extremely rude to leave the table part way through a hand. If you want to leave at the end of a hand, tell the table you are leaving so they can get someone else to fill in.

4.3. Play with your regular partner in a “Casual” game against random opponents

Choose on “Casual” under “Watch or Play Bridge” and then choose “**I have a partner, take us to a table**”. You will then be asked to enter your partners username. They will then receive a BBO invite asking them to “accept” or “reject” the invitation. You won't get to the table until partner accepts. You will have random opponents.

4.4. Play with your regular partner but with “robot” opponents

If you want to play against robot opponents, then you have to hire the robots and they cost \$1 per week.

First you need to spend some real money to purchase some \$BBO money. In the top right of your PC screen you will see the BB\$ (Figure 13). If you are on a device with a smaller screen, then there will be a “shop” button at the bottom of your screen. Spending money is second nature to us all now, so I won’t guide you any further in this step. I do know that paying by credit card gives you \$BBO immediately. I don’t know about other forms of payment.

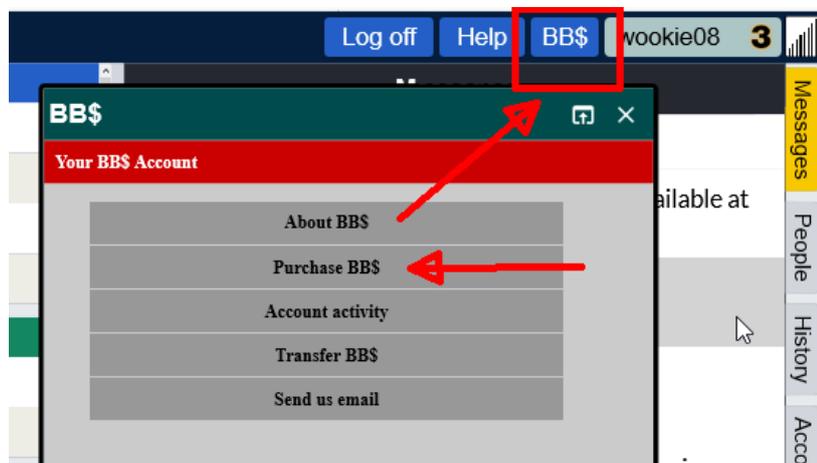


Figure 13. Purchase \$BBO

When you have purchased your \$BBO, click on “**Home**”, and click on “**Robot World**” under the green “Featured Areas”. There you will see some blue buttons at the bottom of the panel. Click on “Robot Rentals”. I have found that the basic robots are fine for normal play. I haven’t tried advanced – they sound too complicated and cost too much. A basic robot costs \$BBO 1 per week.

It is a pain playing with or against robots because they don’t play proper bridge. They do not play normal lead conventions and don’t do nor see signals (be quiet partners!!!). They are exceptionally good at counting and considering all the permutations and combinations of possible hands – so their general play is good.

Now go to “Casual” and choose on “**Start a table**”.

The screenshot shows a game lobby configuration screen. At the top, there are two dropdown menus: 'IMPs' (labeled 1) and 'Description' (labeled 2). Below these are 'Privacy options' including 'Allow kibitzers', 'Allow kibitzers to chat with players', 'Permission required to kibitz', 'Permission required to play' (labeled 3), 'Invisible', and 'Exclude new members'. A 'Reserve seats' section shows two seats: 'West' (labeled 6) and 'East'. The 'South' seat is occupied by 'wookie98' (labeled 5) and the 'North' seat by 'wookie08' (labeled 3). At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Start Table - Relaxed game' (labeled 4) and 'Start Table - Competitive game'. A 'Lobby' button and a 'Message' input field are visible at the very bottom.

- At the top of panel set scoring to IMPs or matchpoints.
- Give your table a “description” of it will be visible.
- Set the switch to enforce “Permission required to play”, otherwise as soon as your table starts you will get people from all over the world trying to sit at your table.
- Click in the “South” panel and put your username [Ok] and your partner as “North” (or whichever seats you want to sit at). Note my name in South is in blue because I am already logged in and sitting at the table.
- Partners name will initially be in red. They have a reservation. They will receive an invite and when they “accept” they will change to blue.

Leave East and West blank at this stage.
- Change any other options above as you desire and then choose “**Start Table**”, I recommend “**Relaxed game**” until you are more experienced”.

You and partner will then be taken to your new table (with you are the host/boss) and will be waiting for opponents before you can start.

Figure 14. Start table options

Now you are at your table (similar to Figure 15), left click on the East or West name, and choose “robot” from the pull down menu. As soon as all four seats are filled, your table can start playing for as long as you wish.

When you have finished, just choose “**Back**” or “**Home**”.

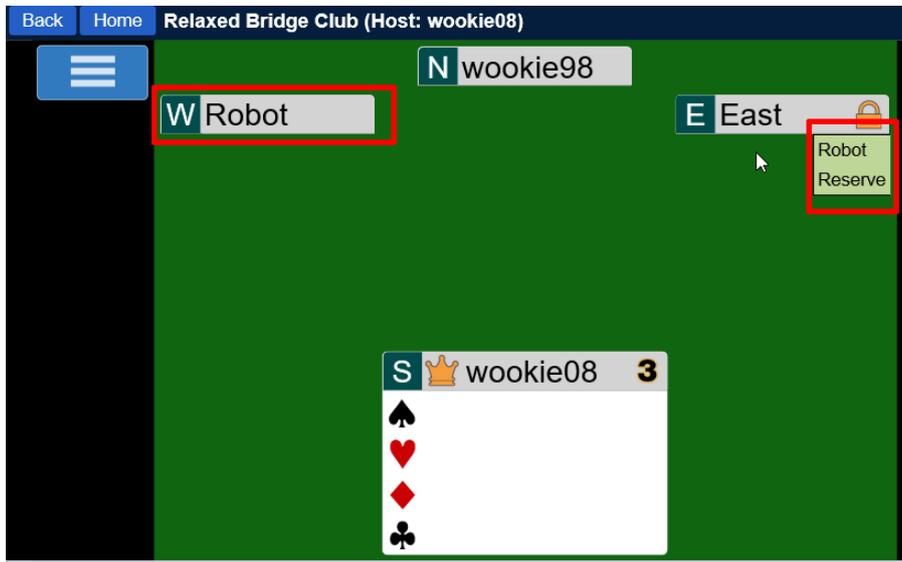


Figure 15. Table about to start

4.5. Start a Table of Four

It will be getting easier as you gain more experience. If you and your partner and two other friends want a nice social game where you all play at the same table, then follow the same steps as you did in section 4.4, except you add all four player usernames at step 4, and ignore the robots. As soon as the other three people accept the invite, your table will start and away you go.

4.6. Practice Bidding with Partner

From the “Home Panel” you can also start a “Practice” table, and your next choice is “Start a Bidding Table”. Again, enable the requirement “Permission Required to Play”. As you enable this option you will see a padlock appear next to NSEW names. Now put you and your partner as North/South, You can leave the opponents settings as “Pass Throughout”, but this will give some very strange auctions sometimes.

Better to change the Opponents Bidding setting to “Controlled by Host”.

Then choose “Start Table”. Once partner has accepted and the table has started, you can put those robots that you hired earlier as East and West.

4.7. Table Navigation

It’s worth talking about navigating around the table (see Figure 16).

As table “Host” you can control the settings at your table by clicking on the Options bars (three horizontal bars). If you have to kick someone off your table, then left click on their name. If someone disappears because of a bad connection, then you can left-click to reserve a seat for another person.

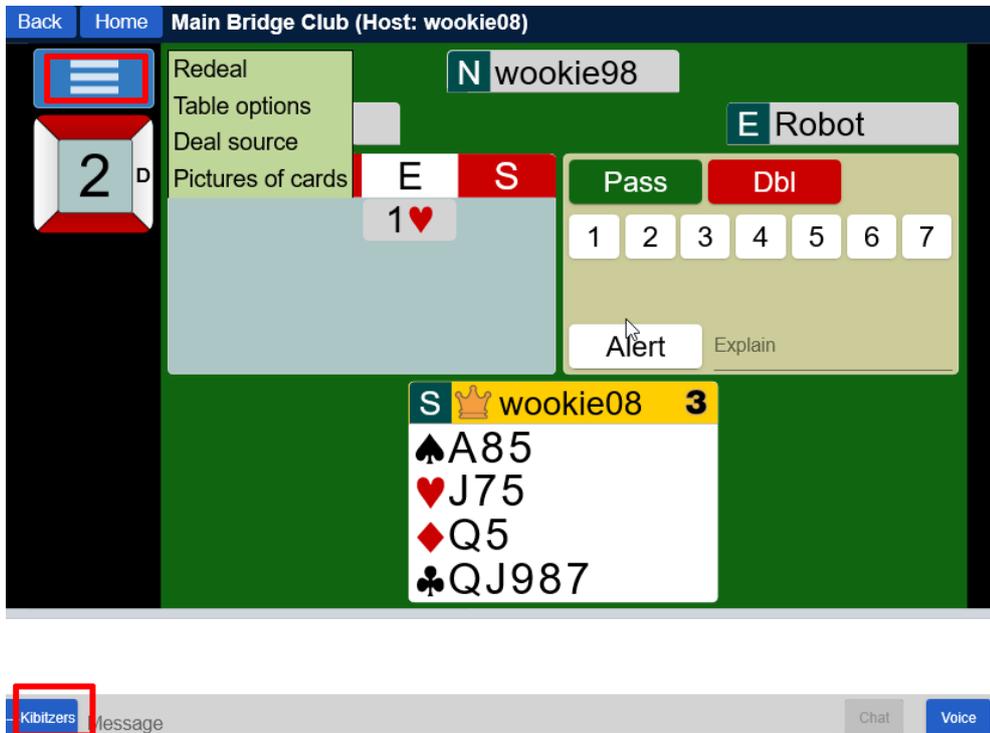


Figure 16. Table navigation

4.8. Partner and I want to Play in a Real Competition

If you and partner are ready to play in a real competition, then from the “Home Panel”, choose “Competitive”. There you will see a list of the competition types. Let’s look at Free Competitions for a start, although you can spend your \$BBO when ever you choose. You will see a panel similar to Figure 17.

Host	Title	Type	Start	Entries	Entry Fee
Chojne	Ind. KBS CHOJNE - 12.00 #6886	Individual	36	44	Free
niki98	Pairs Lancashire BPS #8049	Pairs	36	10	Free
papraline	Pairs * HOP HOP 7 Donnes* #8231	Pairs	37	7	Free
finbbo	Pairs BBoFinland VP-turnaus #9813	Pairs	37	1	Free
paulg	Pairs Berwick Bridge Club and friends #2454	Pairs	37	17	Free
Fr.stad BK	Pairs HELE NORGE SPILLER MP #9978	Pairs	37	7	Free
mcc lp	Pairs CLUB DE BRIDGE LAS PALMAS #5841	Pairs	40	3	Free
Bogna	Pairs BLUES W POEUDNIE #8474	Pairs	50	5	Free
mete28	Pairs giresun ogrmn v kmly #8273	Pairs	65	0	Free
muhittin31	Pairs SIMULTANE EVDE KAL TURKIYE #2869	Pairs	66	7	Free
savant	Pairs ADANA BRIC SPOR KULUBU IMP TURNUVASI	Pairs	66	3	Free

Figure 17. Free Tournaments

1. You will see three items “Pending”, “Running” and “Completed”. Since we are looking for a game we choose “Pending”.
2. The “Host” is the username of the person authorised by BBO to create actual tournaments. There are a limited number of people allowed to do so.
3. The title of the event should be reasonably descriptive, if you are just trying to find somewhere to play. If you have been invited to play, then the name just has to be unique and recognisable.
4. Most events are “Pairs”, but you better check.
5. This is (usually) the number of minutes until the event starts. Events are usually open for entries 2 hours before start time. This is to give everyone time to find the event and register for it.
6. The Lancashire event that I have highlighted has 10 entries at the moment.
7. If you miss out on an event you can put your name down as a “substitute” and if someone leaves early or their internet connection breaks, then you might be invited to join. That skill level that you indicated in your profile is important here. If you say “Expert” and the event host realises you aren’t even close then they may remove you from the table. Similarly if you’re pretty good and you say “Novice” you might be removed.

Now I click on the event name to see more details (Figure 18).

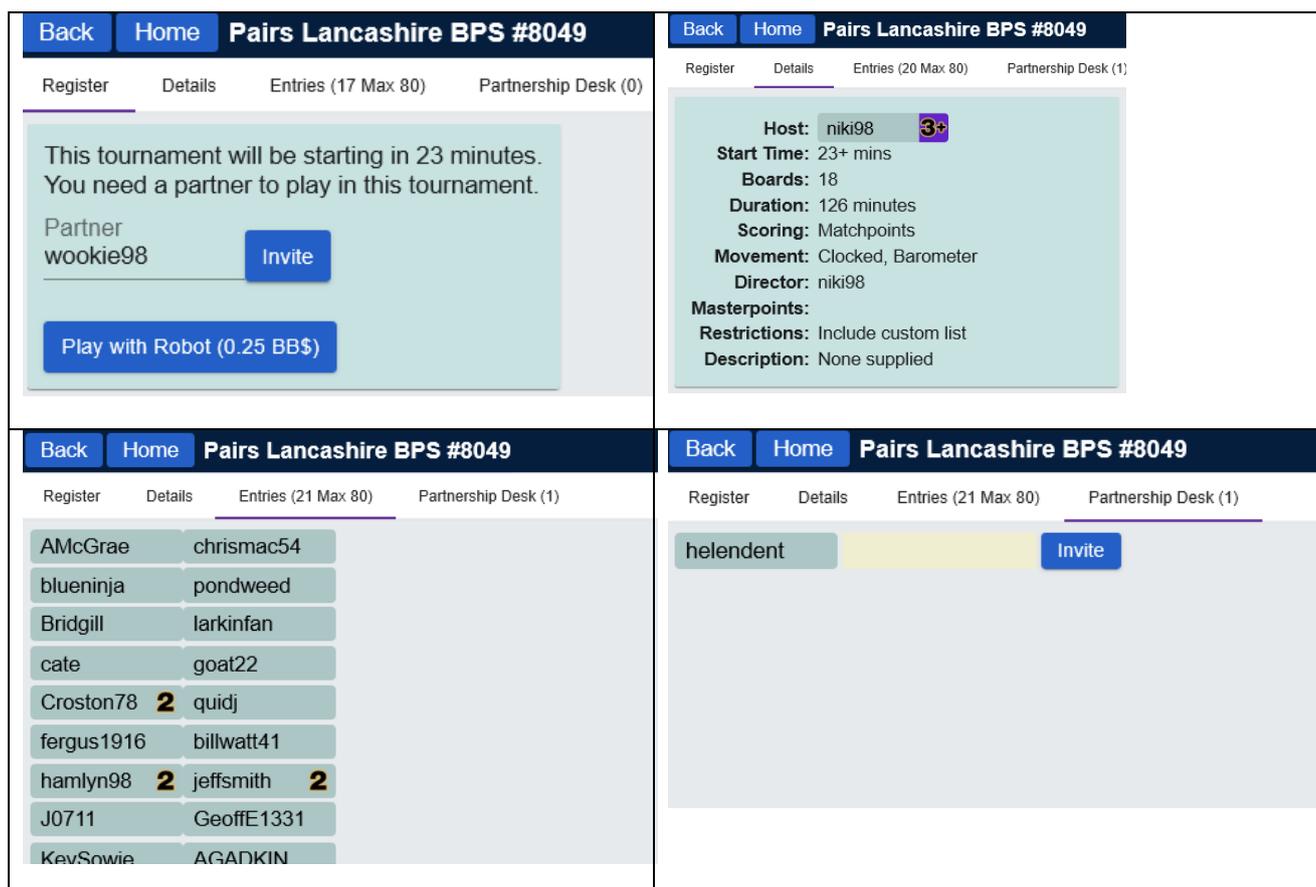


Figure 18. Free Tournament Registration

The critical piece of information I need is in the “Details” panel. It shows all the information about the event:

Host:	This is the name of the tournament “host” who has the greatest powers to control what happens in the event.
Start Time:	This just echoes the information we saw on the Free Tournament list.
Boards:	18. This will list the number of boards to be played. You will note it is generally a lot less than the number on regular face-to-face club play.
Duration:	126 minutes. Looks like about 7 minutes per board is the average (this is critical in some events).
Scoring:	Usual choices are matchpoints (like at the club) or IMPs (like teams).
Movement:	Clocked, Barometer. This means there is a set time per board – much stricter than at the club. Barometer means all tables play their boards at the same time, so the results are known at the end of each round (typically two boards). Of course, on BBO you don’t physically move.
Director:	The Director username(s) goes here, Large events often have more than one Director – but the game is controlled by the computer so most of the silly Director calls can’t happen because we can’t lead out of turn, bid out of turn, revoke, etc.
Masterpoints:	Sometime way in the future we hope we can have ABF masterpoints, but not for quite a while.
Restrictions:	Include custom list. <i>This is the critical one. I see here that the host have made this event only open to people on a specific list (like a club members only event). There has been such a rush on BBO at the moment, that most events are “members only”, so you need to check before registering.</i>
Description:	None supplied.

If you do manage to Register for an event, at start time you will be “swept” to the table ready to start play.

4.9. Creating a team’s event against club members

It looks like the easiest way to get Toowoomba Bridge Club members playing with and against each other is via head to head teams matches (eg team A plays against team B). For this to work you must have eight people wanting to play at your designated starting time (Otherwise you have to invite outsiders and that takes away the fun).

Designate one of the eight as the table “host” and make sure you have a printed list of the people, usernames and contact details for the participants.

The following steps are for the “host” only”:

1. From the “Home Panel” choose “**Competitive**” and then choose “**Team Matches**”.
2. You can see a list of pending events (part created or waiting for players). Ignore these. Instead, down the bottom of this panel, choose on “**Create Team Match**”.
3. On the “Create Team Match – Identification” panel, give the Match and each Team a name.

4. Then move to the “Create Team Match – Options” panel.
Leave scoring as “IMPs”.
Adjust the number of boards as appropriate (although 8 is often a good number).
Use random deals.
5. Then mover to the “Create Team Match – Reserve Seats” panel.
You should see the two teams named, so go ahead and enter the usernames for each of the teams.
6. When this is completed, choose the blue “Create Team Match” button at the bottom of the panel.
7. Each of the participants should now receive their invite. When all four players are at the table they will be dealt their first boards.
8. The little blue “Chat” button on the bottom left of screen will now allow you to send messages to specific players, to your table or to the tournament. Make sure the other table is up and running and phone a reliable person if not.
9. If you lose a player you might have to reserve their seat again or sit someone else in for the remainder of the match.

Once we are all playing at our table, we can chat to table as usual, and can call for the Director if there is a problem (rare). The Director will chat with player or the table to determine what is going on.

After your table has finished a board you can use the toolbar on the right-hand side of screen to choose ‘history’ and you can see your board again. At the top of the history screen you can choose “Other table” to see what happened there.

5. In Conclusion

I hope that you benefit from these notes. We are keen to run member only events at some stage in the future and are playing a team’s events very soon to help get everyone back involved with the club. So please register for BBO and have a practice so that you are ready when the event is about to begin.

I miss you all.

Cheers

Chris